

From: [Neil McBride](#)
To: [Gate Burton Solar Project](#)
Cc: [Eloise Shieber](#)
Subject: Examiners Second Round of Questions deadline 4
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Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Good morning,

The Council submitted its response to the examiners second round of questions on 3rd October but the response to Q2.12.2 on Best and Most Versatile land was not available at that time. The Council's response is now set out below.

“This very issue was discussed in the public inquiry on 3rd October at Uttlesford District Council, for a solar scheme and the restoration potential of the land back to a similar ALC condition to that existed before the development takes place.

If any soil stripping work is done in line with the Soil Management Plan (SMP) and properly supervised by a suitably qualified person, then temporary soil stripping for laying cables should be fine. Long term storage of topsoil adjacent to induction and transformer sites or the tracks, it is less certain that the soil will be able to be returned to the same grade of land after 60 years.

The consensus forming is that towards the end of the life of the project a suitably qualified and independent soil scientist/agricultural officer needs to prepare/review the plan for the re-instatement and particularly review the soil management plan at that time, say year 58/9 just before decommissioning to update any procedures in the light of changes in policy, law and scientific ‘progress’.

Soil testing would be necessary to ensure that subsoil and topsoil are not mixed or unnecessarily disturbed. And any restoration should be signed off having been ALC tested (if necessary). Of course things will change going forward, policy, procedures and energy matters as well as soil priorities, but as things stand today it is possible. It should be captured by an appropriately worded requirement and possibly by Section 106 Agreement to provide a level of certainty that this will be done.

So long as this happens and is properly supervised then the SMP should work.

However, whether the land will return to the same quality is still an open question, in part because nobody knows. No largescale solar projects have been decommissioned in the UK. Again, the consensus is that it is possible, but not guaranteed. This is based on project such as quarries where topsoils are stripped and then later used/re-used in the restoration/aftercare, but it has been evident on some sites that this has failed in the past.

Things have improved in recent years and the solar companies are better equipped.”

Kind regards

Neil McBride
Head of Planning

Lincolnshire County Council,

County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

