



STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

SOUTHLANDS SOLAR FARM AND BATTERY STORAGE
LAND SOUTH OF RUNWELL ROAD (A132), RUNWELL, WICKFORD
P19-SCI OCTOBER 2022



Contents

Executive Summary	02
Introduction	03
Approach to Consultation	03
Scheme Overview	04
The Consultation	05
Consultation Feedback	07
Conclusion	08
Appendices	09

Executive Summary

Enso Green Holdings J Limited (“The Applicant”) conducted a programme of public consultation and stakeholder engagement with regards to its proposals for a solar farm and battery storage facility with associated infrastructure (“the Proposed Development”) on land south of Runwell Road (A132), Runwell, Wickford (“The Site”).

The consultation centred around an in-person public exhibition, which was held on 1 September 2022 at Runwell Village Hall, 17 Church End Lane, Runwell, Wickford SS11 7JE (**Appendix 1**). Prior to the public exhibition, the Applicant engaged with Runwell Parish Council by means of a presentation to members with a follow-up “Q&A” session. Members of the Parish Council were invited to the public consultation event and were provided with a copy of the consultation brochure.

A brochure (**Appendix 2**) detailing the plans and inviting residents to attend the consultation event was sent out on 22 August 2022 to 1263 residential households and 53 businesses (see **Appendix 3** for postal distribution area). Members of the Parish Council were invited to the public consultation event and were provided with a copy of the consultation brochure. The Applicant also sent direct consultation letters (**Appendix 4**) to residential properties situated in close proximity to the Proposed Development.

At the public exhibition attendees were presented with 9 display boards (**Appendix 1**) giving information about the Applicant, the Site and the concept design. The Applicant and its development team were at the event, helping to explain the design of the site and to answer any questions attendees had. Attendees were encouraged to provide their thoughts and opinions by way of feedback forms (**Appendix 2**) available at the exhibition (or by way of the consultation brochure). Additionally, the development team provided attendees with contact details if they wished to send in any follow up questions or feedback, and a project website was available for people to submit their feedback online.

Of the 35 local residents that completed a feedback form, the online survey or sent an email, 13 were in favour of the proposal, 11 objected to it and 11 were neutral.

Key matters raised during the pre-application consultation included:

- Impact on public footpaths
- General support for renewable energy
- Use of agricultural land
- Potential visual impact

Following the public exhibition, amendments were made to the layout of the solar farm and a follow-up meeting was arranged with residents. Solar panels were removed from the north-west corner of the site close to properties along Old Runwell Road and Browns Avenue. Further meetings were arranged with residents to discuss additional amendments to the layout. The layout plan submitted with the application takes into account all of the discussed amendments.

1. Introduction

The Applicant conducted a programme of public consultation and stakeholder engagement with regards to the Proposed Development.

The proposed solar farm would provide renewable energy for distribution to the National Grid at the Rayleigh Substation. The solar farm would generate a significant amount of renewable energy each year that the solar farm is in operation. The proposal would make a valuable contribution to achieving energy targets, offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and help tackle climate change. The proposals include battery storage which will allow energy to be stored on site at times when grid-demand is lower and exported at times of higher demand to ensure no energy is 'lost' and help balance the National Grid.

This document provides an overview of the consultation programme, the feedback received together with an explanation as to how that feedback led to changes to the scheme design.

2. Approach to Consultation

Enso Energy strongly believes that now, more than ever, it is vital local communities are able to see and shape planning applications that may have an impact on them. 'Front-loading' public engagement in this way helps ensure the proposals are as informed as possible by the local community and other stakeholders prior to the submission of the planning application to the relevant Local Planning Authority. This approach recognises that all parties benefit from a communications programme that ensures all people with a potential interest in a development are fully informed of the proposals and have had the opportunity to input early on. The Applicant is supportive of and fully committed to meaningful pre-application consultation.

3. Scheme Overview

The Site comprises an area of land totalling approximately 58.99ha of land which will connect via an underground cable to the Rayleigh substation. The current access point to the site will be from Runwell Road.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

4. The Consultation

4.1 Consultation Aims

The aims of the consultation were as follows:

- To work with local stakeholders and residents from the outset and see how we could improve the proposals by taking onboard their suggestions.
- To raise awareness of the proposals within the local community and to gain their valuable insight based on their local knowledge.
- To gain a firm understanding of the key issues affecting the local community.

4.2 Consultation Overview

Consultation on the proposals began in August 2022 when the development team contacted Runwell Parish Council offering a briefing regarding the proposals for Southlands Solar Farm. The development team presented the Proposed Development to Members of the Runwell Parish Council on 22 August 2022. Rettendon Parish Council were sent a consultation brochure and were invited to attend the public consultation event.

A brochure and invite (**Appendix 2**) for the public consultation event was sent out on 22 August 2022 to 1263 residential households and 53 businesses (see **Appendix 3** for postal distribution area) inviting them to an in-person public exhibition on 1 September 2022. The Applicant held a public consultation event, where a Concept Design of the proposed scheme was available for residents to provide feedback on.

In addition to distributing the consultation brochure, the Applicant sent direct consultation letters to residential properties situated in close proximity to the scheme. A copy of the letter sent can be found at **Appendix 4**.

A website for the project (**Appendix 5**) was also created, which can be accessed at the following address: <https://ensoenergy.co.uk/enso-projects/southlands-solar-farm>. The website provides visitors with an overview of the proposals, the boards from the public exhibition as well the opportunity to get in contact with the development team or leave feedback.

4.3 Briefing Runwell Parish Council

Prior to the public exhibition, the Applicant engaged with Runwell Parish Council. The development team presented the scheme, followed by a Q&A session, at a Parish Council meeting on 22 August 2022. The members of the Parish Council were also invited to the public consultation event and were provided with a copy of the consultation brochure.

