

Please accept this written submission in addition to my initial objection to the proposed Great North Road (GNR) Solar Park. As a resident of Southwell, Nottinghamshire, and a regular visitor to the countryside northwest of Newark-on-Trent for recreational walking, I have a personal stake in preserving the unspoiled rural character of this landscape. For many years, I have walked these paths as an essential escape from daily life, a source of physical exercise, and a vital contributor to my mental well-being. The proposed development, spanning a staggering 1,765 hectares with 550 hectares dedicated to solar photovoltaic (PV) panels generating up to 800 MW of electricity, would irrevocably transform this area into an industrial-scale energy facility. My objection centres on the scheme's immense size, its profound visual intrusion, and its exacerbating cumulative impacts alongside existing and proposed developments—effects that would diminish, if not destroy, the very essence of why I, and countless others like me, travel to walk here.

#### My Connection to the Landscape and the Value of Walking

Southwell, just 10 miles southeast of Newark, sits on the edge of the Trent Valley, offering easy access to a network of public rights of way, bridleways, and permissive paths that weave through the flat, open farmlands northwest of the town. Routes such as the Mansfield to Newark Trail, segments of the Trent Canal towpath and exploratory loops around villages like North Muskham, Carlton and Sutton on Trent have become my sanctuary. These walks, often 5-10 miles in length, take me through a mosaic of arable fields, hedgerows, and distant horizons where the Trent Valley meets the sky—a quintessential Nottinghamshire countryside that feels timeless and restorative.

For me, these outings are more than exercise; they are a mental health lifeline. In a world of screens and stress, the act of striding through open fields, with birdsong and the rustle of crops as my only companions, provides clarity and peace. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in the Environmental Statement (ES) acknowledges recreational users like walkers as key visual receptors (ES Chapter 7, Figure 7.1 ZTV), yet it underplays how such a vast installation would shatter this tranquillity. As a regular visitor—driving the short distance from Southwell via the A617, A616 and/or the A1—I represent the thousands of locals and day-trippers who sustain this area's quiet tourism. The proposal's mitigations, such as 64,500 new trees and 50 km of hedgerows, sound laudable on paper but fail to address the scale of disruption for those of us who seek solitude, not a fenced-off "biodiversity park" that feels more akin to large industrial sites.

#### The Overwhelming Size of the Development

At 1,765 hectares—equivalent to over 4,300 acres, or roughly the size of 2,500 football pitches—the GNR Solar Park dwarfs typical solar installations and would dominate the Trent Valley lowlands. Of this, 550 hectares would host ground-mounted PV panels up to 3 meters high, interspersed with inverters, transformers, substations, and security fencing, all connected by underground cabling and access tracks. This is no modest array; it is a mega-project designed to power 200,000 homes, stretching across 10 km from north to south and varying widths up to 5 km, encroaching on farmland from the near the A616 in the east to the River Trent in the west.

For a walker approaching from Southwell, this scale translates to an inescapable presence. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps in the ES (Volume 3, Chapter 7 Figures) show the panels visible from elevated points like the Southwell Minster ridge. Even from ground level, the flat topography offers few natural barriers; on clear days, the sheer expanse would loom like a metallic sea, altering the perceptual scale of the landscape. The proposers claim the site is "agricultural" and "low sensitivity," but this ignores its role as a breathing space for urban escapees. A development this large cannot be "screened" effectively; partial planting would take decades to mature, leaving interim views of glinting panels that catch the sun like a vast mirror farm. My walks, once defined by expansive skies and golden fields, would become a procession past an industrial zone, reducing the area's appeal and deterring visitors who, like me, choose it for its rural authenticity.

