FOOD SECURITY & AGRICULTURAL LAND

Farming and solar

As we begin our early, non-statutory consultation, we recognise there may be concerns about the potential use of some agricultural land, including areas classed as Best and Most Versatile (BMV), for solar generation rather than food production. At this stage, no final decisions have been made, and we are seeking views to help shape the proposals. The fact sheet outlines how, through careful design and sustainable land management, projects like Tasway Energy Park can play a role in the UK's net zero ambitions while maintaining long-term agricultural potential and protecting the environmental integrity of the local area.

Best and most versatile agricultural land

The National Planning Policy Framework (footnote 65, paragraph 188), advises that where significant development of agricultural land is involved, poorer quality land should be used. The concept of BMV land is based on the agricultural land classification (ALC) grading scheme. BMV agricultural land is excellent to good quality land in grades 1, 2, and 3a.

- Solar farms are temporary and do not cause permanent loss of soil quality. At Tasway Energy Park, Aukera will look at ways for the land to remain in agricultural use alongside renewable energy generation, such as allowing sheep grazing around the solar panels. We will work with local farmers and landowners to explore these opportunities.
- Solar Energy UK (2024) notes that using some farmland for solar does not compromise the UK's agricultural resource and can provide diversification for farming businesses. Government policy also recognises that solar and agriculture can work hand in hand, supporting both food and energy security.

Biodiversity and soil health enhancements

On intensively farmed land, solar development can help soils recover and improve overall land health. The Government's UK Food Security Report (2021) notes that while crops like wheat provide efficient calories, conventional farming can reduce biodiversity, damage soils and cause wider environmental impacts. At Tasway Energy Park, Aukera will look at ways to enhance soil health and biodiversity during the project, while ensuring the land can return to agriculture in the future.

Land use in context

- Solar Energy UK, with Dr Jonathan Scurlock of the National Farmers Union, produced a factsheet showing that solar farms "do not in any way present a risk to the UK's food security."
- Currently, solar farms occupy less than 0.1% of UK land. Even if the Government's net zero target is met, solar would cover at most 0.6% of land – less than the area taken by golf courses.
- The UK Government Food Security Report (2021) confirms that the main long-term risks to domestic food production come from climate change, soil degradation, water quality, and biodiversity loss. It notes that under a medium emissions scenario, the proportion of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land could fall from 38.1% to 11.4% by 2050.
- There is no policy requiring BMV land to be used solely for food production. It is valued for its flexibility and productivity, supporting food crops, animal feed, biofuels, and other uses, including renewable energy.

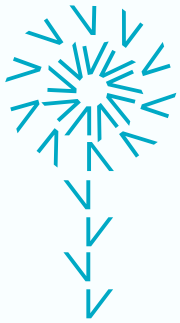
Additional information for Tasway Energy Park

The design approach for Tasway Energy Park will aim to avoid placing key components, such as on-site substations, batteries, and inverters, on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.

COMPULSORY PURCHASE

Compulsory acquisition (CA) is a legal mechanism that allows a developer to acquire land or rights over land that is needed for a project, even if the owner does not initially agree to sell. The use of CA powers ensures that essential infrastructure can be delivered. For Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects such as Tasway Energy Park, CA powers can be granted as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) required for the project. For Tasway Energy Park, CA powers are considered a last resort, with the preference being to reach private agreements with landowners wherever possible, or to adjust the project design to avoid compulsory acquisition

Aukera's CPO powers



- Aukera, as the promoter of Tasway Energy Park, can apply for CA powers as part of the DCO process under the Planning Act 2008.
- CA powers require approval from the Secretary of State following a rigorous examination and approval process.
- The grant of CA powers is subject to strict legal tests, and Aukera will need to provide clear justification for any CA powers sought in the DCO.
- As part of the examination into the DCO application, those persons whose land will be affected by the CA powers sought are entitled to make representations and to speak at any compulsory acquisition hearings that are held.
- If CA powers are granted, landowners are entitled to fair compensation under UK law.

Future use of CPO

- Aukera's approach is to avoid using CA powers unless absolutely necessary.
- Aukera is in the early stages of consultation and is working to agree arrangements with landowners through voluntary, private agreements wherever possible.
- Aukera will focus on design adjustments in the first instance and enter into voluntary agreements to minimise the need for compulsory acquisition.
- CPO powers are granted as part of the Development Consent Order by the Secretary of State, following a rigorous examination and approval process.
- Landowners have the right to object during the DCO consultation and examination.
- If a CPO is granted, landowners are entitled to fair compensation under UK law.
- Aukera will always seek to avoid compulsory purchase through negotiation, land swaps, or re-design before considering formal CPO action.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

When assessing new infrastructure projects, it is important to consider cumulative impacts, which look at the combined effects of multiple developments in the same area. In South Norfolk, Tasway Energy Park would sit alongside other planned or existing projects, including the proposed East Pye Solar Farm and the Norwich to Tilbury 400 kV electricity transmission connection. Cumulative impact assessments will be undertaken by Aukera to consider how these projects together might affect the landscape, environment, wildlife, local communities, and infrastructure, ensuring that any combined effects are understood and mitigated. This approach helps developers and stakeholders plan responsibly, maintaining environmental quality and community wellbeing while supporting the transition to renewable energy.

Proposed East Pye Solar Farm

East Pye Solar is a major renewable energy project in South Norfolk, aiming to deliver large-scale solar power combined with battery storage. It is progressing through the planning process as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Key project details:

- Location: South Norfolk, near Long Stratton, Great Moulton, and surrounding villages.
- Scale: Up to 500 MW of renewable energy, enough to power approximately 115,000 homes annually.
- Project Area: 1,097 hectares for the solar and battery sites; total 2,232 hectares including cable route corridors.
- Planning Status:
  - Currently in pre-application stage
  - Phase Two statutory consultation completed on 6 August 2025.
  - Community feedback and technical assessments are currently being reviewed.
  - DCO application expected to be submitted in late 2025.
  - Planning decision anticipated by late 2027 or early 2028.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Ongoing collaboration with Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council, and local communities to address impacts and concerns.