4.4 Briefing political stakeholders

The site ward Councillors: Cllr Paul Clark and Cllr Lance Millane (Rettendon and Runwell) were informed of the proposed solar farm and offered a briefing. Each Councillor was provided with the consultation brochure that was sent to residents and invited to the public exhibition.

4.3 The Public Exhibition

A public exhibition was held on 1 September 2022 at Runwell Village Hall, from 14.00-19.00hrs. Nine display boards were presented to the public, which included information about Enso Energy, the solar farm concept layout, initial landscaping proposals, construction traffic details, photomontages and viewpoint photographs of the Site from the surrounding area.

Attendees were encouraged to provide feedback by filling in a feedback form at the event or to take one away and return by way of freepost or to submit comments via the dedicated website or via email. Feedback forms and a freepost address were also provided on the brochure sent out to local residents. Of the 1263 residential households and 53 businesses that were sent a brochure of the solar farm proposals, a total of 51 residents attended the event.

Figure 2 below shows the concept design on which feedback was sought.

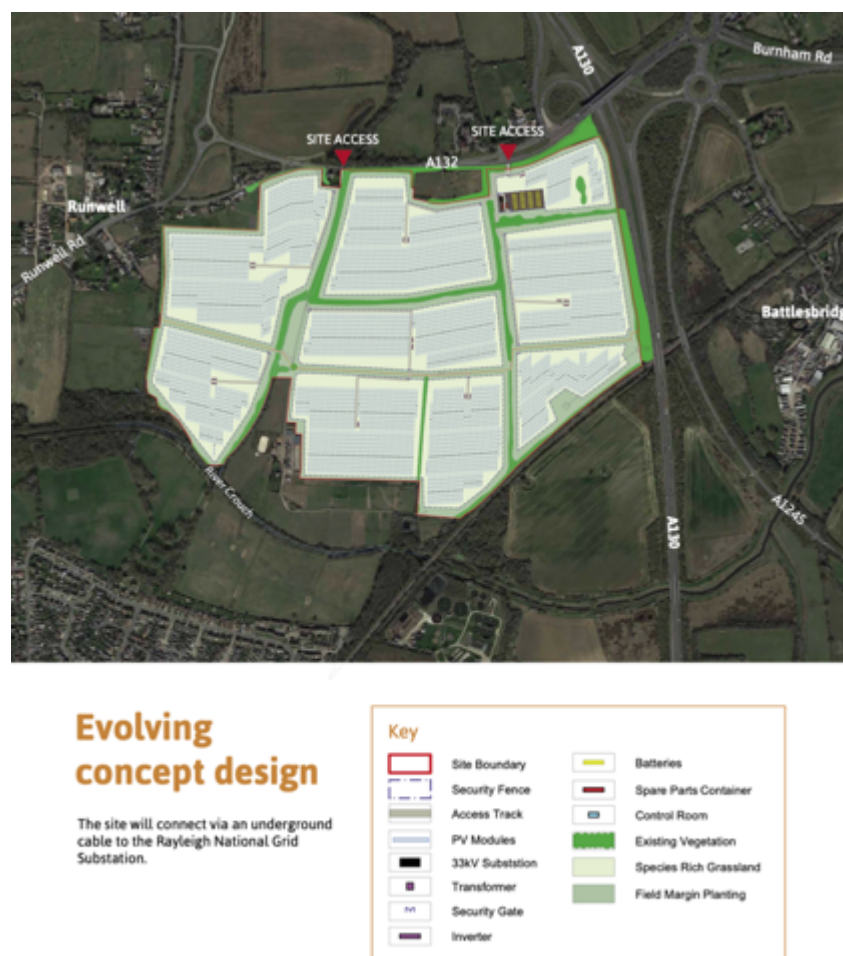


Figure 2: Concept design presented at the Public Exhibition and included in the Brochure

5. Consultation Feedback

5.1 Feedback forms and online questionnaire

The development team received 17 completed feedback forms via post and 18 separate pieces of emailed feedback. In total therefore, 35 pieces of feedback were received. The results are presented below.

The feedback form included two multiple choice tick box questions and a space for additional comments.

Question one: Has this local resident brochure been helpful in understanding our proposal?

YES	NO	NOT SURE/ NO ANSWER
14	1	20

Question two: With regards to the proposals you have read/heard about, are you:

IN FAVOUR	IN OBJECTION	OF NO OPINION
13	11	11

Question three: Additional comments

Thirty-one forms received contained additional comments. **Appendix 6** contains those comments in full, in addition to the Applicant's response.

The themes covered the following topics:

- Impact on public footpaths
- General support for renewable energy
- Use of agricultural land
- Potential visual impact

5.2 Summary of Feedback

Of those who completed the feedback form, 14 said the brochure had been 'helpful', while one said it had not and 20 others either said 'not sure' or did not provide an answer.

Of the 35 local residents that completed a feedback form 13 were in favour of the proposal, 11 objected to it and 11 said they were of no opinion. Those in support of the project referenced their support for renewable energy. A number of respondents queried the Proposed Development's potential impact on public footpaths in the area. Respondents that opposed the development cited the use of agricultural land and potential visual impact as key issues.

5.3 How Feedback Influenced the Scheme Design

In response to issues raised during the public consultation process, the design of the scheme has been amended as follows:

- Panels have been pulled back from the north-western corner of the Site, near Old Runwell Road and Browns Avenue, down to the Public Right of Way.
- A strip of hedgerow and tree planting is proposed along the new boundary of the north-western field.
- The inverter in the southern/central field has been moved further north.
- As a result of these amends, the Site area has been reduced from 70.3ha to 58.99ha.

6. Conclusion

The Applicant undertook a comprehensive programme of public consultation, which successfully engaged with residents and key community and political stakeholders and the feedback received has influenced the final scheme design.

7. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Public Exhibition Boards
- Appendix 2: Local Resident Invite Brochure
- Appendix 3: Local Resident Invite Brochure Distribution Area
- Appendix 4: Local Resident Invite Letter
- Appendix 5: Website Home Page
- Appendix 6: Comments received via feedback form question 3 and Applicant's response.

Appendix 1: Public Consultation boards



Where is Southlands Solar Farm?

Eno Energy is proposing to develop a solar farm and battery storage facility on land in Southlands Farm, south of the A10, A630, and A1033, which comprises approximately 10.1 hectares of land.

We made an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report to Chesham City Council in April 2021 to which this consultation an Environmental Statement was not required.

The project would generate a significant amount of energy each year of the proposed 10 years of operation (10 years), while also providing substantial carbon dioxide savings when compared to the generation of electricity by non-renewable sources.

Our plans also include the construction of a battery storage system that will supply electricity to the local electricity network at times of peak energy demand and help meet the renewable energy output of the solar farm a secure and reliable part of the UK energy mix.

Introducing Enso Energy

Getting to Net Zero

In May 2019 the Government declared a Climate Change Emergency. At local levels, many Councils including Chesham City Council, have made their own similar declarations and have proposed action plans to tackle Climate Change. The Government's Net Zero Change Act 2023 was introduced in June 2023 to achieve net zero by 2050. This will require a step change in all sectors of the economy, including energy generation. This legislative change builds on previous commitments made by the UK as part of the European Union (such as the European Union Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001) and United Nations (such as the Paris Agreement).

Although renewables accounted for approximately 39% of UK energy generation in 2021, further action is required to significantly reduce emissions by 2050. The ambition is to fully decarbonise our power system by 2050 and the proposed legislative change to reduce carbon emissions by 95% by 2050, renewable energy. The development of renewable energy technologies, supported by energy storage, are recognised by the Government as a key part of the UK's transition to achieving a net carbon economy, tackling Climate Change and achieving net zero by 2050.

About Us

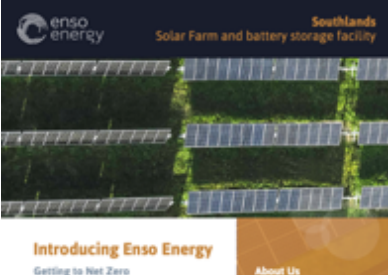
We are one of the UK's leading developers of renewable energy projects.

Our ambition is to use the latest solar technology to create a positive impact on our community and the environment. We work with local authorities, businesses, and the community to ensure that our projects are efficient, effective and sustainable energy that can be generated, stored and shared locally.

Our approach to achieving this ambition is to ensure that our projects are a net positive for the community and the environment. We work with local authorities, businesses, and the community to ensure that our projects are efficient, effective and sustainable energy that can be generated, stored and shared locally.

Register your views

We welcome feedback from members of the community on our draft proposals at this event or via our dedicated website where you can get further information and help to comment on our plans. Please do have a look at our website at www.ensoenergy.co.uk/news-projects/southlands-solar-farm to remain updated about our projects.




The benefits of Southlands Solar Farm

The wider benefits of the proposed development, in addition to the contribution towards the security of energy resources, are:

- Helping Chesham City Council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with local, national and international targets and to deliver Climate and Biodiversity strategies.
- Making an important contribution to achieving legally binding national targets to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Contributing to the UK's urgent need to transition to a low carbon future.
- Payment of business rates once operational.
- Providing a 40 year period in which the electricity generated will be used while the private landowner's operation is maintained in accordance with a site-specific management plan.

Biodiversity

- Significant opportunities to provide additional hedgerow and tree planting to create new ecological improvement areas and enhance existing habitat corridors.
- New round integrated ground protection and drainage opportunities.
- Midflower planting encourages pollinators and other beneficial insects through the food chain.
- Opportunities to keep the land productive and chemical free - suitable species to drive and improve soil quality.
- Insect habitats to promote wildlife e.g. bird boxes, bat boxes.



Construction and access


Access to the site will be from Runwell Road, with construction expected to take 18 months.

It is anticipated that the average number of deliveries to be made by HGVs during the construction period would be approximately 1.5 per day.

Once operational there would be limited vehicle access each month comprising a small site visit, servicing the site.

A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be required to accompany the operation and access the roads.





Evolving concept design

The site will continue via an underground cable to the Beauchamps National Grid Substation.

Key:

- Site Boundary
- Security Fence
- Access Track
- Access Road
- UKV Foundation
- Transformer
- Security Gate
- Overhead
- Battery
- Open-Park Converter
- Storage Room
- Storage Foundation
- Storage Room (Overhead)
- Field Storage Planning



Agriculture and Solar Farms in the UK

The Government Food Strategy, published in June 2021, comes at a time of 'significant increases in food prices, largely because of energy prices and exacerbated by events in Ukraine' (Food Strategy - June 2021).

It states:

"The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and current turbulence caused by the invasion of Ukraine are reminders of the crucial importance of UK food producers to our national resilience. In the UK, government-led food has always been an important dimension of our food security. However, successful domestic production is what gives us national resilience for an uncertain world."

The Government Food Strategy states "Self-sufficiency is not the same as food security. Being part of a global food system provides us with a diversity of supply sources and access to new products that cannot be produced domestically, contributing to our food security."

The UK is largely self-sufficient in wheat, most meats, eggs, and some varieties of vegetable production. However, the UK will still have some a food security gap in self-sufficiency in recent years with an estimated 10% increase in imports. Indeed, for the food that we can produce in the UK, we produce around 15% of what we consume.


"Loss of food-producing land"

Planning Permission is sought for a temporary period of 10 years. After that period, all equipment will be removed. The land is 'not' lost in the presence of a solar farm. The land can still be used for agricultural purposes, including sheep grazing and agriculture (growing vegetables under the panels).

Mr Deputy President, Tim Bratshaw, when responding to the Government's Food Strategy Strategy:

"This is a time when we need to be producing more in Britain. UK food security, self-sufficiency and availability issues have caused areas of UK food production to contract and farmers' prices to collapse with prices now 20% higher than the time last year.

