

**You may have noticed on a secluded edge of Bishop’s Tachbrook a new solar farm is being built, so what is it and why are solar farms becoming more common?**

The site is located to the North west of the village along the footpath between the village and the Asps. Running parallel with the footpath the farm covers an area of 6 hectare (ha), equivalent to 10 football pitches or approximately 1/4 the size of the village of Bishop’s Tachbrook. Contained within this area are 16,000 photovoltaic cells measuring 2.6m high, spaced by 3.6m and pointed south at an angle of 20 degrees to maximise the amount of sunlight captured.

The cells harvest the light by converting the sunlight into electricity, transformers convert the generated electricity so that it can be fed into a substation and then sold to the national grid. It is estimated that the site will produce 4000MWH of energy per year, which is approximately the electricity usage of a small village like Bishop’s Tachbrook. The site is scheduled to last for 25 years at which point it will

be dismantled.

The farm initially met with local opposition; a 159 signature petition voiced concern at the initial plans that had the site positioned closer to residential housing with possible visual impact and loss of a common dog walking area. The parish council initially opposed the plans mainly due to the scale of the plan and its visual impact.

Switching to a newer more efficient panel allowed the developers to use a smaller amount of land than the initial 8ha, resulting in the site being moved 200m from residential housing. Plugging the gaps of existing hedgerows and new planting is planned to shield the panels and the 1.8m security fence. Glare from the panels is likened to the amount of reflected light from a new asphalt road.

Solar energy, produced either through roof top panels or large scale solar farms, is becoming increasingly popular. The favourable rate offered for electricity generated by renewables and the lowering cost of panels makes them an attractive investment.



There are many other applications in the area to build solar farms. The Tachbrook site, which we can call one 'tach', can be used to illustrate the size of other potential developments. Along the Fosse way near Moreton Morrell plans are being considered for a '4 tach' site. At Depper's Bridge near Harbury a '3 Tach' site has been rejected on the grounds of poor consultation and disfigurement to the landscape. This is despite a promise of £9000 per year over 25 years to the parish council to spend on local projects and amenities. Recently there was a new application in the area for a '4 Tach' site near Bishop's Itchington. In the Stratford area planning permission has been granted for a '1 Tach' site at Bishopton close to the A46.

The government has set a target of 15% of UK energy coming from renewable sources by 2020, of which solar is an increasingly key technology. Renewables will reduce the amount of CO2 we produce and help control climate change. Additionally renewables will all be 'homegrown' and not rely upon imported energy sources which tend to come from politically unstable parts of the world, giving greater energy security. The solar contribution to this is planned

to rise five times by 2020 to 20GW, which equates to a large number of solar panels; 2000 'Tach' sites or roof mounted panels on 4 million homes. The Minister for energy has stated that he would like this expansion to come from roof mounted panels and locations on brown field sites, but green field sites are not excluded.

There has been rapid growth in the building of large solar farms in 2014, so much so that the government recently announced an end to the favourable incentives for solar farms bigger than '1 Tach' in 2015 instead of 2017. Despite these mixed messages it is likely that solar panels will become an increasingly common sight over the next few years.

Note: 1 Tach = 4MWp = 8ha = 20acres  
For comparison an average nuclear power station produces 1.6GW equivalent of 160 Tach.

More info about solar and savings potential from domestic solar panels at [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generating-energy/Getting-money-back/Solar-Energy-Calculator](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generating-energy/Getting-money-back/Solar-Energy-Calculator)

WDC information on all planning applications for the village at [http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20374/planning\\_applications](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20374/planning_applications)

