

# Gate Burton Energy Park

The Planning Inspectorate  
Temple Quay House  
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## Representation of the Kexby Parish Council on the Proposed Solar Farms

As Chairman of the Parish Council I am writing on behalf of the parishioner of Kexby Parish to register our opposition to the proposed large scale Solar Farm developments in our immediate vicinity comprising Cottam Solar Project, West Burton Solar Project, (both proposed by Island Green Power), Gate Burton Energy Park (proposed by Low Carbon) and Tillbridge Solar (proposed by Tillbridge Solar Ltd).

Our parish sits amidst these numerous projects and our concern is the cumulative effect the proposed 4 projects will have on the local landscape and its inhabitants. Whilst we accept there is a need to address the effects of climate change and that solar energy has a part to play, this must be balanced with the effect of situating such large project, as proposed above, around communities.

Since the parishes were advised of these projects coupled with the consultation by the relevant proposers there was a perception by parishioners that as these come under the umbrella of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) then as communities we have no say in the matter because this will be decided by central government. This perception has been reinforced by the amount of preparatory/investigative work carried out by the project proposers over the last year and as a parish councilor we have found it a challenge to rectify this perception and get the engagement of parts of the communities. That said, even the findings of the developers has shown that the communities are overwhelmingly against these due in part to the magnitude in such a small populated area.

There are many concerns that the parishioners have which will no doubt be reflected in other parishes affected one of which is that each of these projects should not be considered in isolation but all 4 projects together so that the inspectorate can see the collective impact these will have on the area.

Other areas of concern are:

### **Developers**

The selective presentation by the proposers regarding the effectiveness of solar power does not stand scrutiny in that they suggest the solar array would produce on average 30% of their rated output where in reality they produce around 11% simply because of other factors outside their control i.e. weather and annual yearly cycle. We are led to believe they are referring to the panel performance based on a sunny day in mid-year when we have better weather and longer days, unlike mid-December. The added factor to this is that the energy demand is greatest when the panels produce the least if any, and as the battery storage of any energy is only good for approximately 2 hours, by the time of peak demand, 6pm, the batteries are likely to be flat.

Looking at the National Grid ESO web site, even there they only attribute 4.4% to Solar supply and as mentioned already this site shows the demand on the grid at different times and in mid-June at 4am the demand was 15GW whereas in Mid-December at 5pm the demand was 46GW and this is when the solar farms produce the least.

Are these developers just looking for an easy option with sighting these solar farms in close proximity to each other with the overarching comment that they are here because of access to the grid. As we well know, as is evidenced by the number of wind farms out at sea, that access to the grid can effectively be made from any number of locations,

including Europe, what it would require is the developers actively looking for sites spread further afield and laying the necessary infrastructure to connect. Would the fact that this adds cost to the project making it less attractive. It would be prudent to mention here that the developers of the first farms are just that, they are not the builders and if they secure planning they will be offering this to the market so any added costs that could be negated, i.e. extra cabling to connect to the grid would be a disincentive, something the developers want to avoid.

### **Energy Mix**

It is abundantly clear that keeping the lights on is not going to happen using solar power alone even if the technology to put an array in space where there is 24hr sun was a serious option. It is evident that we are going to need other forms of energy production and Solar power is at the bottom of the list for cost efficiency and reliability, with wind farms also offering an unreliable source again due to the weather.

The energy mix is going to have to include other forms of 'on tap' energy supply such as Hydro, Nuclear even fossil fuels (Gas, Oil and Diesel).

The proposed solar projects make no attempt to match the power produced to when it is needed basically because even with the large-scale batteries these can only store energy for a few hours which means that solar farms and their storage parks take up an immense amount of land whilst providing a limited contribution to the electricity system, and therefore represent an inefficient use of land.

### **Land**

The scale of the 4 solar farms is in the region of 10,000 acres of agricultural land and a lot of conversations have gone on about the grade of the land and that it is sub-standard for crops. Another solar farm project in the area has been shelved due to the land being incorrectly categorized.

Perhaps scrutiny of these Agricultural Land Classification results might well find that the proposed land falls into both DEFRA 3a & 3b classifications, we are also aware that DEFRA may be reclassifying 3b agricultural land to bring it under the 'reserved for food production' umbrella although getting accurate information is a challenge. As you will appreciate the cost of getting an 'independent' ALC for the land could well be quite expensive considering the area within these proposals and we have been given an estimate of £70K a figure likely to be out of the reach of these communities.

### **Regional Issues:**

As a Parish council we are concerned that the combined impact of these 4 Solar Farms will have a detrimental effect in several areas which would likely be irreversible for decades after these projects have served their purpose.

**Food & Farming:** Using arable land for solar energy will displace the production of existing crops, food, animal feed and energy crops. It makes no sense, from an environmental perspective, to cease farming here and import more crops.

**Employment:** Solar Farms will destroy agricultural jobs, skills and livelihoods and create few new skilled jobs to replace them. It is more than likely there will be a net reduction in employment and employment opportunities particularly in relation to seasonal work demands and this in an area with relatively few opportunities.

In addition to there being no economic benefit to the communities affected consideration should also be given to those Tenant farmers who may have no say in whether parts of their farm are made over to Solar. This may make the remaining farm less viable, so even if they are being subsidized for this loss it will still result in under active farmers deciding to leave the industry or go elsewhere.

**Wildlife & Habitat:** No matter what the precautions and assurances, it will not be possible to deliver and install millions of solar panels, pour thousands of tonnes of concrete, as well as installing containers with batteries and switchgear, all surrounded by miles of fencing, without damaging habitat. Solar Farms of the magnitude being proposed (2000MW) only exist in countries that have vast open spaces coupled with high sunlight levels in areas of low population density. They are not situated around several small communities.

The installation of high fencing covering 10,000 acres is going to impact virtually every aspect of the countryside for both the wildlife movement and inhabitants who live, work, and visit the area. Details of which foot paths and bridleways affected have yet to be identified

**Visual:** The cumulative scale of the development is unprecedented, and the impact of such a development is unknown around communities, if these solar farms were to proceed then the implication is that the communities and habitat are irrelevant. The development would change the character and nature of the areas for over 50 years and in a time when the mental health and wellbeing of people is under the microscope, the introduction of such a seismic change needs extensive consultation and investigation.

**Disturbance during Construction:** Rural communities are underrepresented in the wider scheme due to the relatively low population, and one of the main visual impacts is the state of our rural road network. These have been neglected for over a decade and potholes are not repaired properly but holes just have a dollop of tarmac drop in and the vehicle runs over it. This results in very uneven road with hole developing again regularly. The impact of the volume of traffic during both the construction and decommissioning phases, in terms of road safety, noise, disruption, damage to an already damaged road system is of concern to all who live in the area. The roads already show they are inadequate for the farming and other regular traffic which would need to be completely rebuilt placing a huge burden on the local communities.

**Connecting to the Grid:** These four proposed solar farms spread over 10,000 acres and consisting of 10 separate sections will each need to be connected to the grid resulting in extensive civil works causing further ecological disruption and damage the surrounding area. The proposed enormous 500MW battery storage area at Willingham by Stow will be potential fire risk as evidenced by the fire at a small 20MW battery unit in Liverpool that took 59hrs to extinguish.

To conclude, our position is clear, the community is against the proposed large-scale solar farm developments because of their limited contribution to decarbonization and the adverse consequences arising from using productive farm land in this way.

Yours Sincerely

Ron Gore  
Chairman  
Kexby Parish Council  
West Lindsey District