

# Objection to the development from PETER MOSTYN

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak on a subject which has become important and of great concern to me and to many other local residents.

My wife and I live on bridleway 16, Stocking Lane, next to the clubhouse of Rushcliffe Golf Club.

Although our location is near the proposed site of this solar farm, we will neither see nor hear it if it is built. It has also been agreed that its construction traffic will not pass our door, because bridleway 16 is for many reasons unsuitable as an access route for hundreds of large lorries.

So why are we opposed to this solar farm, to the extent that last year I spent a thousand pounds having a joiner make a mock-up of two solar panels to show Borough Councillors their obstructive height, before I spoke for 5 minutes in this very room on behalf of the public on March 9th when Borough Councillors unanimously rejected the developer's Application?

May I confess that three years ago standing on the bridleway with the NCC Rights of Way Officer when I first learnt from him of this solar farm, I distinctly recall replying that I thought it a good thing, as for 12 years we have had 16 solar panels on the roof of our bungalow. I also recall the funny look he gave me.

Since then, I have increasingly discovered the facts about Planning Law in the Green Belt and solar farms which explain why he gave me such a funny look.

For a start, it has become alarmingly obvious that the very words 'solar farm' are an Orwellian doublespeak deception. These farms are actually ugly electricity generating factories, and highly inefficient ones too for our energy security. They generate only 11% of the 49.9MW output claimed, and too much of the actual 6MW is in sunny daylight hours and none on a cold dark winter's night when it's needed.

So who benefits from what might more accurately be called a Solar Industrial Zone – or SIZ for short?

The *financial* beneficiaries are the landowner and the developer - and of course the Asian totalitarian nation which manufactures these panels. That nation uses coal powered electricity which contributes to it being responsible for 30% of global warming, and ships its solar panels to the UK which is responsible for less than 1% of global warming.

There is of course also a *renewable energy* benefit, and in Green Belt Planning Law, I have read there need to be VSCs benefits which substantially outweigh any harms caused.

HMG's legislation and renewable energy targets, and the need for energy security, are often quoted as the VSCs which justify SIZs, and they have their strong supporters. But as time goes by and lessons are being learnt, these VSCs also have their critics, as people realise the problems the SIZs are causing, and that their contribution to energy security is actually only a fraction of the rated output.

There has also been a change in national circumstances such that alongside energy security, HMG is at last focusing on food security - but HMG seems to be suffering from old-age cataracts as it does so. For HMG wrongly persists in viewing only BMV agricultural land as needing to be conserved for food security, and preserved from SIZs.

May I give you the proportions of UK farmland in each ALC grade which was initiated by MAFF as long ago as 1966? BMV ALC grades 1 to 3a inclusive occupy only 42% of farmland. So, if food security is important, this objective is receiving less than half-hearted HMG support. The grade 3b subdivision created in 1976 which accounts for 28% of farmland, should surely *also* be deemed necessary for food security - and not just for its statistical importance but because its output can match or exceed that of 3a's output.

Obviously, then, the ALC grading is not fit for the current purpose of balancing food security and energy security, as it leads to a mistaken imbalance to the detriment of food security.

Looking at our local SIZ site, fields 12 to 15 are arable. Before they are dismissed as fair game for a SIZ, however, my wife is a local arable farmer's daughter and has knowledgeably viewed the output of these fields as impressive and worthwhile for the past 60 years. In the past 28 years I have viewed them, I don't recall seeing the current flood damage to the current grain crop – but the unprecedented rainfall has damaged many fields

Moreover, even HMG is now concerned also about the cumulative impact in any one area of the SIZ gold-rush – a major concern here locally because of the number of SIZs built or approved or in the Planning pipeline. If the solar panel racks were not aluminium or stainless steel, our Green Belt would become a Rust Belt in addition to becoming an ugly one.

In short, this is a very special Green Belt area in the south of Rushcliffe with a combination of popular and well-used public benefits which few if any other sites can match. These set the bar uniquely high for any VSCs to substantially outweigh.

I conclude by observing that this challenge might explain – but certainly not excuse – the apparently puzzling support on the Rushcliffe planning portal of 169 neighbours who signed a petition in favour of this SIZ. This volume of support seems to match the volume of *objections* on the portal and hence fly in the face of all I have just said.

