

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Gate Burton Solar Project](#)
Subject: Submission for deadline 7
Date: 04 January 2024 16:32:49

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Dear Sir

I would have loaded this submission via the Portal but the service is unavailable.

My Interested Party Reference Number is **20036670**

The emerging policy document (EN3) states that a typical solar farm will be 250 acres and Gate Burton is circa 10 times that size. Indeed if all of the proposed solar farms around Gainsborough were of a typical size, put together they would be they would half the size of that proposed in the Gate Burton proposal. I think that the inspectorate should pause and think of that fact. Indeed each of the proposals is circa 10 times the size of a typical solar farm as envisaged in the emerging policy document. I understand that Gate Burton is a separate proposal but the cumulative impact upon our community of all the proposals should not be ignored. It is clear that scale of the Gate Burton proposal is beyond anything envisaged in the policy document.

The land included within the Gate Burton proposal is mainly productive arable farm land that is used to grow crops. Representatives of Gate Burton Energy have tried to minimise the significance of this but it is an issue in times where food security in the UK is of national concern. The UK imports too much food and is susceptible to fluctuations in the availability of commodities such as wheat, which is one of the main crops in the local area. The war in Ukraine has highlighted the fragility of the supply chain in recent times.

The proposal states that the development would be good for the environment and includes specific bird species within that statement. Research commissioned by the RSPB <https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/science/posts/bird-use-on-solar-farms-final-results> has the following conclusion:

“Conclusion and recommendations

There is huge potential for solar farms to replace the grassland lost due to the intensification of farming in the later part of the twentieth century. Solar farms have demonstrated their value in the farmed landscape with little evidence to suggest that solar farms are having a negative impact on farmland birds. While it is positive that birds are using solar farms at a similar level to arable, pasture and meadows. Changes to management such as mowing later in the year and leaving margins to set seed where possible would benefit both stakeholders and nature.

Solar farms provide an opportunity for the long-term existence of land in which wildlife can thrive, which could go a long way to help slow the rate of decline of farmland birds.

However, it must be remembered that the primary function of the solar farm is to produce low carbon electricity, rather than being nature reserves. Consequently, management to increase a sites biodiversity value could increase costs by encouraging large flocks of birds to nest in and forage within the site. Solar farms need careful management to ensure that the fragile state of our farmland birds is not made worse and with the suitable management systems in place for each site and, with time solar farms can be a place in which both its value to biodiversity is increased and management costs are reduced.”

It is clear from reading the report that the way that a solar farm is managed has a significant impact upon the diversity of bird life and that there is the potential for benefits, the report found that birds using solar farms are at a similar level to arable, pasture and meadows. Indeed, if the development of the solar farm removes hedging, trees and other valuable resources used by birds, there will likely be a detriment to bird life. The benefits stated in the proposal need to be reviewed with care.

There is an impact on mental health with the Gate Burton proposal. The level of public interest makes it clear that people are anxious about the plans and the impact that they would have upon future quality of life. One simple example is the change of the nature of the land from a primarily agricultural landscape to an industrial one. Again representatives of Gate Burton Energy have tried to minimise this by referencing the cooling towers that sit in a few locations along the Trent. However, these are extremely localised and do not impinge upon thousands of acres of land that are visible from so many places. Another example would be the impact of construction upon the community. The increase in HGV traffic, site workers commuting etc. The noise not only of the building works but also from the operation and maintenance of the solar farm. Roads in the area are already in a state of disrepair and increased traffic is most likely to have a negative impact upon this.

Gate Burton Energy Park is but one of several solar farm proposals in the local area, amounting to over 10,000 acres. The companies submitting these proposals have shared resources and have common elements to their proposals and yet they are being considered separately by the NSIP process. That does not seem equitable. The cumulative effect of the number of proposals upon the local population who wish to comment is significant because the work involved in keeping abreast of each, at its different stages and being available to submit comments is significant. We aren't experts in planning processes, planning laws or schooled in how to phrase things to gain maximum impact. Whilst we are learning as the process unfolds, we don't have a single resource attending all briefings in the same way that the various companies does (via their shared legal representation).

Lincolnshire has an abundance of brownfield sites that could be hosting solar farms, these include disused airfields and old power stations. The developers have not proposed utilising these when their use would undoubtedly be less disruptive to the local communities. Have they been discounted too quickly and easily? There is also an abundance of commercial roof space and developed land (such as car parks) that could house solar farms but again these have not been proposed by developers. A company that recently built a factory in the Lincoln area wanted to put solar panels on the roof but were turned away by the electricity industry. Alternative sites are available but the fact is that the developers have not selected them due to their preference for farm land.

Sir Edward Leigh pointed out that the planning legislation being used to consider this (and other) proposals was not intended for projects of this type. Allowing the developers to take this route bypasses the local planning authorities, none of whom support this proposal.

My final point is that solar is an inefficient way to generate electricity. This might be why the emerging policy states that a typical site would be 250 acres? Taking significant areas of productive farmland out of use is not an efficient trade. Solar produces peak power when it is not generally required and therefore the proposal includes a significant battery storage mechanism. These batteries are a health hazard, especially in the event of a fire when noxious chemicals would be released into the atmosphere. I understand that fighting battery fires is difficult and that they have resulted in the loss of recycling plants in the past (one example is the recycling Mountain plant near Grantham).

Kind regards
David Swayne