Grazeley Solar Farm FAQs

August 2025

How much will the scheme cost?

The project is estimated to cost £18.6m. This includes the scheme design, development, construction and two years of maintenance.

How much energy will the solar farm produce when complete?

The solar farm has a capacity of 20 megawatts peak and will generate just under 20,000 MWh of energy per annum. This is enough to power over 5,500 homes and will save approximately 3,800 tonnes of carbon per annum.

Where will the scheme be built?

The scheme will be built on land which is part of Bloomfield Hatch Farm and is owned by West Berkshire Council.

How much income will the solar farm generate?

The solar farm is estimated to general approximately £1.7m per year from exporting energy to the grid. After pay-back of the interest on the capital loan, operation and maintenance costs, the solar farm is estimated to have a surplus of up to £400k per annum.

How will this help with the Council's net zero ambitions?

The Council is committed to being net zero operationally by 2030 and further details on the Council's Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan can be found here.

The solar farm could reduce the Council's annual carbon emissions by approximately 40%, contributing significantly to reaching net zero.

I would like to know how, as a local council tax payer, I will benefit from the solar farm?

The solar farm will generate a modest income following pay-back of the capital loan, which will be used to re-invest in the environment and to offset the pressure on other essential Council services. This will be to the benefit of all West Berkshire residents.

West Berkshire COUNCIL

What experience of building and running a solar farm does the Council have?

This will be the first solar farm the Council has constructed. However, the Council has procured the services of industry experts to help with the design, delivery and operation of the scheme.

Who would own the solar farm and who would run it?

The solar farm will be owned and operated by West Berkshire Council.

Where will the solar panels be made?

Until we have a contractor on board, we will not know how the solar panels will be sourced. However, we are aware of concerns that have been raised about the use of slave or forced labour in some parts of the world where solar panels are produced. The Council seeks to put safeguards in place for all such projects where this could be a risk and the solar farm scheme is no exception.

We have put in place clauses and stipulations making it clear in our tender documentation that any contractor we award the delivery of the solar farm to must have strict anti-slavery and human trafficking provisions.

There is a clause in the contract ensuring that all practices comply with the Modern Slavery Act of 2015 and any other associated legal requirements. We will also require the contractor to maintain their own policies, procedures and compliance and include robust requirements with any sub-contractor or supplier agreements.

In addition to this being in the contract, it is also made clear in our specification that we have a strict position on anti-slavery and we seek details of a contractor's supply chain and any partners they work with.

We are therefore confident that we have in place the necessary safeguards to ensure our project will comply with anti-slavery and human trafficking laws and policies.

How long before they have to be replaced and how will they be disposed of?

The scheme has been modelled over a 30-year period. However, it is anticipated that the site will be profitable for longer than this given the improvements in solar photo voltaic technology. Once they reach the end of their usable life, the solar panels will be responsibly recycled. This is something the Council has arranged previously for some older solar panels using a local company.

West Berkshire Council will disappear under the current Government's plans - what are the implications?

The solar farm will pass into the ownership of any subsequent authority that West Berkshire may become part of following Local Government Review and will continue to be of financial and economic benefit to that authority and its residents.

How will the installed equipment, and grounds it's built on, be maintained and at what annual cost over the expected scheme life?

The contractor delivering the site will maintain and operate it for the first 2 years. Subsequently, a contract will be let for operation and maintenance which is estimated at approx. £200k per annum. Additionally, it is anticipated that items such as inverters will require replacing every 10 years and this has been accounted for.

How is the scheme, including maintenance over its expected life, being funded?

The initial capital outlay for the delivery of the scheme will be funded through capital borrowing. The ongoing maintenance and operation, replacement of inverters and disposal will be funded through the income generated from the site when operational.

Why are we using farmland for energy generation?

The farmland at Bloomfield Hatch is low grade class 3b farmland, and using this land is generally considered appropriate and aligns with UK policy and environmental goals. Solar farms are temporary and reversible developments (albeit over a long period), meaning the land can be restored to agricultural use after decommissioning.

Why was affordable housing on the same land as the solar scheme, ruled out as a better use for that land?

The land falls within the Burghfield AWE Detailed Emergency Planning Zone and the proposal for housing was halted due to local and national safety concerns around the potential evacuation of thousands of additional residents, should a radiation emergency occur.