Leaford Solar Farm

Statement of Community Involvement

power for good

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced for a proposed 30MW solar farm and associated infrastructure (the "Proposed Development") on land between Stallington and Saverley Green, Staffordshire (the "Application Site").

1.2. The SCI has been prepared by Renewable Energy Systems Ltd ("the Applicant") to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.

1.3. As well as detailing the stakeholders and community the Applicant has consulted with during the pre-application period, it also details the various consultation methods used.

1.4. The SCI goes on to summarise feedback from stakeholders and the community and how this feedback has been taken into account regarding the design of the Proposed Development.

2. INTRODUCTION

Background

2.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) accompanies the planning application for a proposed 30MW solar farm and associated infrastructure (the "Proposed Development") on land between Stallington and Saverley Green, Staffordshire (the "Application Site").

2.2. Please refer to **Figure 4** (5004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-004) for the layout of the Proposed Development.

Proposed Development

2.3 Construction and Operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment, necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains.

2.4 The Proposed Development will result in the production of clean energy from a renewable energy resource (daylight) and will also involve additional landscaping including hedgerow and tree planting and improved biodiversity management – further details can be found in **Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) Figure 19** which accompanies the planning application.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

3.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.

3.2. Conducting an early and transparent pre-application public consultation is consistent with the guidance within the NPPF (2023). Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:

"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."

3.3. The NPPF goes on to state that:

"[Local Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications."

3.4. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 ensures Local Authorities develop strategies to engage the local community in the planning process. These strategies must be set out in a document called a 'Statement of Community Involvement' and must be aimed at all sections of society - including identified 'hard to reach' groups - and encourage engagement in the planning process. The aim is to encourage 'ownership' of the planning process by the community.

3.5. As a result, this SCI (for the Proposed Development) also fulfils a formal recommendation of Stafford Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), by documenting how people have been provided with an opportunity to feed into the design process of a scheme.

3.6. Stafford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement[1] sets out how early community consultation should take place on planning issues. Paragraph 3.3 states:

"*We will encourage developers to consult on their proposals as soon as practicable*.

3.7. In addition to the above, the Applicant recognises that local people can make a valuable contribution to the proposals by offering their local knowledge and raising issues that may not have been considered by the project team, in many cases resulting in a stronger proposal.

3.8. Consistent with advice in the LPA's Statement of Community Involvement, this document forms a consultation supporting statement that summarises the consultation activities undertaken by the Applicant, a summary of comments received, and issues raised, and how the Applicant has had regard to these comments.

3.9. The approach to community consultation as presented in this SCI reflects the LPA's advice for community consultation. Throughout the pre-application public consultation, the Applicant has:

- Invited comments at a time when they can inform the process;
- Provided sufficient information to describe the subject matter of the consultation;
- Given notice of the consultation in advance;
- Clearly described how to submit comments and emphasised that comments made were not representations to the determining authority (Stafford Borough Council) and that there would be the opportunity for representations to be made to the determining authority once the planning application was submitted; and
- Considered the representations received prior to submitting the planning application.

1 https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cme/DocMan1/Planning%20Policy/Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement/Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement%20Adoption%202018%20FINAL.pdf

4. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

4.1. This section details the key local stakeholders the Applicant identified and engaged with during the pre-application public consultation process. Prior to the start of the consultation, the Applicant undertook detailed desktop research to develop a comprehensive understanding of the key stakeholders to engage with during pre-application public consultation. This research involved identifying local stakeholders located around the site of the Proposed Development.

4.2. The stakeholder groups identified included:

- The local population around the Application Site, including Fulford, Stallington, Saverley Green, Cresswell and the surrounding area; and
- Locally elected political representatives from the following parish council and ward:
  - Fulford Parish Council;
  - Ward councillors for Fulford ward of Suffolk Borough Council;
  - County Councillor for the Stone Rural electoral division of Staffordshire County Council;
  - Outdoor recreation groups

5. CONSULTATION

5.1. The pre-application public consultation began on 28th June 2023. During the pre-application public consultation, a range of communication methods were used to provide information about the Proposed Development and ensure that the local community had the opportunity to provide their feedback. These methods included:

5.1.1 Introductory letter to elected representatives

On 28th June 2023, the Applicant wrote to ward councillors for Fulford ward of Suffolk Borough Council and the county councillor for the Stone Rural electoral division of Staffordshire County Council, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in the near future. The letter also invited the parties to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the letter can be found at **Appendix A**.