I therefore need to tell you that having been asked myself that day in 2022 outside the East Leake Co-op to sign this petition, I can testify to the misinformation promulgated to disparage our Green Belt PRoW amenity, by the two canvassers in trying to obtain my signature. They also failed to declare they were working for the Appellant. In wondering how many of these petitions are not worth the paper they were written on, I suggest that a more accurate quantification of local attitudes to this SIZ is to put these petitions to one side and observe that on the Rushcliffe portal there are almost 30 times more objections than endorsements, from those whose text actually demonstrates a knowledge and/or use of this Green Belt amenity.

I am not a barrister, solicitor, town planner, borough councillor or parish councillor. I am merely a member of the public. So forgive me please if I have misunderstood the purpose of this Public Inquiry. But it seems to me that the Planning inspectorate has been good enough to allow 4 days for the public to be part of this crucial decision-making process. In this context, I therefore regard the 169 petitions as an abuse of the public's role in this process and a serious misrepresentation of the public's attitude to this SIZ.

Taking all its harms into account, the SIZ could indeed be relabelled a SWIZ – a Solar Woeful Industrial Zone.

I have a copy of my statement with its data, and a copy of an article about the medical proof for the public's benefits of being in green nature, and a photo of the sunset over field 15, should the Inspector require this paperwork.

Thank you, Inspector.



# The benefits of a daily walk

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It's great for your physical and mental wellbeing – and even the most casual stroll can give you a boost, says *Dominic Bliss*





"Ten thousand steps a day." It has become almost a religious mantra for anyone embarking on walking as an exercise routine. But you don't need to adhere to this to feel the benefits of getting outside and stretching your legs.

And this magic number has less scientific value than you'd think. It dates back to a Japanese marketing campaign from the 1960s designed to promote a commercial pedometer - and for some reason it has stuck, making us feel guilty for not hitting this made-up target ever since.

Britain's leading walking charity, Ramblers, says the benefits of walking little and often are not to be sniffed at. "Walking in the great outdoors is one of the most effective things we can do to improve our health and wellbeing," says George Salmon, a spokesman for the charity. "And there's no need to set out on taxing treks to feel the benefits: even a short stroll around your local park can make a drastic difference."

### The health benefits of walking

It burns calories and contributes to weight loss - but just how many calories does walking burn?

It all depends on your age, weight, height, gender and speed. An average 180lb (12st 12lb) person burns around 100 calories walking one mile at a brisk pace. Increase the pace to vigorous and that figure rises to 130 calories.

By accelerating and decelerating the pace of your walking, you can burn even more. A study by engineering researchers at the Ohio State University discovered that mixing up the speed of your walking (which is natural when you're outdoors) can burn up to 20 per cent more calories compared

with going at a steady pace (which would most likely be on a treadmill).

"Walking at any speed costs some energy, but when you're changing the speed, you're pressing the gas pedal, so to speak," explained the study's lead author, Nidhi Seethapathi. "Changing the kinetic energy of the person requires more work from the legs and that process certainly burns more energy."

Additionally, walking at a pace of 3km per hour (1.86mph) or more could lower the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by at least 15 per cent, according to a new study.

The findings, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, found the risk of diabetes fell for every kilometre per hour faster

**'Walking in the great outdoors is one of the most effective things we can do for our health'**

someone walked on average.

Those who walked at a pace of between 3km and 5km per hour, which is considered "an average or normal walking speed", reduced the risk of Type 2 diabetes by 15 per cent, compared with those who walked at a "strolling" pace of less than 3km an hour.

Walking also helps your heart. There's plenty of scientific evidence that walking - like many other regular physical activities - has enormous cardiovascular benefits. The Stroke Association says that just 30 minutes of moderate walking five days a week can reduce your risk of a stroke by a quarter.

A paper published in the journal *Current Opinion in Cardiology* found that even short walks offer heart-health benefits. "Patients may accrue short-term gains such as improved fitness, body composition, blood pressure and lipid profiles," said the authors. "Longer term benefits include reduced risk of coronary heart disease, coronary events and mortality." Walking can even have an effect on cholesterol.

Walking can also help people with dementia. A 2022 review of numerous trials that encouraged dementia sufferers to take regular light exercise - including walking - concluded it improved cognitive function across the board. All the participants were 60 or older and exercised at least once a week for eight weeks or more.

