

## Stage Two Statutory Consultation – 22 Jun to 05 Aug 2022

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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#### **Q: Why is Gate Burton Energy Park needed?**

A: The transition to a low carbon energy system is necessary to avoid the effects of climate change. The UK's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 was enshrined by law in June 2019 – the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050.

However as the publication of the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) annual report in June 2021 made clear, while the climate promises UK Government's has made deserve credit, it has been slow to follow through with delivery and our journey to net zero is not yet half completed.

This is a decisive decade for tackling climate emergency. More renewable energy is needed to fast-track the transition away from fossil fuel electricity generation, with onshore and offshore wind and solar providing some of the key building blocks of the future generation mix. The recently published Energy Security Strategy detailed the aim to increase the UK's solar capacity five-fold by 2035 – equivalent to around 70GW total generation capacity.

With an anticipated generation capacity of 500 megawatts (MW) Gate Burton Energy Park would make a significant contribution towards achieving net zero; providing utility-scale clean energy to National Grid's electricity transmission system to power more than 160,000 homes and avoid more than 100,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions every year.

#### **Q: Why has Low Carbon chosen this location at Gate Burton?**

A: We consider a range of factors when evaluating land available to deliver a utility-scale clean energy scheme, including planning and environmental factors including existing use and quality of land, and well as any designations and constraints. However one of the factors ultimately informing site choice when looking at potential locations for new utility-scale solar development is available capacity on the national grid.

In the instance of Gate Burton Energy Park, the decommissioning of Cottam and West Burton coal-fired power stations means there is capacity available on the grid network to accommodate new energy developments connecting in. By utilising existing electricity infrastructure rather than build new this also means we can reduce the potential impacts of the solar energy park.

#### **Q: What is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)?**

A: Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects otherwise known as NSIPs are large scale projects over a certain size which means they are considered by the Government to be nationally important. Permission to build them therefore needs to be determined at a national level – namely by the responsible Government Minister ('Secretary of State').

Instead of applying to a local planning authority for planning permission, when seeking consent for an NSIP the developer needs to apply to the Planning Inspectorate a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the final scheme. The process for applying for a DCO is set out in the Planning Act 2008.

The anticipated generation capacity of Gate Burton Energy Park is 500MW, more than the 50MW threshold set out in the Planning Act 2008 which means it is regarded as an NSIP.

For projects with an installed capacity of 50MW or less, a developer is required to apply for planning permission for the relevant local planning authority (LPA) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

In the case of energy related projects the Planning Inspectorate acts on behalf of the Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). It will carry out an examination of the application for development consent and then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State on whether or not to grant consent. The Secretary of State for BEIS will then make the final decision on whether to grant consent for the scheme.

You can find out more about the process of applying for a DCO on the National Infrastructure Planning website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/>

**Q: So what happens after this second stage of consultation?**

A: Before we can submit our application for development consent, the Planning Act 2008 requires that we conduct a statutory stage of consultation. The consultation we are carrying out from 22 June to 05 August 2022 is our statutory consultation on our proposals for Gate Burton Energy Park. It's likely to be the last time we consult on our proposals before we apply for consent.

When this second stage of consultation closes on 5 August 2022, we will review our proposals in light of all the feedback received along with the findings from our ongoing assessments, so we can finalise our detailed proposals for Gate Burton Energy Park. When we are happy that our proposals are read, we will then submit our application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate.

**Q: What is the timescale you are working on to deliver Gate Burton Energy Park?**

A: We anticipate that the development process through DCO submission and examination will take between two to three years.

We intend to submit our application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate in late 2022 / early 2023. Subject to consent being granted, construction would start no sooner than early 2025.

**Q. How long will Gate Burton Energy Park be in operation?**

A: Gate Burton Energy Park is expected to be operational for around 60 years, so permissions granting its consent will be temporary. When this time has lapsed, the land will revert to its original use for agricultural – the land will not be classified as having been previously developed.

If equipment is still operating successfully and safely it might be that we chose to operate beyond the original anticipated lifespan. However, any extension to the operational life of the project beyond 60 years would be dependent on new negotiations with landowners and new planning consent.

**Q. How will Gate Burton Energy Park affect local ecology and wildlife?**

A: From 2023, all developments including Gate Burton Energy Park will be required to demonstrate a net increase in biodiversity on site of at least ten per cent. We pride ourselves on going above and beyond this baseline requirement, and have pledged going forward, that all our new sites will deliver biodiversity net gain well in excess of ten per cent.

Independent evidence of biodiversity net gains on solar farms, using metrics provided by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, shows that solar farm biodiversity net gain can range from 20 per cent to over 100 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

While we aren't yet at a stage to have an exact estimate of the biodiversity net gain for Gate Burton Energy Park, we're currently averaging over 75 per cent biodiversity net gain across our other new sites.

**Q. How much of the land comprising the site on which Gate Burton Energy Park is proposed as being built will be taken out of productive agricultural use if the scheme goes ahead?**

A: There is always a balance to be found when new development comes forward, with many factors and impacts to consider. Due to its proposed location, Gate Burton Energy Park will utilise land that could be used for food production. However, the land take involved is minimal in the context of food production across Lincolnshire and allows clean energy to be generated at greater scale and efficiency than rooftop alternatives.

Solar farms provide valuable income for farmers, they can still be used for grazing, and they support UK farmers to continue food production on other parts of their land. The independent National Food Strategy Review shows that solar farms do not present a risk to the UK's food security.

For more information please refer to: <https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Briefing-Fact-Checker-1.pdf>.

**ENDS**

**If you have any questions or require further information, please contact us by:**

**Tel:** FREEPHONE 0800 860 6259

**Email:** [info@gateburtonenergypark.co.uk](mailto:info@gateburtonenergypark.co.uk)

**Post:** FREEPOST GATE BURTON ENERGY PARK

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<sup>1</sup> (<https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Briefing-Fact-Checker-1.pdf>).