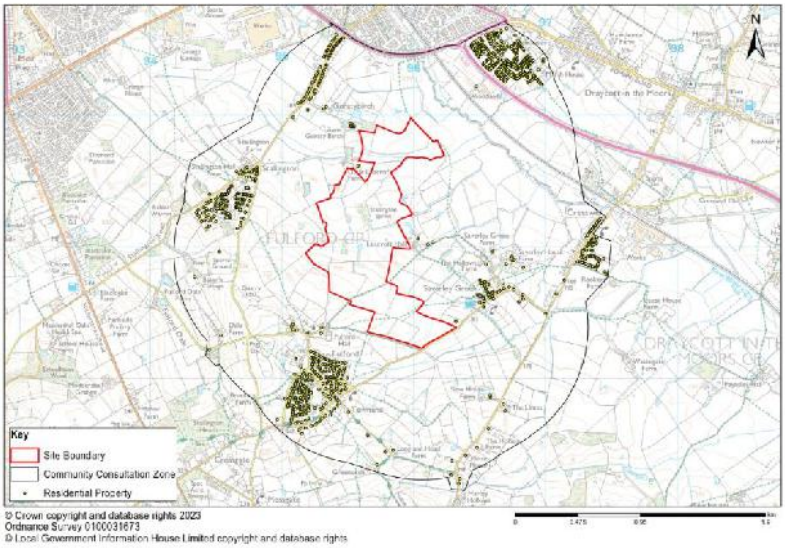
5.1.2 Email to elected representatives

On 3rd July 2023, the Applicant wrote to ward councillors for Fulford ward of Suffolk Borough Council and the county councillor for the Stone Rural electoral division of Staffordshire County Council, enclosing a newsletter regarding the upcoming public exhibition. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix B**.

5.1.3 Newsletter to local residents

On 3rd July 2023, the Applicant sent a newsletter, advertising the upcoming public exhibition, to 821 properties identified within the consultation zone as shown on the map below. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix B**.

Fulford Community Consultation Zone



5.1.4 Pre-exhibition advertising

The Applicant placed an advertisement in the Stoke Sentinel, on 3rd July 2023 to inform the wider community of the public exhibition. A copy of the advertisement can be found at **Appendix C**.

5.1.5 Project website

On 3rd July 2023, a project website was launched at www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk/ containing information on the Proposed Development as well as contact details for the Applicant.

The project website is updated regularly including when the planning submission is made, to include links to all planning application documentation and information on how people can comment on the application.

5.1.6 Introductory letter to local recreation group

On 7th July 2023, the Applicant wrote to Stafford Rambling Group to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and enclosing a newsletter regarding the upcoming public exhibition. A copy of the correspondence can be found at **Appendix D**.

5.1.7 Meetings with local elected representatives

On 11th July 2023, the Applicant held two separate meetings with a ward member for Fulford ward of Suffolk Borough Council and the county councillor for the Stone Rural electoral division of Staffordshire County Council respectively. A copy of the presentation provided at the meetings can be found at **Appendix E**.

5.1.8 Public exhibition

The public exhibition took place between 4pm and 8pm on 12th July 2023 at Fulford Village Hall. Approximately 80 people attended visiting from Saverley Green, Blythe Bridge, Fulford, Stallington, Crossgate, Mossgate, Meir Heath and Draycott in the Moors.

All of the information provided on the exhibition boards at the public exhibition was also published on the project website at www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk from 12th July 2023. A copy of the exhibition boards can be found at **Appendix F**.

A comment form was provided as part of the public exhibition and online, to encourage feedback from attendees about renewable energy in general and the project design specifically. The comment form was made available as a hard copy at the exhibition or as a downloadable version on the project website. A copy of the comment form can be found at **Appendix G**.

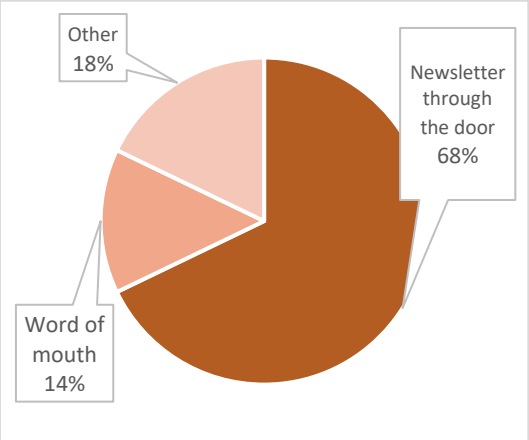
For people without internet access, hard copies of the information on the exhibition boards and comment forms were available upon request. No requests for hard copies were received.

Twenty-eight completed comment forms were received by the Applicant. Below is a summary of the answers received to the questions on the comment form.