There is also a link to fighting cancer. A 2019 study from the American Cancer Society found that two-and-a-half to five hours of moderate exercise such as "brisk walking" every week lowered the risk of seven different cancers: colon, breast, kidney, liver, endometrial, myeloma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Many people report feeling better and brighter after going out for a walk, and this is backed up by research. Mind, the UK mental health charity, published a study that compared the results of exercise in the great outdoors with a walk inside an indoor shopping centre. 71 per cent of respondents reported decreased levels of depression and said they felt less tense after taking a walk in a green environment. 90 per cent felt increased self-esteem.

Ramblers agrees with the importance of being outside specifically. "Getting out in the fresh air can be invaluable for your mental wellbeing," George Salmon says. "Not only does it give you a chance to relax and recharge, it's a great way to reconnect with nature."

There's also evidence that our mental health is affected by something called negative air ions. These are negatively charged gas ions generated by sunlight, cosmic rays and plants, which are particularly concentrated in forests, near waterfalls and on beaches. A US review of multiple studies highlighted that people who had been exposed to these negative ions experienced "reduced depression severity, lower psychological stress, less anxiety and enhanced well-being".

Joanna Hall, a sports scientist and founder of walking programme WalkActive, says this is another reason we should walk outside as often as we can.

### How walking can help you live longer

■ Men ■ Women

A brisk walking speed has been linked to a longer life span - even for people who are overweight

Slow, underweight walkers



Fast walkers, healthy weight and overweight



SOURCE: TOM YATES, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER



"especially in dense forest or by waterfalls".

### How far should you walk every day?

Hall warns us not to obsess over distance. "But if you're looking for quantity, I feel 7,500 steps as a daily target is a good benchmark," she adds.

Ramblers says you shouldn't worry about how many you do per day, as long as you do something. "The good news is that any number of steps has a really positive impact on your health," stresses Salmon.

### Is it better to walk longer or faster?

Neither, according to Hall. What's far more important is to "walk better". "There are skills involved in walking just like there are in golf and tennis," she adds.

In her coaching programme, she encourages walkers to use the leg

that trails behind to propel them forwards, rather than using their leading leg to pull them along. Ideally, as we stride, our legs should make the shape of an inverted letter V.

"That way you will improve your posture, increase your walking speed and reduce joint strain at the hips, knees and ankles," she adds.

Rather than speed of walking, she prefers to talk in terms of foot cadence, suggesting that, for most people, 120 steps a minute is a good target. Check your watch while you're walking.

### What to wear when walking

Such a simple sport requires only very simple clothing - although it's worth spending money on quality trainers or hiking boots.

"There's no need to have fancy gear to start walking," says Salmon. "The number one rule is to walk in anything that makes you feel

comfortable and supported. So if you're setting out for the first time, a trusty pair of trainers is often the best call. Once you've decided to explore a bit further, you'll want to invest in a pair of well-fitted walking boots. Most outdoor stores will provide a personalised fitting service."

Hall stresses that your trainers should allow your toes to spread in your shoes as you walk. "A wider and squarer toe box will mean you'll have an even push from your big toe, middle toe and little toe all at the same time, which will help with the alignment of your feet, knees and hips, safeguarding your joints," she says.

She also recommends flexible soles on your trainers, so as to allow all the joints in each foot to move properly. "Imagine you have a Post-it note stuck to the back of your shoe," she explains. "If someone is walking behind you, you want them to be able to read it. So you should leave

that back foot behind you for a little bit longer. This switches off your hip flexors and improves alignment from foot, knee and hip, safeguarding your joints and giving you more propulsion forwards."

### How to stay safe while walking

Solo walkers would be wise to stick to busier or well-lit routes, especially in winter when the days shorten. Rather encouragingly, Hall says that as your walking technique improves, so will your physical presence, making you appear more confident and less vulnerable.

According to Ramblers, when it comes to walking in the countryside, one of the biggest barriers is "the fear of getting lost". For that reason, they offer a beginner's guide to navigation - a free online service that covers map and compass reading, plus other practical advice.

### How to get started walking daily

Ramblers suggests novice walkers should start gently and build up their daily distance. "If you're just starting out, taking that first step can seem daunting," Salmon says. "Set out at an easy pace and keep it short. Work out a route that suits you and as you build up your stamina, extend the distance over the coming days and weeks. When you can keep going for over half an hour, basking in the beauty of the great outdoors, you'll know it's working."