In order to give farmers the confidence to continue to produce food in such a time, we need to see policies that protect the importance of food and electricity for food production. We also need immediate responses to the energy efficiency and the UK's renewable energy sector and where we need, which farmers are well placed to help deliver."



Photomontage Viewpoint 6

View from Runwell Road looking north west

Existing view

Year 1 view

Year 5 view



Photomontage Viewpoint 8

View from footpath north of Beauchamps Drive

Existing view

Year 1 view

Year 5 view



Photomontage Viewpoint 11

View from PRUW PROW 229_Z1 looking south

Existing view

Year 1 view

Year 5 view

October 2022

10

Appendix 2: Local Resident Invite Brochure



Southlands Solar Farm

Invitation to public consultation event on **Thursday 1 September 2022** from 2pm – 7pm



Where is Southlands Solar Farm?

Introducing Southlands Solar Farm

Enso Energy is proposing to develop a solar farm and battery storage facility on land at Southlands Farm, south of Runwell Road (A1332), Runwell, Wickford.

The proposed solar farm would provide renewable electricity for distribution to the National Grid. The proposal is equivalent to the electricity demands of approximately 7,434 homes each year of the proposed 40-year operational life, while also providing significant CO₂ savings when compared to generation of electricity by non-renewable sources.

The battery storage facility will supply electricity to the local electricity network, at times of peak energy demand and help make the renewable energy output of the solar farm a secure and reliable part of the UK energy supply.

The project is at an early stage, and we would like your views on the development proposals.



The site

The site is located on land south of Runwell Road (A1332), Runwell, Wickford comprising of approximately 70.3 hectares of land.

While there are no statutory landscape, heritage or ecological designations on site, as part of our site surveys and further assessments we will be considering these matters carefully in developing our proposals alongside the feedback received.

Access to the site will be from Runwell Road.

The site will connect via an underground cable to the Rayleigh Substation.

The benefits

- The project will produce a significant amount of renewable energy. It will assist Chelmsford City Council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with local, national and international targets.
- It will assist Chelmsford City Council in meeting its 'Climate and Ecological Emergency pledge' of making activities Net Zero by 2030.
- The project will support the UK's transition to a Net Zero economy by 2050.
- This is a temporary development and at the end of the solar farm's life (40 years), all equipment can be easily dismantled, removed from site and largely recycled. A solar farm allows agricultural land to rest for the period of operation and the land use is reversed back to agriculture at the end of the project life.
- A scheme of landscape and ecological improvements will be prepared, ensuring the project provides a biodiversity net gain.
- A solar farm gives land the opportunity for multiple uses. In addition to renewable energy production, solar farms can continue to be grazed by sheep with wildflowers sown around the site.
- The proposed development will make use of innovative tracker technology. This maximises the renewable energy generated and significantly increases the efficiency of the solar arrays.

We anticipate that construction will be complete in approximately 6 months.

The proposed solar farm will not require Government Subsidy.



Getting to Net Zero

The UK Government was the first national government in the world to declare a Climate Emergency in May 2019 and has set a legally binding target of Net Zero emissions by 2050 (relative to 1990 levels). At local levels many councils, including Chelmsford City Council, have made their own similar declarations.

Renewables now account for approximately 43% of UK electricity generation proving they are a very viable alternative to fossil fuels. However, to achieve targets and tackle Climate Change we urgently require a rapid increase in the further deployment of renewables, including solar.








Battery storage

We need to make the best use of all available technologies and resources to achieve net zero by 2050. As the share of renewable energy generation increases, the ability to store and balance energy supply and demand will be essential to achieve a zero carbon economy. According to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) around 30 GW of short duration storage and flexible demand may be needed by 2050.

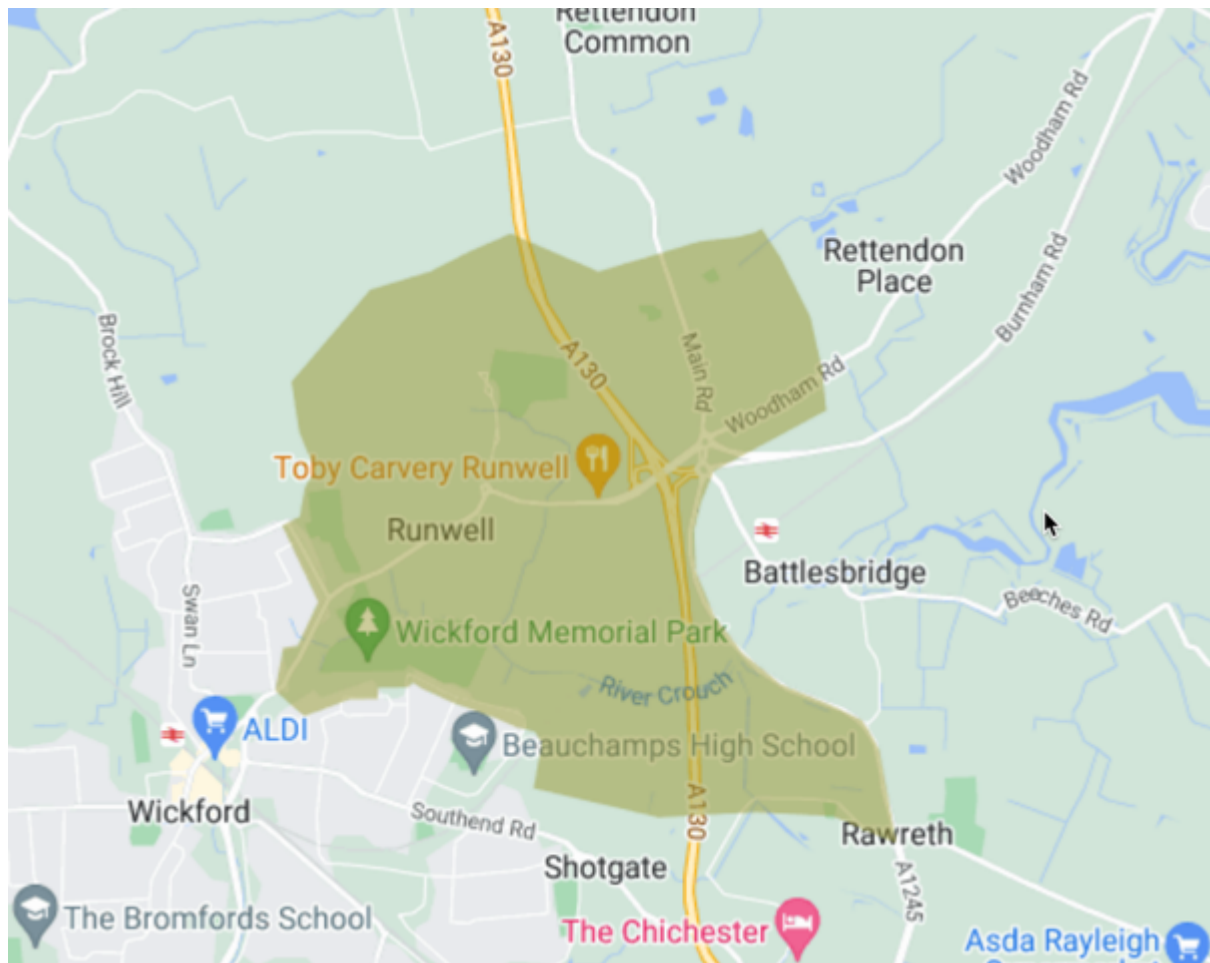
Due to technological advances in battery technology, renewable energy can now meet peaks in energy demand throughout the day. Deploying co-located battery storage provides an important role in decarbonising our energy system by storing renewable energy and discharging it at times of high demand.



