

Welcome

Welcome to our public consultation event

We are currently preparing a planning application for a new solar energy development on land at Tollgate Farm and are inviting feedback on our proposal

About Brockwell Energy

Brockwell Energy was formed in 2017 to raise investment capital to develop an £800 million portfolio of sustainable energy projects, predominantly in Scotland but also across England and Wales.

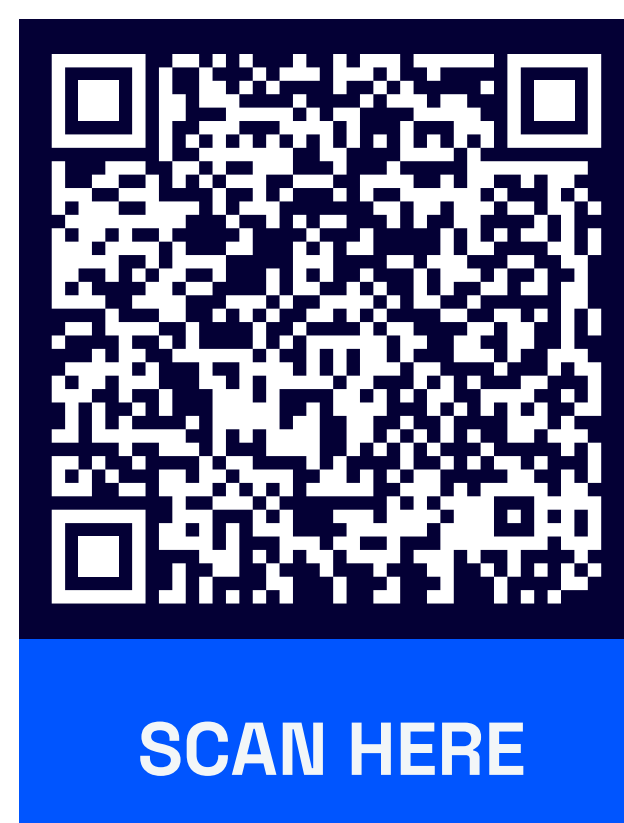
We are focused on a range of renewable energy technologies, including onshore wind, energy from waste, solar and battery storage.

The Brockwell Team are highly experienced and passionate about building the infrastructure that is needed for a net zero future.

We are looking to deliver a number of new solar farm developments in suitable locations across the country.

As an experienced developer, we specialise in finding suitable, cost-effective grid connection points and engaging with landowners to deliver sustainable infrastructure.

brockwellenergy.com/projects/tollgate-solar-farm/



SCAN HERE



The Site

Brockwell Energy is preparing plans for a new 16-megawatt (16MW) solar development, to be located on fields to the east of the A1(M), between the towns of Welham Green and Hatfield, within the area of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

The site has been identified following an extensive selection process which considers environmental designations, local electricity network access and capacity, the physical characteristics of the site and the need for a supportive landowner.

Proximity to the grid: The proposed development will connect to the grid via an existing 33kV pylon located a short distance to the west of the site, reducing the need for an extensive cable route or a disruptive construction period.

Distance from local residents: The proposed development is sited on fields between the towns of Hatfield and Welham Green. Bounded by the A1(M) to the west, it is also screened from view by mature vegetation around much of the perimeter and lies lower than much of the surrounding area, limiting the visual impact on local residents.

Access: An existing bridge over the motorway has been assessed for its suitability to act as a construction traffic access point. Use of this bridge, entering the site from the west, will mean that construction traffic can avoid driving through Welham Green or Hatfield, and also minimising any impact on Colney Heath to the west.

Once operational, Tollgate Solar Farm will generate 16 MW (megawatts) of clean, renewable energy for export into the national electricity system – powering thousands of homes and businesses both within Welwyn Hatfield and across the country.

The development of new renewable energy sources is a key component of the fight against climate change and will help to ensure our energy independence at a time of significant international uncertainty.



