

# Southend Airport wants to build huge solar farm



The site of the proposed solar farm

First published 1 hour ago in [News](#) by [Ian Burbidge](#)

THOUSANDS of solar panels could be sited close to [Southend Airport](#) to help power its continuing development.

The airport has applied to create a huge solar farm on land to the north of the main terminal.

It would have 12,000 solar panels in 41 rows and be spread over almost eight acres of grassland to the north of the airport which lies in the [Rochford](#) district.

Council planners are recommending approval for the plans, even though councillors rejected an almost identical plan a few months ago.

An airport spokesman said: “The land is within the airport boundary, but is non-operational because it is on a flood plain.

“The solar panels would be on frames, lifting them above any flood water and the transformer building would be sited outside the flood plain.”

The Environment Agency objected to the previous application because it would lay on a flood plain, and has submitted a provisional objection this time on the same grounds.

The airport says it commissioned a flood risk specialist to study the impact of the plan on the flood plain and was liaising with the agency to make sure objections over flood risk, water quality and ecological concerns can be overcome.

it is the only available site for the panels which would not interfere with operations.

The site – previously earmarked for aircraft maintenance hangars – includes protected badger setts, but the airport insist building work would not come within 20m of them The solar farm,

which would supply 20 per cent of the airport's electricity requirements, have been given a "cautious thumbs-up" by one of the airport's staunchest critics, the Green party.

Jon Fuller, who has campaigned in the past against airport expansion, said: "Where possible, we don't want solar panels placed on agricultural land. We'd rather see them on buildings and roofs.

"However, the idea of a business deploying renewable energy is a good thing, and if they are going to be elevated from the flood plain, it could be a positive addition to the airport.

"I would give it a cautious thumbs-up."

Rochford's planning committee is due to vote on the application – on Thursday.

Rochford Council head of planning Shaun Scrutton said: "There was concern with the first application about technical issues and the fact the site was within a flood plain.

"The new solar farm is to be located within the airport boundary, but not on land which is currently in use, and the applicant has worked with the council to overcome the concerns with the original proposal.

"The application is good news for the airport operating company, as the energy requirements for the airport will now be augmented by clean, solar energy."