Proposed Norwich to Tilbury Connection

The Norwich to Tilbury project is a major infrastructure initiative by National Grid, aiming to reinforce the electricity transmission network between Norwich in Norfolk and Tilbury in Essex. This project is a critical component of the UK's "Great Grid Upgrade," designed to accommodate the increasing generation of renewable energy, particularly from offshore wind sources, and to meet the growing electricity demand in East Anglia.

Key project details:

- Project Scope: ~184 km of high-voltage transmission lines, mainly overhead, with some underground sections and a new 400 kV substation.
- Route: From Norwich Main substation (Norfolk) through Bramford (Suffolk) to Tilbury (Essex).
- Planning Status: DCO application submitted 29 August 2025 and accepted for examination in September 2025.
- Public Consultation: Three stages completed, including statutory consultation in summer 2024; feedback used to refine proposals.
- Environmental Considerations: Underground cables planned in some areas to reduce visual impact and meet environmental standards.
- Timeline: Decision anticipated in 2026, Construction anticipated from 2027 and line to be operational by 2031.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS

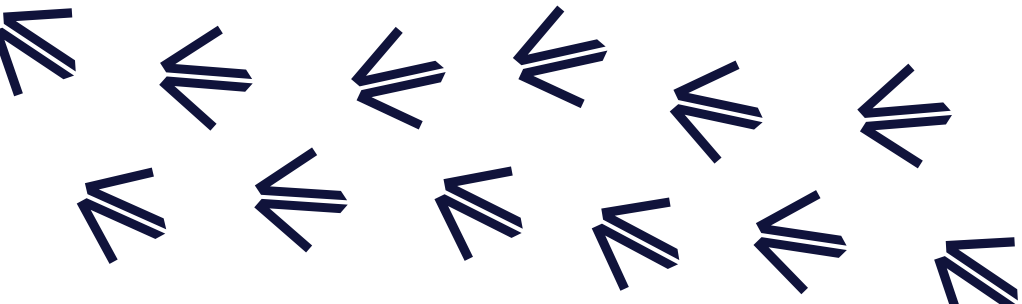
Tasway Energy Park, developed by Aukera, will include Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) as part of its renewable energy infrastructure. BESS are designed to store electricity generated from solar panels and release it when it is needed most. This helps balance supply and demand on the electricity grid, supporting reliability and making renewable energy more efficient.

How they work

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) store electricity generated by solar panels when production exceeds immediate demand and release it when energy is needed most, such as in the evenings or during periods of high demand. This helps ensure a reliable and consistent supply of electricity, even when the sun isn't shining.

At Tasway Energy Park, BESS are essential to making the most of the solar energy produced on-site. By storing excess energy, they allow the park to supply electricity to the grid when it is most needed, helping to reduce waste and maximise the contribution of renewable energy to the local and national network.

The modular design of BESS means the system can be tailored to match energy needs and expanded or upgraded over time. This flexibility allows Tasway Energy Park to respond to changing local energy demand, future-proof the project, and integrate effectively with the wider electricity grid.



Benefits and safety

Grid support: BESS help manage fluctuations in electricity supply and demand, ensuring a more stable and reliable grid. By storing excess solar energy and releasing it when needed, they reduce pressure on the network and support the integration of more renewable energy sources.

Environmental impact: Battery systems have a relatively small physical footprint compared to other infrastructure. They do not result in permanent land loss and can be sited to avoid sensitive soils, habitats, or areas of ecological importance. This allows solar farms to coexist with agriculture and biodiversity initiatives.

Safety: Modern BESS are designed with multiple layers of protection, including fire suppression, cooling systems, and monitoring controls. They are built to strict UK standards for fire safety, environmental protection, and operational reliability, ensuring safe operation throughout their lifetime.

Community and climate benefits: By making renewable energy more predictable and available, BESS help accelerate the UK's transition to net zero. This benefits local communities by supporting clean energy jobs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and helping the UK meet national climate targets.

AUKERA

Who are Aukera?

Aukera is a European renewable energy company founded in 2021 with a mission to lead the global transition to clean energy. The company develops, invests in, and operates grid-scale renewable energy assets across Europe and the United Kingdom. Aukera's approach combines entrepreneurial agility with a commitment to environmental and social sustainability, aiming to create long-term value for stakeholders.

Aukera's role in Tasway Energy Park

Aukera is the sole developer of Tasway Energy Park. The project aims to deliver up to 700 MW of clean, renewable electricity through a combination of a large-scale solar array and integrated Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).

Key responsibilities:

- Project development: Aukera is responsible for the planning, design, and permitting of the Tasway Energy Park, ensuring compliance with UK regulations and environmental standards.
- Community engagement: The company is actively engaging with local communities, stakeholders, and authorities to gather feedback and address concerns throughout the pre-application phase.
- Environmental stewardship: Aukera is committed to enhancing biodiversity and soil health on the project site, aiming to improve land quality and support local agriculture.
- Project delivery: Aukera will oversee the construction and operation of the energy park, ensuring it contributes to the UK's net-zero targets while providing reliable, renewable energy to the grid.

Aukera's commitment to sustainability

Aukera integrates Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into every aspect of its operations. The company has implemented robust ESG processes to ensure that all projects, including Tasway Energy Park, are developed with a focus on long-term sustainability and positive community impact.