

My name is Freddie Spickenell and I am the owner of The Vine Tree pub in Norton.

The Vine Tree is not just a business to me. It is a historic village pub that has been part of this community for centuries.

I have invested heavily — both financially and personally — to bring it back to life as the heart of the village. The pub is supported by residents and visitors who come to enjoy the countryside that surrounds us.

But this proposed 2,000-acre solar development poses a very real threat to that future.

Our business depends heavily on visitors. People come here to walk through the countryside, to experience the beauty of the village, and to sit in our garden for a meal or a drink while enjoying the landscape.

Under this proposal, every approach to the pub would pass large areas of industrial-scale solar panels. The rural setting that attracts walkers, cyclists and tourists would be fundamentally altered.

Wiltshire Council has already estimated a loss of £1.8 million in tourism income to the area. From my perspective as someone running a rural hospitality business, I believe the true economic impact will be considerably higher.

If visitor numbers drop, the pub becomes unviable.

And if the pub closes, the consequences extend beyond my business. I employ local people — many of whom rely on the pub for their first jobs or vital local employment. Losing the pub would mean losing those jobs, losing a key meeting place for the village, and losing another rural pub at a time when so many have already disappeared.

There are also serious practical concerns.

The pub sits at the bottom of a hill in a known flash-flood area. Covering upstream land with solar infrastructure risks increasing runoff and worsening flood risk. During construction, heavy goods vehicles are expected roughly every ten minutes, which would make it extremely difficult for staff and customers to reach us.

And the noise and disruption during construction — and from the battery storage systems afterwards — would severely damage the peaceful setting that our customers value.

I want to be clear: I support renewable energy.

But this proposal is the wrong scale, in the wrong place.

I urge you to refuse this application in order to protect local businesses, local jobs, the character of this village, and the future of The Vine Tree.

Thank you.