Southlands Solar Farm
Statement of Community Involvement

<p>Have your say</p> <p>Enso Energy believes that it is vital that local communities are able to see and shape planning applications that may have an impact on them.</p> <p>We therefore invite you to provide feedback on our draft proposals in the following ways:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>1 Attend our public consultation event on Thursday 1 September from 2pm – 7pm</p> <p>You are invited to attend our public consultation event at which you can see our plans, learn more about our proposal and talk to the project team.</p> <p>The event will be held at Rumwell Village Hall, 17 Church End Lane, Rumwell, Wickford SS11 7JE.</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>2 Fill in the feedback form that accompanies this public consultation brochure</p> <p>Please read through this brochure and provide feedback to us by way of the free post feedback form.</p> <p>3 Visit the dedicated public consultation website: www.ensoenergy.co.uk/enso-projects/southlands-solar-farm</p> <p>We have set up a dedicated public consultation website, where you can find further information about our draft proposals and provide feedback.</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p>This brochure forms part of our pre-planning application process. We are asking for your opinion on a proposed solar farm at Southlands.</p> <p>Please take your time to consider the information within this brochure, and don't hesitate to contact a member of our team should you have any questions.</p> <p>We would be grateful if you could answer the feedback form and let us have your contact details for the purpose of informing the project design and our planning application. Feedback received will be included within a Statement of Community Involvement which will accompany the application.</p> <p>For further information, please do not hesitate to email consultation@ensoenergy.co.uk</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Southlands Solar Farm</p>									
<p>About us</p> <p>We are one of the UK's leading developers of renewable energy projects.</p> <p>Our ambition is to use the latest solar technology to make a positive impact on our country and the communities we work with. We are firm advocates for renewable, low carbon, efficient, secure and sustainable energy that can be generated, stored and utilised locally.</p> <p>Our approach to subsidy-free renewable energy is assisting the country's move towards a more secure renewable energy supply and accelerating progress to net zero.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p>Remain informed</p> <p>Please visit www.ensoenergy.co.uk/enso-projects/southlands-solar-farm where information about our proposals will be updated.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p> 020 7499 2842</p> <p> consultation@ensoenergy.co.uk</p> <p> www.ensoenergy.co.uk</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%; font-size: x-small;"> <p>Should you require this document in large print, audio or braille then please contact us at the details provided.</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%; text-align: right;">  </div> </div>	<p>Feedback form</p> <p>To return your completed feedback form please tear it from the brochure and pop it in the post by Thursday 8 September 2022. Alternatively, you can return your form via email to consultation@ensoenergy.co.uk</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Title:</td> <td style="width: 30%;">Name:</td> <td style="width: 40%;">Postcode:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Address:</td> <td colspan="2">Telephone:</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Email:</td> </tr> </table> <p>1. Has this local resident brochure been helpful in understanding our proposal? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p> <p>2. With regards to the proposals you have read about within this brochure, are you: <input type="checkbox"/> In favour <input type="checkbox"/> In objection <input type="checkbox"/> Of no opinion</p> <p>3. Please use this space to provide any comments on the proposal. We would welcome your feedback on all aspects of the emerging design shown in the brochure.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 80px; margin-top: 5px;"></div> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 10px;">Please provide your contact details if you wish to get a response. Any information provided will only be used for the purpose of the planning application to the Local Planning Authority and will not be disclosed with any third parties. Your contact details will not be listed on the planning application documentation.</p>		Title:	Name:	Postcode:	Address:	Telephone:		Email:		
Title:	Name:	Postcode:									
Address:	Telephone:										
Email:											

Appendix 3: Local Resident Invite Brochure Distribution Area



A brochure and invite (Appendix 2) for the public consultation event was sent out on 22 August 2022 to 1263 residential households and 53 businesses.

