

Pelham Solar – FAQs

Following the public exhibition held at Berden Village Hall on Monday 21 March and a number of emails with various questions, we have produced a Frequently Asked Questions document which seeks to address any points raised.

How can we trust Statera to deliver appropriate landscaping given the inadequate planting around the battery installation? A specialist landscape architect has been appointed to design the landscaping for this project and a dedicated site management team will be appointed to manage the landscaping when the site is operational. The Local Planning Authority will ensure compliance with any associated landscaping condition.

Where would the crops produced on this land now come from if the solar development were to be built? 72% of the site is grade 2 and 3a best and most versatile land. The remaining 28% of the site is 3b and poorer quality land. However, of this BMV area, certain areas will be fallow on a rotation basis. The land is not suitable for high value crops and has principally been used for cereal production. The land will contribute to the UK's energy generation and energy security. Its loss from food production will be balanced against this energy benefit. The Government is balancing multiple demands on farmland food, energy, and environmental schemes (see - Farming is Changing, DEFRA June 2021).

During construction which route would be used for the vehicles to gain access to the site, how many vehicle movements would there be and for what length of time? What size will the vehicles be? The current proposal is for the vehicles to travel west on the A120 up to Little Hadham, and through Clapgate and Patmore Heath on Albury Road. It is then proposed that the vehicles will turn onto Ginns Road and travel through Stocking Pelham before arriving at the site access point just before the entrance to Berden. The types of vehicles used in the construction traffic will include 15.4 metre artics, 10m tipper trucks, 10m rigid trucks, 12m rigid trucks and a front end JCB. On average there will be approximately 16 two-way movements per day.

What happens at the end of the scheme's operational life? It is a common misconception that once the life cycle of a solar farm comes to end, that the land becomes 'brownfield'. If planning permission is granted, it is temporary, usually between 25 and 40 years. The metal poles supporting the panels are driven into the ground, but the topsoil is not removed during construction or operation of the development. Once the planning permission term has lapsed, the land reverts to its original use, in this case agricultural. There is no obligation on the Local Authority to consider the land as previously developed.

How many solar developments have Statera Energy built to date and where are these sites situated? Statera has not developed any solar projects to date. However, the founders of the company and members of the project construction team have had extensive experience of developing and building solar projects in the UK since 2011.

What steps are you planning that will assure people that battery storage plants erected by your company will be safe and well screened from view? This application is for a solar development and not a battery storage facility. It is proposed that the solar development will be screened with hedging and trees.

Statera Energy has already built a battery storage facility at Pelham substation. Why has this facility not been adequately screened? The trees planted around the perimeter of the Pelham battery storage facility did not take and grow as expected having undertaken various maintenance visits. A solution to this is being considered internally at Statera.

Which company supplies solar panels to Statera Energy and what precautions have been taken to ensure there are no human rights issues in their production? Statera acknowledges the imperfect and complex nature of the global supply chain. The supplier of solar panels for this project will be determined at the procurement phase and is therefore yet to be decided.

What other locations did you consider? None. Statera Energy has selected this site on its merits alone and believes it is a good site to promote. There are no sites in the local area which are classed as grade 4 ALC or brownfield which would be commercially viable to promote that make use of the grid connection available.

Why have you chosen this location? The high irradiance levels in the area combined with the site's close proximity to the Pelham substation makes it suitable for a solar development. We think the site is well screened and its impact is lessened by the presence of the existing National Grid substation and overhead power lines.

How are the solar panels recycled at the end of their life? The industrial process by which solar panels are recycled differs depending on whether the panels are silicon-based or thin-film based. In both cases, the parts are separated, and components are re-used where possible.

How efficient is solar power? Generally, solar farms operate at a capacity factor in the range of 10-25%.

How many acres of solar panels would be required to produce the same output of electricity per annum as one offshore wind turbine? Offshore wind is a great solution which operates very effectively. A significant land take for solar is undoubtedly needed to match an offshore wind turbine. However, a system built primarily on renewable energy sources needs to incorporate a range of different technologies so that it is not overly dependent on a single intermittent resource (e.g. wind, solar or hydro). In this case, it is not always windy, and when the wind doesn't blow, the system needs other technologies like solar to fill the gap. In September-2021 for example, wind generation was at historically low levels. It was solar energy (as well as, amongst other sources, fossil fuel plant such as coal and gas that prevented the UK from experiencing service disruption (i.e. blackouts).

Farmers in the countryside protect their land, crops and livestock with well-tended mixed hedging. Why is it necessary to protect solar panels with high security fencing and CCTV cameras? (The farmland growing crops and livestock is likely to be of greater value than with solar panels) It is standard industry practice to install fencing and CCTV cameras around a solar farm. This helps to ensure the owner and operator of the scheme can monitor the site to protect the value of the equipment, ensure no damage is being done by larger mammals and the site is operating in a safe manner. Without this infrastructure the project will not to be financeable and/or insurable.

Who will be making the profit from the electricity generated? The development of energy assets is a commercial endeavour and therefore several parties including Statera, its investors, contractors and energy suppliers should make money from developing the solar farm. Government and the UK relies entirely on the private sector to develop and operate generation assets.

When will it be built? If consent was given the aim would be to build the scheme out the following year (i.e. Spring/summer 2023) this might slip to 2024. Winter construction would be avoided, if possible, but this is all subject to change.

How long will it take to build the site? A scheme of this size would typically take 4-6 months for summer construction and 6-9 months to build out in the winter.

Will it affect walkers access? No, if planning is granted legal public rights of way will not be moved or closed during construction or operation. Following feedback at the 21 March 2022 exhibition, we are also investigating the possibility of proposing additional public access routes as part of the proposals.

Will the project be noisy? No, there is a small noise from the inverters, but this is not expected to be a notable impact.