

GATE BURTON SOLAR – DEADLINE 7 – 4 JANUARY 2024

Gate Burton does not offer a sustainable future. It is oversized, incompatible with its surroundings and of little local community benefit. Lincoln / Lincolnshire and its communities are set to be devastated by this/these projects. There are now 13 NSIP solar schemes either with the Inspectorate, are coming forward or are at the Consultation stage in Lincolnshire that will cover thousands upon thousands of acres of farmland. The Inspectorate is urged to reject the Gate Burton Solar application.

The desire to cumulatively industrialise 10,000 acres of countryside not only in respect of Gate Burton Solar but Cottam Solar, West Burton Solar and Tillbridge Solar projects for financial gain when there are clearly better energy alternatives is difficult to comprehend and invokes scepticism on this / these project's statement of purpose. Given the reported performance of UK offshore wind (and the potential of onshore wind) in line with current strategic planning policy, there is no sound or science based planning reason for this project to be approved.

Alternatives are available. The success of offshore wind to date supported by the current growth rate in rooftop solar means that the UK is projected to be self-sufficient and actually able to export energy by the year 2030. This alone challenges the need to cover farmland and greenfield sites with huge solar installations. There are innumerable places for solar schemes such as motorway central reservations, supermarket car parks, brownfield land (Ministry of Defence bases) and then there are floating solar schemes – we are an island surrounded by water. We do not have finite land yet we have a growing population.

Understanding Lincoln and Lincolnshire as a tourist destination is paramount in any planning deliberation with significant countryside impact. Tourism along with agriculture lies at the heart of Lincoln and Lincolnshire's economy. The visual impact of 4.5metre high solar panels and all associated paraphernalia will destroy the area. The affected communities and their village histories are tourist areas. This project will not enhance the area in any way at all. It will detract from it.

Food security is important. We are at risk of endangering swathes of valuable agricultural land at a time when severe economic hardship and a war in Europe highlight the value of home grown food. The loss of agricultural land is insupportable and the loss of food production. It is expected that the Inspectorate will not support the loss of farms and green space at such a critical time for the food supply chain. Such a decision would defy logic.

Flooding across England's farmland during the Autumn and Winter of 2023 and January 2024 where crops have been ruined with the resultant shortage of food that will occur in 2024 is further warning of the importance of protecting grades 3, 3a and 3b agricultural land from industrial scale solar schemes of this nature.

Foreign investment seems to be a significant force in the market with little evidence of long term commitment to the UK. The community benefit offered to supporting communities touted by some of these investors does not stand up to scrutiny and is frequently not transparent. There is, therefore, considerable and understandable public opposition to such a massive proposal. Most of those consulted have taken the view that this is not a potentially valuable contribution to the country's future energy needs but in fact a 'get rich quick' project for foreign investors. The Inspectorate must be aware of this.

Persistent and excessive over use of the words 'may', 'anticipated' and 'could' throughout all aspects of the Applicant's literature and documentation submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, even at this stage in the examination process, continues to denote that the Applicant, Low Carbon's mitigation statements, cannot be wholly relied upon. The Applicant has been particularly reticent and economic with so many aspects of this proposed solar scheme and questions have either not been answered or answers have been vague / inaccurate and / or misleading from the outset.

An Example: Gate Burton Energy Park Consultation Information Booklet January 2022 , *Quote*: The project is anticipated as having generation capacity of around 500 megawatts (MW). This is equivalent to providing enough clean energy to power over 160,000 homes and to avoid more than 100,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions

every year. *Unquote.* The Applicant has patently misled the public as to the achievable output of power by deliberately over-estimating the number of homes that could be powered & carbon tonnage saved. On average solar can only deliver 11% of its stated output in the UK and nothing in the depths of winter when needed most.

The risks of Low Carbon's proposals very much outweigh the hypothesised/speculated benefits put forward by them – we do not wish to lose the beauty and tranquillity of the Countryside.

The Gate Burton Scheme proposal will detrimentally affect Mental Health and Wellbeing, will detrimentally affect Biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain, it will detrimentally affect Landscape and Visual Effects, it proposes to infringe the use of Public Footpaths/Public Rights of Ways (PROW's) and so much more.

People are moved by nature, they are moved by flora and fauna, the clouds changing and the weather. It changes their whole feeling and they can feel immense happiness and also immense melancholy but it fills them with hope and gives them a spring in their step. People go for answers when walking in the wide open countryside.

I will finish with this poem : -

Deep in the wood where the Bluebells grow
Next to them the wild garlic will show
An old oak creeks with a century of age
With brand new shoots and the daylight they crave
A crystal clear brook where the Sticklebacks nest
Flows into a stream where the bull rushes rest
The Swifts swoop down like dive bombing planes
In a field of mown hay set in country lanes
In the distance a Wood Pigeon coos
And the rest of the birds also voice their views
Beneath this cloud free clear blue sky
Hear the distinctive sound of a Pheasant cry
As dusk sets in with moon rising higher
Far away glows a farmers pyre
Soon to come the majestic Bat
Skilfully collecting Moth and Gnat
These are the delights that the countryside brings
Peaceful bliss as the Nightjar sings

Thank you for this final opportunity to submit opinion and evidence.

P A Mitchell

January 2024.