Appendix 4: Local Resident Invite Letter



[insert address]

Dear [insert name]

RE: ENSO ENERGY – PROPOSED SOLAR FARM AND BATTERY STORAGE FACILITY ON LAND AT SOUTHLANDS FARM, SOUTH OF THE A132, RUNWELL, WICKFORD

I am writing to you on behalf of Enso Energy to inform you about our proposals for a solar farm and battery storage facility on land at Southlands Farm. You may recently have received a brochure with information about the proposals inviting you to attend a public exhibition on 1 September at Runwell Village Hall between 14.00 and 19.00. **Further to this I wanted to reach out to you personally to see if you would like to meet or arrange a call to answer any specific questions you may have about our proposals for a Solar Farm in your area.**

The project forms a major part of our ambitions to contribute meaningfully to the security of energy supply in Chelmsford City Council. To help make the renewable energy output of the solar farm a secure and reliable part of the UK energy supply a battery storage system will be used, this will also help supply electricity to the local electricity network at times of peak energy demand.

The main features of our proposal are as follows:

- We plan to develop a solar farm and battery storage facility that provide renewable electricity for distribution to the National Grid.
- This is a temporary development. The site will be returned to agricultural use at the end of the project life.
- The solar farm and battery storage facility would generate a significant amount of energy each year of the proposed 40-year operational life.

Please do not hesitate to email me on tom.ohare@ensoenergy.co.uk to facilitate a meeting or call me on 07384 812 818 should you wish to discuss anything mentioned in this letter further. Alternatively, we have a dedicated website where you can find out more. Once again, please do have a look at www.ensoenergy.co.uk/enso-projects/southlands-solar-farm to learn more about our proposal.

Yours Sincerely,



Tom O'Hare
Project Manager

A local direct consultation letter was sent out on 31 August 2022 to residential properties situated in close proximity to the Proposed Development offering a direct briefing.

Appendix 5: Website Home Page

[Discover more](#)[Why solar?](#)[Proposed Projects](#)[News and views](#)[Careers](#)[Contact](#)

Southlands Solar Farm

We are proposing to develop a solar farm, and battery storage on land at Southlands Farm, south of Ranwell Road (A132), Ranwell, Wickford

We are in the early stages of developing our proposals on land at Southlands Farm, south of Ranwell Road (A132), Ranwell, Wickford.

The proposed solar farm would provide renewable electricity for distribution to the National Grid. This project would generate significant amounts of energy each year of the proposed 40 years of operational life, while also providing significant carbon dioxide savings when compared to generation of electricity by non-renewable sources. The proposals include battery storage which will allow energy to be stored on site at times when grid-demand is lower and exported at times of higher demand to ensure no energy is 'lost' and help balance the National Grid.

[Read More](#)



[Download Our Brochure](#)

[Further Information](#)

[Site Location](#)

[Consultation](#)

The Site and Proposal

The Site is located on land Southlands Farm, south of Ranwell Road (A132), Ranwell, Wickford comprising approximately 70.3 hectares of land. While there are no statutory landscape, heritage or ecological designations on site, as part of our site surveys and further assessments we will be considering these matters carefully in developing our proposals for consultation.

The development forms a temporary (40 year) use of farmland that is easily reversed at the end of the operational life. A scheme of landscape and ecological improvements will be prepared to support the application, ensuring the project provides a biodiversity net gain.

Access to the site will be from Ranwell Road with construction expected to take 6 months.

The Benefits

The wider benefits of the development proposed, in addition to the contribution towards the security of energy supplies, are:

- Assisting Chelmsford City Council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with local, national and international targets and declared Climate Emergency.
- Making an important contribution to achieving legally binding national targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Contributing to the UK's urgent need to transition to a low carbon future.
- Payment of business rates once operational.
- Providing a 40-year period in which the intensively farmed land can 'rest' while the onsite boundary vegetation is improved and maintained in accordance with a site-specific management plan.

Community Benefits

We believe that it's right that the community closest to a solar farm is able to benefit from it. In addition we believe that the community itself is best placed to say what the community benefit should be. If you have an idea for a sustainable community based scheme or project, then please do let us know by getting in contact with us via the form at the bottom of this page.

[Getting to Net Zero](#)

[Our Vision](#)

Register your views

If you would like to register your views for Southlands Solar Farm, please fill in your details in the form or

[020 7499 3842](tel:02074993842)
consultation@ensoenergy.co.uk

Please provide your contact details if you wish to get a response. Any information provided will only be used for the purpose of the planning application to the Local Planning Authority and will not be disclosed with any third parties. Your contact details will not be listed on the planning application documentation.

Name (required)

Email (required)

Telephone (optional)

What is your connection to Southlands Farm Solar Farm? (required)
☐ local resident ☐ local business
☐ representative of a local group or organisation

Postcode (optional)

Message

☐ Please confirm that you have read and agree to our [privacy policy](#)

[Send](#)

Appendix 6: Comments received via feedback form question 3 and Applicant's response

