

Springdale Solar Farm Submission

POLICY

The NSW government's own policy does not designate Sutton as a place for renewable energy, and this project does not meet the NSW draft guidelines for large scale solar development.

A 5 km buffer zone has been endorsed by Yass Valley Council, the ACT Government, and the NSW Planning Department to ban housing development along the ACT border to prevent urban sprawl. The area for the proposed development is within this buffer zone. It is likely to be viewed by the public as adding insult to injury to instead develop large scale infrastructure in this zone.

Because of access road problems the Yass Valley Council has voted against any more windfarm developments. This would indicate how it views such developments.

VEHICLE ACCESS

Heavy vehicle access to this solar development, which is via rural roads, will increase.

From the Federal Highway via Sutton the road passes through Sutton village and a 40 km/hr school zone. Traffic has to make a right angle turn onto McLaughlin's Creek bridge which is narrow and dangerous, having minimal barrier to prevent vehicles falling over its edge. The developer has not mentioned this. It then has to pass over Tallagandra Lane, which is not fully sealed.

From the Hume Highway via Gunning, a much longer route from a highway, the road passes through Gundaroo village.

From the Federal Highway via Gungahlin ACT, the road passes through new residential development. Horse Park Drive suffers from severe congestion at times and is being duplicated, and Mulligan's Flat Road is not fully sealed.

The rural roads need improvement and there are probably constraining weight limits. An undertaking should be agreed with the relevant council(s) for these improvements before consent is granted.

The developer has not provided a firm undertaking to use any particular route, but has suggested one route using the worst case scenario of the transformer transport. The developer should be required to designate a specific route, as it currently has no control of the route taken by, nor the movements of, contractors bringing heavy equipment to the site, who may desire to use another of the 3 access routes which is more convenient.

The traffic load will increase the danger and disturbance to users and residents of these routes.

SITE SUITABILITY

The Sutton area has historically been highly valued for 'mixed farming' due to its fertile soils and close proximity to Canberra and Queanbeyan. The land identified for this development is in a rural zone designated for grazing and farming. While grazing can occur concurrently, the development will have an affect on light and rain reaching the soil, and will modify water run off, affecting its surrounds. Other farming pursuits, such as crop growing (including grapes, olives, and fruit), which are becoming more prevalent in the area, will no longer be possible. The site is also already prone to water inundation and is a source for Yass town drinking water supply, which needs protection. Yass already has problems with sodification and sedimentation. The development would be more suited to a marginal site, rather than prime land, as the electricity can be transported by powerlines to where it is required.

The winter weather in the area is subject to winter fog, which can last all day, and to heavy frost. This will impact the efficient operation of the solar panels.

BIODIVERSITY

This site is in a State and Regional biodiversity corridor. NSW Planning Direction 14 says that intensive development should be avoided in such areas. The area is rich in biodiversity, both flora and fauna, including endangered and threatened species. These will be affected during the life of the project, through its construction and operation, and also by restricting movement through the

site, which provides a connection between the largest remaining, and most intact, contiguous area of Yellow Box/Red Box grassy woodland and other regions in New South Wales.

The site is also close to the ACT Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve Woodland Sanctuary which is, amongst other things, reintroducing animals such as bettongs and bandicoots. The developer has not stated how they will control feral species once they have control of the site.

Substantial disturbance will occur at the site due to grading and landfill. The construction process will, without doubt, promote the erosion process and introduce undesirable weeds to the site. Even the contractor who checks my domestic water treatment system has promoted erosion and introduced new weeds to my domestic property by driving in with a ute once a quarter.

VISUAL IMPACT

The development will create an industrial look, which will have a visual impact for both the local population and for tourists, over a substantially large area in comparison to other such sites. It will undoubtedly literally be an eye-sore at times, causing sun glare and probably reflected heat. Even my own house roof, made of dark grey corrugated Colorbond sheeting, has a bright silver glare when viewed from certain directions at certain times of the day. The proposed planting of screening plants will not reduce this for many years and may not ever reduce it for neighbouring properties and for road views at higher elevations.

FIRE HAZARD

I assume that installation of a high voltage electrical infrastructure will increase the possible fire hazard risk for the current grassland and future tree screening. Likewise, lightning strikes will be attracted to the numerous metal poles, fences, and support frames. Since there is no reticulated water supply, nor large local water body close by, a water supply tank will be required. It is likely that this will be insufficient to extinguish a large grass fire and consequently greater strain will be placed on the Rural Fire Service volunteers.

SOCIO ECONOMICS

It is unlikely the development will have the predicted economic benefit to the local community. It is more probable that available construction and operational workers with the required skills will be brought in from outside the region, or from interstate, as large scale solar installations do not happen regularly locally. This, in turn, will have a negative impact by exacerbating the supply shortage of suitable local housing and rental property, especially caused by lack of investment in infrastructure for development in the rural area. It may have a positive impact on local businesses, but this will be offset by the construction traffic impact on the local tourism venues such as the wineries etc. Opportunity for community investment in the project is proposed but no details will be available until the project is operational. It is therefore not possible to determine any future community benefit from such investment before a decision to proceed is made. It is also unclear whether the proposal will also be extended to people outside the local community.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The noise and disturbance of such a large scale development in a rural environment, which is sought-after by people who want a quiet, stress-free life outside the Canberra border, will have an effect on their health and well-being. People living close to the site will be especially affected as the price of their property will also be negatively impacted. Land value in general in the Sutton area may also be similarly impacted.

SITE REMEDIATION

No provision has been made to ensure funding for decommission and rehabilitation of the site, and for recycling materials on premature cessation, or after the normal 30 years cessation, of the project. The developer should make available a realistic bond to the consenting authorities for this purpose.

COMPENSATION

The developer has offered no transparent opportunity for the community to provide their consensus views to the developer at open general meeting. Instead the developer has only provided community information drop in sessions. The community does not consider this to be proper consultation, but provision of information. As a result, compensation needs to be properly negotiated, rather than stated as a fait accompli.

I offer my views on this as follows:

The value of the Community Enhancement Fund should be increased in line with similar contemporary developments around Australia.

Landowners within 1 km **and** within sight of the development should receive compensation for loss of visual amenity.

All local community members, within a distance to be decided by community meeting, should receive compensation in the form of an electricity subsidy or domestic solar installation.