#### Profound Visual Impact on Walking Experiences

The visual harm is the most visceral objection for someone like me, who navigates this landscape on foot. The LVIA identifies 25 representative viewpoints, including PROWs near Coddington and along the A1 (Viewpoint 12 and 18), where moderate to major adverse effects are predicted during construction and operation. Yet, these assessments feel sanitized—static photomontages that fail to capture the dynamic intrusion: the relentless shimmer of panels tracking the sun, the hum of inverters audible on still days, and the stark contrast of 2-meter deer fencing against undulating fields. From Southwell, my typical route heads North West to the A617, dipping into lanes like those near Eakring, where I park and strike out on foot. Here, the proposal's eastern edge would intrude directly: panels visible, transforming pastoral vistas into a cluttered foreground of infrastructure. Heading East to the A616 and across to the river at Carlton on Trent for walks round Ossington and Norwell I would be faced with a sea of blue-black panels rising like a corporate billboard. The ES admits "major magnitude" changes for nearby receptors (Table 7.8), but for distant walkers—5-10 km away on higher ground such as Hawton on the A46—the subtle horizon shift would still register as a creeping urbanization, eroding the sense of remoteness that draws so many to visit.

Worse, the 800 MW battery storage facility and grid connection to Staythorpe Substation amplify the visual clutter: hulking containers and cabling compounds that the LVIA glosses over as "mitigated." For evening walks at dusk or star gazing opportunities, the potential for security lighting would pierce the darkening fields, banishing the starlit tranquillity and add to light pollution. These impacts are not abstract; they would shorten my visits, force detours onto busier roads, or drive me elsewhere—perhaps to the Peak District, adding hours and emissions to my carbon footprint, ironically undermining the project's "green" credentials.

#### Cumulative Impacts: Tipping the Trent Valley into Industrialization

Perhaps the most damning aspect is the cumulative effect, which the ES addresses in Chapter 8 but treats as additive rather than transformative. Newark & Sherwood's countryside is already peppered with smaller solar developments. There are more in the pipeline all around the same area including Kelham, Tuxford and Norwell, plus rejected South Muskham and Knapthorpe applications which councillors believed to have been split to evade the NSIP threshold which have gone to appeal. These, combined with wind farms like Egmanton, Halloughton (near Kirklington) and the Hoveringham proposal, plus those further afield like East Leake, Holme Pierrepont, Kingston on Soar and Ruddington and ongoing grid upgrades, are fragmenting the landscape into a patchwork of energy infrastructure which is inescapable.

The GNR Park would compound this: its ZTV overlaps with existing sites, creating "in-combination" views where panels bleed into one another across the horizon (ES Figure 8.2). From Southwell's walking trails, such as the ascent to the Minster viewpoint, the Trent Valley would no longer offer a serene panorama but a glittering corridor of development. The

proposers' Cumulative LVIA (CLVIA) claims "negligible" overall effects beyond 5 km, but this is disingenuous; for a regular walker across the county, the layered intrusions would accumulate into a sense of enclosure, stripping away the open-hearted freedom that defines the area.

Local authorities, including Newark & Sherwood District Council, have raised similar concerns in their Local Impact Report (2024), noting pressures on landscape character and recreation. Rushcliffe Borough Council's Solar Farm Landscape Sensitivity Study (2024) highlights high cumulative risks in the Trent Washlands, rating areas like this as "medium-high sensitivity" due to flat terrain and visibility. I already navigate around Radcliffe on Trent panels on southern expeditions and Halloughton on northern adventures; adding GNR would saturate the eastern area and a city to the west does not appeal for walking. The cumulative effect is therefore pushing walkers out of the county altogether, let alone the district. This isn't sustainable development—it's a domino effect that prioritizes energy output over equitable access to nature, disproportionately burdening rural recreators while urban beneficiaries reap the power.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, the GNR Solar Park's colossal size, glaring visual dominance, and compounding cumulative burdens would devastate the walking experience for visitors like me. This is not opposition to renewables—solar has its place on rooftops, brownfield sites, or less sensitive locales—but a plea to protect irreplaceable green lungs. The benefits of 800 MW are undeniable, yet they cannot justify sacrificing a landscape that sustains community health and heritage.

I urge the Examining Authority to refuse consent or impose radical redesigns with a mandate for independent monitoring of cumulative visuals.