COMMENTS RECEIVED	APPLICANT'S RESPONSE
I object to the solar farm being behind my home, blighting my view. If it stopped in the field before my home, it would be acceptable as long as access isn't in the lane beside my home, it would mean non properties would have to see the panels and frames. The value of my property would be affected, and compensation would have to be given to me if this goes ahead.	<p>The Solar Farm layout has been amended so that the northern half of the field in question has been removed from the application.</p> <p>Comprehensive assessments have been made on visual impacts of the Proposed Development within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal. Planting on site boundaries would be encouraged to grow higher, with new hedgerows or trees planted to infill any gaps.</p> <p>Any potential effects on property value is not a material planning consideration.</p>
My husband bought our home 39 years ago for the surrounding views of fields and countryside. We are objecting because the view behind our home would be blighted by solar panels for the next 40 years. We also object to access beside our home as it would be extremely dangerous and noise, pulling in and out at the bottom of a fast busy hill onto Runwell Road.	<p>The Solar Farm layout has been amended so that the northern half of the field in question has been removed from the application.</p> <p>Comprehensive assessments have been made on visual impacts of the Proposed Development within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal. Hedgerow planting on site boundaries would be encouraged to grow higher, with new hedgerows or trees planted to infill any gaps.</p> <p>A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared and is submitted with the application, this details the anticipated traffic levels and mitigation measures. The access point has been assessed and is acceptable.</p>
How will this effect the Essex Wildlife Trust land at Shotgate Thickets? Will people still be able to access it? You say there is no ecological value to the land. https://www.essexwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/shotgate-thickets	The Essex Wildlife Trust land at Shotgate Thickets is outside the application area and will remain unaffected by the proposals.
Hi, what do you intend to do about the public footpath that runs across that land. It starts at OS Grid Ref: TQ 75658 94630 > OS Grid Ref: TQ 76373 94525 > OS Grid Ref: TQ 77187 94621 I look forward to your reply.	The public footpath will remain unaffected by the proposals.
I am stabled at Southlands Farm, is this likely to use the grazing fields or just the crop fields?	The Site Location Plan identifies the application area.

<p>Hi I hope to meet some of you next week at the consultation at Runwell Village Hall. I'm a sustainability consultant and local resident. Your brochure shows sheep grazing under the panels (but I'm aware this requires a special build of taller supports) and you state you want to make ecological improvements (and I'm aware that some solar farms simply spray weedkiller several times a year). What plans do you have for either keeping the land under the panels productive, bearing in mind the food and energy cost crisis, or enhancing local biodiversity? Would you like to be put in contact with potential local partners to achieve those aims?</p>	<p>The application is accompanied by an Agricultural Land Classification Report, Ecological Assessment and a Landscape Plan which ensures that wildlife is protected and habitats enhanced as part of the proposed development.</p> <p>The project will deliver significant Biodiversity Net Gain in area habitats.</p>
<p>Proposal understood.</p> <p>My wife and I object to the proposals.</p> <p>There is a risk to human health, caused by hypersensitive and electromagnetic rays, which can result in headaches or worse. There is more sickness in areas where there are already Solar Farms and therefore they should not be constructed near homes.</p> <p>Solar energy is the least productive of all forms of renewal energy with only a 20% success rate.</p> <p>Solar farms are destroying the ecosystem slowly, which affects every type of insect, bird and land animal.</p> <p>Solar Farms can be unsightly and noisy causing considerable inconvenience to the residents of nearby houses. This would almost certainly reduce the value of the properties.</p> <p>I appreciate the need for renewable energy but I think much more consideration should be given to the location of Solar Farms.</p>	<p>Solar energy forms a fundamental part of the UK's transition to achieving a low carbon economy, tackling Climate Change and achieving net zero by 2050. The technology is proven to be safe. It is the lowest cost and quickest to deploy of all energy sources. Between June and August this year, solar often provided up to 25% of UK daytime electricity. In the southwest, it was up to 65% (National Grid ESO carbon app)</p> <p>The application is accompanied by an Agricultural Land Classification Report, Ecological Assessment and a Landscape Plan which ensures that wildlife is protected and habitats enhanced as part of the proposed development.</p> <p>The project will deliver significant Biodiversity Net Gain in area habitats.</p> <p>Comprehensive assessments have been made on visual impacts of the Proposed Development within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal.</p> <p>A noise assessment has been completed and accompanies the planning application. It concludes there will be no impact on residential receptors.</p> <p>Any potential effects on property value is not a material planning consideration.</p>
<p>Can you confirm PROW Footpath 8 will remain open from Battlesbridge to the Quart Pot Public House.</p> <p>Also as part of the benefits to the local community could you fund the proposed</p>	<p>The public footpath will not be impacted by the solar farm.</p>

Footbridge over the River Crouch to link the Memorial Park to Footpath 8	
Can you tell me where the access point will be on Runwell Rd? Please	Access to the Site will be taken directly from Runwell Road, in the north-eastern part of the Site as shown on the application documents (using an existing farm access broadly opposite the 'Travelodge'/'Toby Carvery').
The public footpath that runs through the site between Runwell and Battlesbridge MUST be retained. It is the only safe way to reach Battlesbridge on foot from the Runwell end of Wickford; the only other route is via Rawreth, at the complete opposite end of town. I see no mention of the footpath in your proposal, but its removal would mark a significant decrease in accessibility for foot traffic and put an end to a historic path that has been trod by locals for hundreds of years.	The public footpath will remain unaffected by the proposals.
<p>I have read the brochure and attended the very helpful consultation event in Runwell Village Hall on Thursday.</p> <p>I am pleased to see a large project for renewable energy. It would demonstrate to current and future generations a serious contribution by local people to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. And I would be proud to see it in operation.</p> <p>I am pleased to learn that the plans include using and maintaining the land as suitable for agriculture and biodiversity in the future. I very much hope that this proposal happens.</p>	Noted.
I was unable to attend the public consultation but wanted to check something with you please. Should the project go ahead, will the public right of way still be open throughout the set-up and life of the solar farm? Also, do you envisage there being any job opportunities for local residents? Thank you	The public footpath will remain unaffected by the proposals.
Please email the pictures over of the site plan	Consultee has received image of site plan.
Main concern would be regarding the effect of traffic control on the main Runwell Road.	A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared and is submitted with the application, this details the anticipated traffic levels and mitigation measures. The CTMP is provided to reduce the effect of the construction phase on the highway network.