Our Proposals

Our plans for the Tollgate Farm solar development include the following elements:

- New solar panels and ancillary development spread across a site of approximately 22 hectares, capable of producing up to 16 megawatts (MW) of electricity;
- Inverters to convert the electricity from direct-current (DC) power to alternating-current (AC);
- A connection to the grid via the existing 33kV pylon located 350m west of the site;
- Security fencing;
- A landscaping and biodiversity enhancement scheme to retain existing trees and hedges, and provide new planting.

Construction and Operation

The construction phase of the proposed development will last for approximately 38 weeks.

However, this does not mean that work will be taking place across the full site for the entire construction period. Construction work would involve excavation to install the panels and lay the cabling to the existing 33kV pylon, service trenches, fencing, CCTV and gates.

The only vehicles required to attend the Site when the facility is operational would be those associated with security and maintenance. This is anticipated to be less than one vehicle per week, averaged across the year.



Location in the Green Belt

Green Belt

- The Tollgate Farm site is located within Welwyn Hatfield's Green Belt. We recognise the need to design a scheme which minimises any harm to the openness and purposes of the Green Belt.
- While it would be ideal to locate the proposed development away from the Green Belt, it is a fact that there are very few suitable sites within the local area which are not themselves covered by a Green Belt designation.
- Additionally, very few of these sites would enable as easy access to electricity grid infrastructure as the site at Tollgate Farm.
- We understand the importance of the Green Belt to local people, and we are preparing a full 'Very Special Circumstances' document as part of the planning application, to outline the reasons we believe this is the right location for a solar development.

Ecology

- At present the majority of the site is used for agricultural purposes. Typically, arable farmland such as that currently found on the site presents a very low ecological /biodiversity value.
- The forthcoming planning application is supported by an ecological assessment and calculations of the Biodiversity Net Gain delivered by the scheme. The ecological assessment will put forward appropriate mitigation to avoid / minimise harm to ecology and biodiversity.
- The Proposed Development is expected to deliver significant ecological/biodiversity benefits by delivering large areas of species-diverse habitats, which hold a much higher ecological value. The new habitats compromise grassland, woodland and hedgerow, all of which would promote biodiversity.



Consideration

Alternative Sites Assessment

- An Alternative Sites Assessment (ASA) has been commissioned and a preliminary report prepared. This involves identifying and reviewing other potentially available sites to determine whether a more suitable location exists for this type of renewable energy development.
- The Hatfield substation is the only grid connection point with available capacity in the Welwyn Hatfield, Hertsmere and St Albans local authority areas.
- Five parcels of land within 3km of the Hatfield substation were identified as part of the ASA. Each of these parcels have either been deemed unsuitable for solar development or would not be preferable to the application site.



Landscape & Visual Impact

- The site does not sit within any locally or nationally designated landscape
- The development site is bordered to the west/south-west by the A1(M). Despite being located between Hatfield and Welham Green, there are few residential properties in the immediate vicinity.
- Additionally, the natural slope of the land at this location, alongside dense, existing vegetation around parts of the perimeter, can work together to reduce the visual impact on any nearby properties.
- A full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) will be submitted as part of the planning application. The LVA will advise on appropriate planting and mitigation to be provided by natural screening.

Agricultural Land Classification

- We have undertaken an agricultural land assessment as part of our preparations to submit our planning application. This assessment identified that the agricultural land component of the development site is graded 2 and 3a.
- While we design our schemes to avoid Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land wherever possible, Brockwell Energy recognises this is not always achievable, and meeting the government's clean energy ambitions means that some solar projects will need to come forward on BMV land in certain parts of the country.
- The site's current use is limited to growing combinable commodity crops, for which the UK maintains a consistent trade surplus and for which yields are average at best. The site therefore makes a limited contribution to national food security.
- The leasing of agricultural land for renewable energy development is an important form of income diversification for farm businesses which can support agricultural activity on the rest of the farm, helping to mitigate the risks associated with volatile prices, weather patterns and recent changes to the EU and UK agricultural support regime.
- The proposed development also has the potential to deliver significant wider environmental benefits, such as improvements to soil structure and health, carbon sequestration and habitat and biodiversity enhancements.

