

7000Acres

Summary of Relevant Representations

July 2023

Introduction

7000Acres represents a large number of local residents concerned about the impact of the Gate Burton NSIP and three other solar NSIPs in the locality. During our Relevant Representation we raised 50 concerns over the Gate Burton Energy Park (GBEP) and three closely located solar NSIPs.

Fifty Major Issues

This is a summary of our 50 issues.

1. Overall, the limited energy security and decarbonisation benefits the Gate Burton Energy Park claims to achieve are outweighed by the significant adverse impacts it would have on the region (its communities, ways of life, landscape and its wildlife) and on the nation (in particular pressure on land use and food security). 7000Acres are a group of volunteers seeking to address the fact that our community faces development of solar farms on an unprecedented scale in our region.
2. Public Consultation was insufficient/inadequate. Information was lacking and misleading. Those affected were unable to gain understanding of the proposals.
3. The proposed GBEP would have a significant impact on visual amenity. The combined effect of four large solar farms in one area of Lincolnshire would be overwhelming.
4. GBEP has the potential to have a significant detrimental impact on the general health and wellbeing of residents (rural mental health is a particularly important issue locally), depriving access to visual amenity, changing views, destroying agricultural jobs and livelihoods.
5. GBEP fails to describe how proposed development could mitigate the harm through loss of employment and livelihoods caused by the development or remedy the underlying socio-economic situation.
6. All local Parish Councils and Meetings that have expressed a view to date are opposed to the proposed developments.
7. GBEP will provide power to the National Grid rather than local homes. It will displace agricultural jobs, provide few employment opportunities, and reduce local amenity.
8. Small villages surrounded by GBEP have few opportunities for employment and very few amenities other than the open countryside landscape that it sits in. The scale of the GBEP would rob villages of this key attribute and erode the attractiveness of villages, therefore reducing their capacity to sustain communities and populations.
9. The development proposed for the GBEP are, in terms of size, an order of magnitude larger than any of the surrounding villages.

10. GBEP proposes solar panels which would have a height of 3.5m as well as extensive security fencing. At that height, the character of the land would undoubtedly be dominated by solar panels, which could not be adequately screened.
11. The impact of the proposed scheme to heritage and such cultural assets has not been adequately explored or mitigated.
12. The GBEP does not adequately consider the impact of traffic through rural routes and villages and the potential for disruption, damage, and noise.
13. UK Food Security has not been considered, particularly in light of the circumstances of war, pandemic, crop disease and global warming on national and global supply chains.
14. The overall sustainability impact of displacing this production has not been considered (what production will be lost and the additional food miles and carbon impact of production being required elsewhere).
15. GBEP does not provide a thorough assessment of the potential harm to the ecology and biodiversity of the area.
16. 60-70 year nature of the schemes is not temporary.
17. The project design fails to consider or mitigate the impact of the large area of GBEP, which dwarfs surrounding villages.
18. Development at the scale of the GBEP would alter the character and appeal of the region to attract visitors, tourists, or new people to the region.
19. The direct impact of GBEP on leisure and recreation have not been adequately considered.
20. The four NSIP solar projects should be considered together by the Planning Inspectorate, i.e. Cottam Solar Project, West Burton Solar Project, Gate Burton Energy and Tillbridge solar.
21. The project does not consider the detailed work by communities in developing approved neighbourhood plans.
22. There is no clear case for extensive displacement of farmland through the installation of large-scale ground-mounted solar farms.
23. The proposed project has failed to follow the requirements of the current and draft National Policy Statements.
24. GBEP represents a grossly inefficient use of land in the face of ever-increasing pressures on its use.
25. Given the margin for potential changes, it is imperative that there is an independent soil analysis conducted to establish the accurate picture and to be certain of the methodology that has been followed.
26. The proposed project fails in that reasonable alternatives have not been adequately considered.

27. It is a misuse of the NSIP process to develop the project in this way.
28. GBEP does not meet the necessarily high threshold to allow compulsory purchase.
29. Supporting information provided by GBEP is partial and fails to objectively consider all aspects and implications of the development.
30. Combined impact of solar on the region would be disproportionate.
31. Limited benefits of solar (load factor & timing). Solar produces power when least needed and none at peak times.
32. There is no clear case for uncontrolled development of large scale, ground-mounted solar farms.
33. Uncontrolled development of large-scale solar farms has the potential to limit the contribution of solar to carbon reduction policy.
34. The claimed economic benefit of solar on energy prices is marginal.
35. Claiming to be able to power homes with solar and batteries at low cost is misleading.
36. Claims of community benefit are exaggerated or misleading.
37. Connecting solar directly to 400kV represents an inefficient use of strategic national infrastructure.
38. There is no requirement to connect solar direct to the National Grid.
39. Congestion in National Grid connection applications process means that the likely connection date for GBEP is July 2030, not Q1 2028.
40. GBEP constitutes a grossly inefficient use of land.
41. The developer has not made adequate consideration of the impact of Electro Magnetic Fields.
42. Information available relating to flood management, drainage and soil erosion are inadequate.
43. GBEP have failed to explain how Biodiversity Net Gain would be achieved, nor is it clear what methodology or assumptions lie behind the assertion.
44. Batteries operate in a separate segment of the electricity market; the proposed energy storage system cannot be considered “associated development”.
45. The safety and environmental concerns arising from battery development at this scale have not been appropriately considered, including through operation and transportation.
46. The impact of glint and glare on aviation (e.g. RAF, airfields, gliding clubs), or other outdoor activities (e.g. horse riding, hunts) has not been thoroughly considered, as well as visibility from prominent roads.
47. It is unclear from the information provided by GBEP what noise pollution will arise from the proposed development, either from electrical equipment (e.g. battery and inverter fans), or from wind noise / resonance from the configuration of large panel structures.

48. GBEP documentation provides little detail on the arrangements for decommissioning and recycling, nor the standards to which the developer would be held to at the end of the life of the project.

49. It is evident from Financial Returns that neither GBEP nor its parent company Low Carbon Ltd have direct capital to support the estimated funds to develop the project or deal with the decommissioning.

50. Any materials sourced by GBEP for the development should be truly sustainable, e.g. free of forced labour, where workers' safety is paramount, and where the full environmental implications are understood.

We will address these issues in our Written Representations. We are sure other important issues will emerge as the full details of this scheme are extracted from the Applicant.