Submission ID: 25195

With respect to good design, the Gate Burton development utilises a large quantity of land but does so in a way that is insensitive to the surrounding environment. The proposed development is placed within a landscape that is currently used primarily for arable agriculture and the character of the landscape would be fundamentally altered if the proposed development was built. The proposal does little to ameliorate the impact of placing an industrial power generation plant within this environment.
Indeed, the industrialisation of this rural landscape, utilising large solar panels and associated infrastructure, are so damaging to the nature of the environment that the proposed development should not be allowed to proceed because these clearly outweigh the benefits of the scheme.
There are alternative sites for solar panels but it is impossible to replace the productive food producing land that would be consumed by the Gate Burton proposal. It is perfectly feasible to place solar panels on the rooftops of industrial buildings, car parks and newbuild houses. Lincolnshire also has a plethora of brownfield sites that could be used to site solar panels, including disused power stations and airfields.
The emerging National Policy Statement (EN3) sets the expectation that a ‘typical’ solar farm would be circa 50 MW and 125-200 acres. This is around ten times smaller than the proposed Gate Burton project. The proposed project is well beyond the scale envisaged by the policy makers and perhaps it should be scaled back to fit the expectations of the policy?
In the emerging National Policy Statement EN3 there is an implied pecking order in the land that should be used for ground-mounted solar and it is clear that applicants should where possible, “utilise previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land”, and that “the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary”. Agricultural land should only be used after all other land classes have been explored. As stated above, the Gate Burton project could be sited elsewhere but the developers have eschewed these opportunities.
The applicant has not demonstrated that the use of agricultural land on this scale in necessary. Solar generates power at times when there is typically limited demand for electricity (sunny periods and most effectively in the summer months when power requirements are low). Solar farms on this scale cannot fill the gaps in the energy mix required to meet the country’s net zero commitments. What is required is a blend of energy technology solutions of appropriate scale and placement. Gate Burton, as proposed, is not the right solution and attaching a significant Battery Storage capability on the side of the project is a poor attempt to make it fit the criteria. From a commercial point of view, it is clear that the project will not work without the Battery Storage, whilst the Battery Storage could be powered by any form of generation capability – perhaps the Gate Burton project should be evaluated on the basis of it being a Battery Storage plant that is charged by solar arrays when less land could be used if it was charged by another means?