Hall suggests you're more likely

'Work out a route that suits you and as you build up your stamina, extend the distance'

to complete a daily walk if you make it part of your morning routine rather than putting it off until the end of the working day.

She also says you're more likely to walk regularly if you make it as easy as possible for yourself. One way to do that is to map out short but interesting walks starting from places you visit every day.

"That might be your desk at home, your place of work or the school gates where you drop off your kids," she explains. "From each location, map out a five-minute walk, a 10-minute walk and a 15-minute walk." Armed with these different route ideas, you'll never have an excuse not to complete your daily exercise.

Finally, if you commute to work by public transport, Hall recommends you get off a couple of stops early and walk the final section. If you work from home, you can always give yourself a short pretend commute every morning by walking down to your local high street for a coffee.

### How to stay motivated to walk daily

Podcasts can provide a sense of companionship and make the walk a bit less lonely.

Many have a handy walking theme, such as *Ramblings* by BBC presenter Clare Balding, in which she heads out into the countryside with a different guest in tow.



Similarly, *Folk on Foot* combines folk music and walking, hosted by former BBC executive and broadcaster Matthew Bannister. There's also the *Talking Walking* podcast, which features artists, designers, activists and writers talking about their passion for walking. And in *Walking the Dog*, host Emily Dean is joined by a celebrity for a walk with their four-legged friends.

Even the National Trust has a walking podcast, in which ranger Kate Martin rambles through some of the trust's most beautiful landscapes.

Training for an event will keep you focused too. Perhaps consider signing up for a charity walking event - long enough that you need to walk regularly as part of your training.

Walking with a friend will encourage you not to drop out of regular walks, especially if you both make time in your diaries for a rendezvous on certain days of the week.

Otherwise you could join a local walking club. Ramblers has hundreds of local groups across the country that offer regular walks and social events. Find your nearest one on their website.

## ARE YOU A FAST WALKER?

Three miles an hour or less  
slow walker

Three to four miles an hour  
steady or average pace

Four or more miles an hour  
brisk pace



## IN NUMBERS

# 2,337

2,337 daily steps are enough to cut the risk of premature death

# 3,967

3,967 steps a day reduce the risk of dying from any cause

# 1,000

Every extra 1,000 steps per day are linked to a 15 per cent reduction in death from any cause

# 500

Just 500 more steps each day cut the risk of heart disease by 7 per cent, regardless of gender, age and climate

# 5,000

5,000-7,000 is the sweet spot that goes beyond the basics of heart health and helps you burn fat, as well



For Gyles Brandreth, the tree-lined avenues and wide, green sports pitches of Barn Elms playing fields are much more than his local park in Barnes, south-west London.

They are where he walks Mabel, the family chug – a pug and Chihuahua cross – and where he took all its predecessors. “But beyond that,” he says as we stride around together, “I have a particular interest in this green space.”

Sporting one of his trademark knitted jumpers featuring a dog, the 76-year-old author, broadcaster and former MP walks as quickly as he talks on Radio 4's *Just a Minute*.

Of course, he begins, ever erudite, there is the history of the place – it is mentioned in Samuel Pepys's diary, was a sometime haunt of Henry Fielding, and was where Handel wrote one of his operas. And then there are the health-giving benefits of having a public park on your doorstep.

“I used to take it for granted but during Covid and lockdown, horrific as they were for so many in so many ways, I found joy in coming here for my hour's walk with Michele [his wife of 50 years]. For the first time, I even got into mindfulness, though I know that sounds a bit fey.”

The real reason we are here, however, is that, since the 1970s, Brandreth has been involved in what used to be called the National Playing Fields Association, now Fields in Trust, a charity that champions and supports parks and green spaces nationwide. Today its month-long “Bark for our Parks” campaign is launched.

The aim is to mobilise the 12 million dog-owners who use parks and green spaces to “take a four-legged stand” so they are not lost to the public forever. That was the fate facing Barn Elms 10 years ago when Thames Water tried to buy it from the council as part of building London's “super sewer”. Fields in Trust stepped in and saved it.

As the campaign's poster boy, Brandreth wants those signing up to pledge to walk 50 or even 100 kilometres around their local green spaces to raise funds for Fields in Trust over the course of May. “It's not just Barn Elms we have saved. We protect over 3,000 parks and green spaces across the country,” he says.