Consideration (Continued)

Traffic & Transport

- Traffic movements will primarily be related to staff travel and will be scheduled outside of peak congestion periods. It is anticipated that the total number of deliveries requiring access to the site would be some 635 one-way trips (1,270 two-way trips) across the full 38-week construction period.
- Vehicles will access the site via the existing bridge over the A1(M) motorway. This will reduce the impact on local residents and keep these larger vehicles away from homes and businesses.
- During the operational phase, traffic visits will be limited to occasional LGV maintenance access.
- A full Transport Assessment will be completed and submitted as part of the planning application.

Heritage

- While there are a number of listed buildings in the nearby area, the closest of these is Hatfield House, 1.35km to the east of the development site.
- We do not foresee any impacts on the listed buildings and will submit a full heritage assessment alongside the forthcoming planning application.

Flood Risk

- The development is designed to minimise the risk of flooding affecting equipment.
- There will be a drainage report commissioned to confirm that the site has no significant impact on flooding on or off-site, which will be submitted alongside the planning application.
- The drainage strategy supporting the application will ensure surface water is appropriately managed without affecting surrounding areas.

Glint & Glare

- Our glint & glare assessment concludes that the effects of glint and glare and their impact on local receptors would result in low or no impacts, and therefore no significant effects would occur.

Public Rights of Way

There are two Public Rights of Way running through the application site:

- An unrestricted byway running along the northern perimeter of the site which continues to the northern boundary of Bush Wood (North Mymms 028A)
- A restricted byway along the proposed access to the site over the motorway, and through Tollgate Farm (North Mymms 052)
- We understand the importance of these routes to local people and have designed the scheme in such a way as to protect and enhance the PRow network.
- Retention of existing trees and hedges, and new planting along the byways will screen the visual impact of the solar arrays from people out walking – in addition to enhancing the site's biodiversity and preserving local mobility.



Next Steps

Your Community, Our Contributions

Our renewable energy projects aim to bring lasting benefits to local communities. Our approach to community engagement is built on listening, understanding, and acting with purpose.

Our Commitment includes:



**Community
Support**



**Trust funds for
local priorities**



**Local contracting
and sponsorship**

Collaborative community benefits

We engage with communities from an early stage of each project, shaping community benefit packages around that feedback. By working closely with communities, we create innovative, lasting benefits tailored to their aspirations and needs. Whether supporting local businesses or fostering long term economic initiatives, we're committed to realising community goals together.



Have Your Say

We are keen to hear your thoughts on our proposals and would welcome your feedback. You can provide your views by:

- Visiting our website:
www.brockwellenergy.com/projects/tollgate-solar-farm/
- Complete a feedback form in person at the event or on our website at the address above.
- Calling our Project Information Line on:
0808 281 5551 (Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm)
- Emailing our designated consultation email address at:
tollgate@brockwellenergy.co.uk

Please provide your comments to us ideally by **27 April 2025** when the consultation period ends.

Why Solar Energy

Why do we need to build new solar farms?

There is an urgent global need for advanced economies to reduce their carbon emissions in the fight against climate change. Reducing the UK electricity system's reliance on imported fossil fuels is additionally a key aspect of the fight for energy security.

The Government has ambitious targets for solar energy development to as part of the move towards clean power by 2030. This will require all kinds of solar power – panels on homes and the rooftops of large buildings; large, 'nationally significant' projects determined by the Planning Inspectorate; and mid-sized solar farms located close to existing grid infrastructure, such as the one proposed for Tollgate Farm

If approved, the Tollgate Farm solar farm development will generate, renewable energy for export into the national electricity system – capable of powering 4,800 homes both within Welwyn Hatfield and across the country.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and there is a pressing need to develop new renewable energy capacity to meet the to meet local and national targets. To date, there have been very few solar projects proposed within Welwyn Hatfield. By constructing the Tollgate development in a suitable, well-screened location with significant benefits for biodiversity and local climate action, we can make a strong contribution to this crucial mission.

The development of new renewable energy sources is a key component of the fight against climate change and will help to ensure our energy independence at a time of significant international uncertainty.

