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# Gate Burton Energy Park

## Summary of Written Representation

EN-010131

West Lindsey District Council (GABE-ISP002)

August 2023

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# Summary

- 1.1. This document summarizes West Lindsey District Council's (WLDC) Written Representation (WR) regarding the Gate Burton Energy Park application.

## Decision Making and Policy Framework

- 1.2. WLDC outlined the legislative context, emphasizing the application's scope under Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) and its determination through section 105 due to solar projects' exclusion from relevant National Policy Statements (NPS). Concerns were raised regarding landscape, socio-economic, construction traffic, ecology, water, and air quality aspects.
- 1.3. Local and national planning policies, including the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, neighbourhood plans, NPSs, NPPF, and energy-related strategies were summarised.

## Key issues

### Approach to site selection and alternatives

- 1.4. The applicant's 'Outline Design Principles' document outlines detailed design guidelines for the solar scheme, aligning with a draft Development Consent Order requirement. It summarizes the scheme, lists control documents, and outlines design principles for each element. The 4-stage site selection method, approved by WLDC, prioritizes National Grid proximity, minimal cable length, and landscape continuity. Criticisms include missing stage 4 assessments, contradictions, prime land use, landscape impact, and inadequate cumulative transport impact assessment during construction.

### Impact on Communities

- 1.5. The proposed scheme's construction and operation will harm West Lindsey's interconnected communities and settlement character. Agriculture-driven traditions and limited pathways necessitate road use for daily activities.
- 1.6. The 60-year scheme, involving PV panel replacements, threatens ongoing disturbances, affecting residents in the culturally significant area.

### Construction and operational traffic

- 1.7. Construction and operational traffic from the proposed scheme will significantly disrupt local communities, causing adverse effects on daily life. Increased HGV and AIL traffic, along with traffic control measures, will extend travel times in the district. The surge in construction traffic on rural roads will worsen road safety perceptions, discouraging recreational road use. Noise and air quality decline will reduce living standards for over 5 years, negatively impacting community well-being. Accommodation and services will be strained due to the construction period exceeding 5 years, deterring visitors and affecting local businesses and property values.

### Main Site

- 1.8. WLDC understand the reasoning behind the general location of the proposed application; however, WLDC maintain the objection and concerns set out below.

### Landscape and visual impact

- 1.9. The Gate Burton scheme will significantly alter the landscape, its agricultural essence, and visual appeal, posing long-lasting impacts that challenge claims of reversibility. The scheme's impact on the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) raises concerns about irreversible changes, affecting communities and visitors, and potentially lasting

generations. Dismissing impacts as temporary for a 60-year consent period is questionable as the enduring presence of the solar farm landscape could hinder a complete return to the district's original agricultural and cultural character, casting doubt on claims of reversibility.

#### Impact on best and most versatile land / agriculture

- 1.10. WLDC criticizes the applicant's soil and BMV impact assessment methods, emphasizing low borehole density's impact on soil detail and ALC assessment. PINS' ALC survey request was ignored. Separating grade 3a land from assessment, neglecting socio-economic impacts, and conflicting with Policy S67 raise concerns. Flawed assessment prompts WLDC's objection for resolution before decision-making.

#### Transport and access

- 1.11. WLDC acknowledges construction-phase traffic impacts and emphasizes the need for careful control to ensure highway safety and community well-being. The LIR notes ES traffic and transport deficiencies, hoping for clarification during the examination. Key traffic concerns include unnecessary secondary accesses, cumulative impacts from multiple projects, and disruption to communities due to narrow rural road use. WLDC objects to the project based on these transport issues.

#### Tourism

- 1.12. Gate Burton scheme's construction disruption, landscape alteration, and accommodation shortage could hinder tourism recovery. The 5-year construction impact and long-term landscape changes threaten tourism. WLDC expresses concern about the project's negative tourism effects, advocating consideration in planning decisions.

#### Cable Corridor

- 1.13. WLDC consider the identified cable corridor to the south of Marton as an area that will experience significant impacts during the construction phase.

#### Traffic and highways

- 1.14. WLDC urges assessment of cumulative construction traffic impact under relevant policies. Impacts vary over 5-7 years from concurrent or sequential projects. Inadequate details in ES and control plans hinder mitigation understanding, requesting improved coordination, including a traffic coordinator, for concurrent projects. Uncalibrated effects on communities, strategic roads, and the cable corridor are concerning, particularly in Marton.

#### Noise and vibration

- 1.15. WLDC stresses control of vehicle movement and construction over a prolonged period, suggesting a coordination mechanism in control documents like CEMP/CTMP. This would manage impacts, traffic, and site activities, helping communities function while minimizing disruptions and enabling effective communication with WLDC.

#### West Lindsey – Cumulative Impacts

- 1.16. WLDC raises concerns about cumulative impacts from multiple proposed solar NSIP projects in the district. Despite individual examination, their combined effects cannot be ignored. Gate Burton's impact on tenant farmers and tourism is significant, potentially affecting employment and visitor attraction. WLDC objects strongly to the adverse landscape transformation, questioning project claims of reversibility due to the lengthy 60-year consent period. Cumulative traffic impacts and their long-term nature are of great concern, necessitating careful consideration. WLDC objects based on cumulative impacts but commits to exploring solutions. Detailed control mechanisms must be established during the examination phase for informed decision-making.

## The draft Development Consent Order

### Article 46 – Schedule 16

- 1.17. WLDC objects to Schedule 16 provisions, advocating a 16-week approval period for EIA development due to complexity. They contest deemed approval's efficiency claim, citing Schedule 16's distinct nature. WLDC objects to 10-day information requests and seeks reinstating omitted fee provision with reasonable timeframes, emphasizing proper process.

### Planning balance

- 1.18. WLDC acknowledges the national need for electricity generation and decarbonization but requires further assessment and justification for certain aspects of the Scheme. Solar projects lack a relevant NPS and its benefits, requiring careful consideration of climate, grid capacity, and the loss of agricultural land's impact on West Lindsey's character and economy. WLDC deems the proposal's harm to economy, communities, and landscape irreparable. Matters raised necessitate additional information; without it, WLDC maintains its objection, asserting that disbenefits outweigh benefits as per section 105 of PA2008.

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