While the charity cannot yet provide exact figures on how many are being lost – it is building a database that will do just that – its research paints a worrying picture. Some 6.1 million people in the country do not live within easy access – defined as a 10-minute walk – of a green space, while just 6 per cent of parks and recreation grounds nationwide have any sort of legal protection to prevent them being turned into housing developments or supermarkets.

As our population rises, Fields in Trust calculates that 4,000 new parks will be needed by 2033 just to maintain the existing level of readily accessible green spaces.

“Providing green spaces and parks is not a statutory function for local authorities, who own many of them,” explains the charity's director, Helen Griffiths. As their support from central government has been cut

in the past decade, councils have been making savings on their parks' budgets to the tune of around £350 million every year since 2010.

“Next to providing adult social care, parks are low down on most local authorities' list of priorities. And even when they remain open, the cuts have had an undesirable impact. They are less well cared for, with many at risk of falling into disrepair and disuse and so becoming no-go areas.”

What Fields in Trust does, when alerted by community groups or press reports of a specific threat to a green space, is to work with the local authority to agree a binding legal agreement that the land should only ever be used for recreational purposes.

“When local authorities are open to discussing such an idea, our success rate is very high.”

reports Griffiths. “With some we have a rolling agreement to place a certain number of parks under deeds of dedication each year. But we can only protect them if the council wants to, and as budgetary pressures on them grow, more may become reluctant.”

Yet how does the charity manage to persuade them to say no and instead tie themselves to an agreement that means they can never sell in the future?

“We show local authorities how it is really short-sighted to think only about money coming in,” explains Griffiths, “when you consider the cost to the public purse of losing all the benefits parks and green spaces bring from health, wellbeing and environmental perspectives.”

She quotes a study showing that people who use parks regularly save the NHS £111 million each year because they are unlikely to go to the GP as often as those who don't. Another suggests those who use parks frequently generate £34 billion of health and wellbeing benefits.

Then there is the argument about councils' responsibility to respond to residents' wishes. In the case of Barn Elms, as in other places, Richmond council was encouraged to recognise the strength of the community response to losing this precious green space, how well used it was, and how many sport and recreational facilities on the site would disappear if the sale went ahead.

The charity now has ambitions to spread protection for green spaces more widely, which is where Brandreth and the Bark for your Parks campaign come in. As well as being a fundraiser, it also feeds into its wider awareness-raising work.

It is a cause, points out this confidant of the Windsors (including his friend the present Queen), that has long-standing royal approval. As the National Playing Fields Association, it was founded in 1925 by the Duke of York, later George VI.

When Prince Philip married the future Elizabeth II in 1948, his first royal appointment was as its new president, one that he took so seriously in his early years that he would spend several days a week in its offices directing its operations himself.

He even featured in its annual calendar, in athletic poses on different recreational fields in the charity's portfolio. “My mother had what you might call a pin-up calendar featuring Prince Philip on the kitchen cabinet,” Brandreth recalls.

His own involvement dates back to the early 1970s. “In my 20s, I was looking to do a bit of volunteering, and someone took me along to a Playing Fields

Association event. That is where, to my amazement, I first met the [late] Duke of Edinburgh.”

A friendship developed – in 2021 he published a biography of Prince Philip – as Brandreth got involved with the charity's fundraising. “He once told me that, when the late Queen became the Queen, people were always telling him what not to do, how he had to keep out of things, and so he invented a role for himself. ‘The Playing Fields was for me an anchor,’ he used to say.”

The message he was promoting then remains the same one the charity is championing in its national event this week. “For the late Duke it was long-term protection of environmental space. He liked to quote Mark Twain: ‘The trouble with land is they have stopped making it.’”

In 2013, the Duke was succeeded as president by his grandson Prince William, now Prince of Wales. Brandreth had a ringside seat to observe the official handover in Nottingham in 2013.

“Certainly we need more affordable housing,” says this former Conservative junior minister in John Major's government, “but there is no point in building housing if it hasn't got recreational space near it. The green space is as important as the building.”

Echoing the mental health and environmental concerns of its current president, Fields in Trust has steadily shifted its emphasis from sporting facilities for all to promoting the wider benefits of access to green space. It is not a case of one or the other, Brandreth argues.

“The point of getting out into your local park,” he insists, “is that it works at every level, mind and body.”

barkforyourparks.org