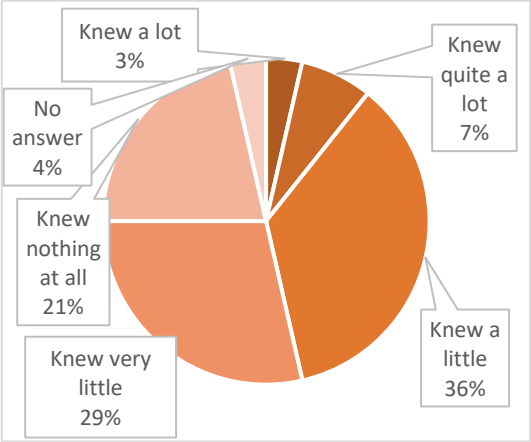
At all stages of the consultation process the Applicant set out clearly the purpose of the consultation and emphasised that comments made were not representations to the determining authority (Stafford Borough Council) and that there would be the opportunity for representations to the determining authority once the planning application was submitted.

5.1.9 Summary of responses to questions on submitted comment forms

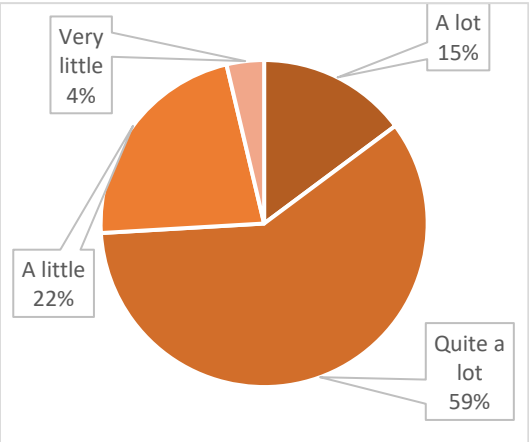
Q1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibition?



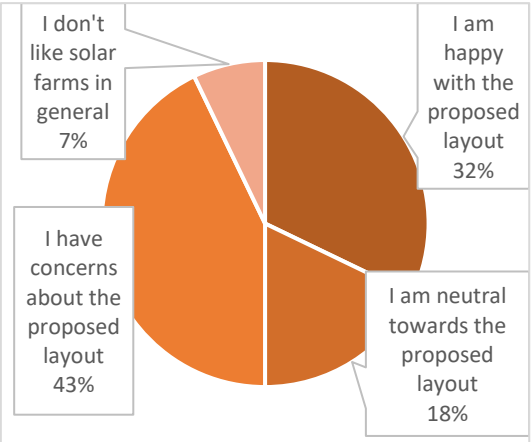
Q1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Leaford Solar Farm?



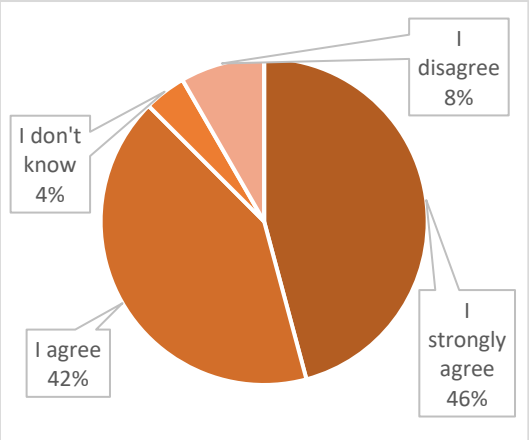
Q1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Leaford Solar Farm?



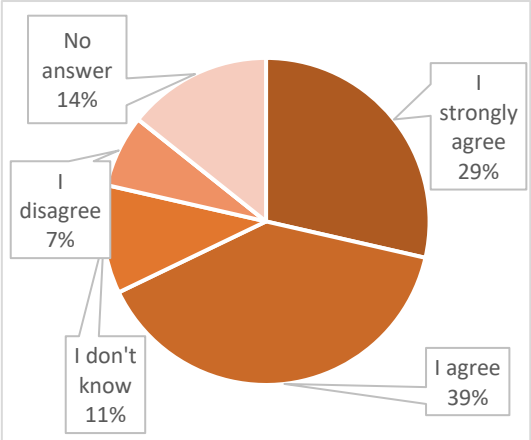
Q2.1 What do you think about the proposed preliminary design layout of Leaford Solar Farm?



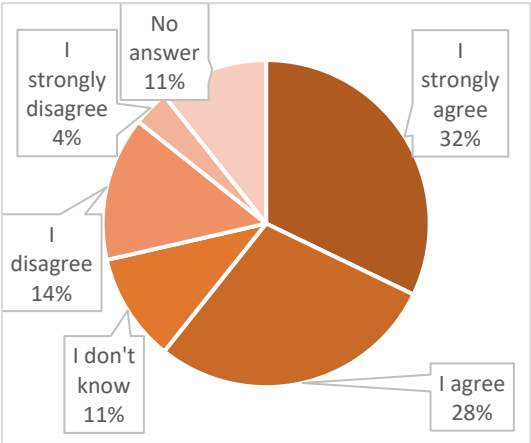
Q4.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?



