

Notes from Accompanied Site Inspection, 25/08/2023

On the morning of the 25th August, the Accompanied Site Inspection was an opportunity to see the location of the proposed Gate Burton Energy Park in reality.

On a beautiful, late-summer morning, the group toured the planned route, which superbly demonstrated the “expansive landscape, characterised by long views and dramatic skies”*, as evidenced by the photographs below. It was possible to look over fields from the proposed BESS site, across to the village of Willingham on Stow. Looking south-east towards Lincoln, it was possible to see Lincoln Cathedral, over 10 miles away (see final picture).



*Description taken from the West Lindsey Landscape Character Assessment.



Within the first session of Issue Specific Hearing No. 3 (Environmental Matters), covering Character and Visual Amenity, the Applicant's specialist attempted to describe the existing landscape as "industrialised" in nature, and that long, open views would not be compromised by the installation of either 3.5m high solar panels, or by screening panels with hedgerows of a similar height.

7000 Acres attempted to seek clarification as to how an open view could remain unaffected by 3.5m panels or hedgerows. In theory, this should have been the ideal opportunity to explain the rationale, but the Applicant's specialist stated that they didn't feel able to answer the question, and referred instead to the Environmental Statement.

We were left with the impression that the description provided in the hearing, that long views would be retained, could not be justified in reality by the Applicant.

During the walk, the Applicant's specialist was also asked about their use of the phrase "industrialised" to describe the region, to which he referred to the Cottam and West Burton Power Stations, which are undeniably a feature of the region, and were therefore an industrialised element of the landscape – which we pointed out was not explicit within the hearing itself.

Overall, it was a very pleasant walk, within a traditional farming environment, with fields – some harvested, some not, with mature hedgerows, and huge Lincolnshire skies. In short it was an experience that would be ruined by the installation of 3.5m high solar panels at such a vast scale.