In favour providing inverters do not cause noise to residents. Inverters must be sited in a way that generates the least noise from the cooling fans regarding dwellings in Beauchamps Drive.	A noise assessment has been completed and accompanies the planning application. It concludes there will be no impact on residential receptors.
Providing there is a written guarantee in place (that is legally binding) that the land is restored to, and designated greenbelt at the end of the solar farm's life. I have no objections. Runwell village residents should also benefit directly from the project and money not siphoned off into a general Essex County Council.	This is a temporary development and will be returned to solely agricultural use after the life cycle of the project. A Planning Condition would be applied confirming this.
I attended the consultation on the 1st September after reading the information in the brochure. I asked what the carbon foot print is for making, installing the panels and running the main cable to the Rayleigh grid, the guy could not tell me, I asked how long will the installation have to run before the carbon footprint of installation was reversed, again no figures could be provided yet the guy said about 2 years, no figures to back this up. the brochure quotes that the UK now generates via renewable energy 43% however no data on where this information came from and the guy told me it was from government data, in truth the average is around 23% although over a period in 2020 we did achieve 47% for a period of time due to a very windy period. The brochure states that the panels are self-cleaning however when pressed on this point the guy did confirm that contractors will be brought in to clean them and keep the weeds down, again pressed on what the carbon foot print of these works would be no figures could be produced. I am not against the idea of reducing carbon to combat global warming but this brochure is totally inaccurate in so many ways and is a tool to sell the idea to people so there is no one against it. lets see figures to back up the positive benefits of this installation, my guess is we are being hood winked on the basis of saving the world but in fact its to line the pockets of Enso Energy. I very much look forward to receiving answers to the above not just saying but actual data of when and where this data was obtained.	The data provided in brochure was accurate and comes from a variety of sources, namely government data.
I wish to object to your plan to develop a solar farm at Southlands.	

Looking at your plans for this solar farm there seems to be no provision for the existing footpath that goes from Runwell Road across the fields to Battlesbridge. This is a well used footpath and my objection is on the grounds that this route will no longer be accessible.	The public footpath will remain unaffected by the proposals.
I agree that we need more power, but I feel this land should stop as it is for food whether it be growing food or animals, plus because we live near to this solar farm we are worried about radiation? and any noise that it will give off. For these reasons I am against this solar farm.	The use of the land for agriculture can continue, even with the presence of a Solar Farm. A noise assessment has been completed and accompanies the planning application.
You say you'd like the support of local people for these projects and that your ambition is to use the latest solar technology to make a positive impact on our country and the communities you work with. Unfortunately I think company profits are what's most important and any thoughts or objections raised by the local communities will be dismissed. We all care about our climate and we all care about where we live. What the answer is I've no idea - I understand there are two other large solar farms proposed for this area, do we really need another. Have we not done our bit for the National Grid!!	The Applicant is supportive of and fully committed to meaningful pre-application consultation. Thoughts and feedback raised by the local community have been listened to – the Applicant has amended the scheme considering feedback received during the public consultation process. The Applicant has carefully considered the location of the proposed Solar Farm.
I object as the public path seems to be gone with new proposals and we use this path for our walking / rambling group	The public footpath will remain unaffected by the proposals.
I wish to object to your plan to develop a solar farm at Southlands. This is prime agricultural land that has been used to grow wheat and rape this year - we need to protect our productive farmland for the sake of food security. Looking at your plans for this solar farm there seems to be no provision for the existing public footpath that goes from Runwell Road across the fields to Battlesbridge. This is a well-used footpath, and my objection is on the grounds that this route will no longer be accessible. Please can you assure me that the public footpath will still be assessable for all to continue to use in the future.	The site will retain and agricultural use throughout the life of the solar farm. In the meantime, it will also produce a groundswell of clean, green energy which will be of benefit to all. The public footpath will not be impacted by the solar farm.

One question - How will the solar panels link up to the existing electric pylon infrastructure? I understand that the noise emission is very low and not at night - this was my main concern, as I live just across the A130 to where the solar panels will be.	<p>The solar panels would connect to the National Grid Rayleigh Substation via an underground cable.</p> <p>A noise assessment has been completed and accompanies the planning application.</p>
Its about time something was done to help this area having closed Bradwell power station. Now we are feeling the backlash of no longer being self-sufficient, thanks to Russia. We rely too much on other countries for our needs.	Noted.
Good idea in principle, would need to reserve final opinion until I've attended the meeting, where more detail would be available.	Noted.
It seems Chelmsford gets the advantages and Wickford/Runwell get the disadvantages. There is plenty of farmland closer to Chelmsford for Chelmsford to use or provide advantages to Runwell/Wickford	The Applicant has carefully considered the location of the proposed Solar Farm.
I think its a very good idea, i hope you get the permission to do this.	Noted.
Your brochure was delivered while i was on holiday so i could not get to your consultation event. You do not state in your brochure where you have put other solar sites. Also how are they working out! The amount of homes you say you would provide renewable energy for does not seem that much for the 70.4 hectares you will be using. Also i would like to know who would be paying for this!	<p>A full list of the projects the Applicant is involved in can be found on: https://ensoenergy.co.uk/enso-projects.</p> <p>The Proposed development will be funded solely by private investment. The Proposed Development will not require a government subsidy.</p>
Very concerned about looking like a prison with high security fencing etc. wildlife suffers - what about footpaths? Noise once installed. Six months of traffic to construct. House prices being reduced due to living right near a solar farm - if footpath being kept maybe upgrade to a bridleway too as nowhere locally to ride??	<p>Comprehensive assessments have been made on visual impacts of the Proposed Development within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Appraisal.</p> <p>Public footpaths will remain unaffected by the proposals.</p> <p>A noise assessment has been completed and accompanies the planning application.</p> <p>A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared and is submitted with the application, this details the anticipated traffic levels and mitigation measures. The CTMP is provided to reduce the effect of the construction phase on the highway network.</p>

	Any potential effects on property value is not a material planning consideration.
This is greenbelt land used for agriculture - not a suitable site as this land would be a loss to agriculture - viability of a sheep farm?	<p>The application has been assessed against the purposes of the Green Belt. It is considered acceptable in this case.</p> <p>Agricultural activities can continue on this Site.</p>
investment can be a positive move in the local and surrounding areas and improve the communities that live there	Noted.