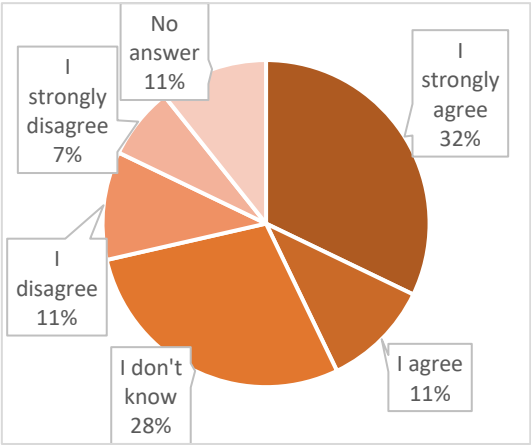
Q4.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?



Q4.3 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to support greater energy independence and security for the UK?



Q4.4 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to cut energy bills?



5.1.10 Meetings with local elected representatives

On 9th August 2023, the Applicant held two separate meetings with a ward member for Fulford ward of Suffolk Borough Council and the county councillor for the Stone Rural electoral division of Staffordshire County Council respectively. A copy of the presentation provided at the meetings can be found at **Appendix H.**

5.1.11 Meeting with British Horse Society (BHS)

On 9th November 2023, the Applicant met with a representative from the BHS. The meeting was arranged when the Applicant became aware that the BHS had submitted a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) for Bridleway status on Footpath 13 which runs along the southwest boundary of the proposed site and were preparing a DMMO for Bridleway status on Footpath 15 which runs west to east across the site of the Proposed Development.

5.1.12 Project Update Newsletter – December 2023

On 15th December 2023, the Applicant released a project update. The update, by way of newsletter, was sent to Fulford Parish Council, ward councillors for Fulford ward of Suffolk Borough Council and the county councillor for the Stone Rural electoral division of Staffordshire County Council as well as 824 local properties. This included all properties contacted as part of the newsletter mailing referenced in section 5.1.3 and other local residents who had attended the public exhibition and asked to be kept updated on the Proposed Development. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix I**.

5.1.13 Other consultation

In addition to the activities outlined in sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.12, the Applicant has been receiving and responding to enquiries and comments from local residents and Fulford Parish Council via email.

5.2. All feedback received during the consultation has been considered by the Applicant throughout the design iteration and pre-planning stages of the Proposed Development. A summary of feedback, issues and concerns raised, together with the Applicant's response to each can be found in Section 6.

6. FEEDBACK AND APPLICANT'S RESPONSE

The Applicant believes in meaningful and effective consultation, to facilitate constructive dialogue with stakeholders and the community. All feedback received through the pre-application consultation activities is considered, as part of the iterative design process. A summary of the feedback received, and the Applicant's response is below.

6.1. Need for Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar

Sample of Comment(s) received:

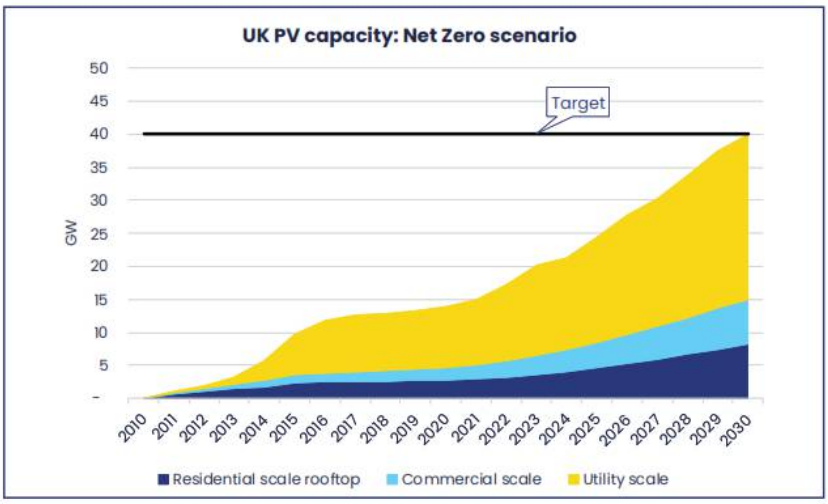
"Get on with it."

Applicant response:

As laid out in its Net Zero Strategy published in October 2021, the UK Government has made it clear that solar and wind will be the backbone to achieving a secure, affordable and low carbon energy supply. Analysis from the Climate Change Committee[2] and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero by 2050.

Solar Energy UK[2] has published an analysis, as shown in the graph below, estimating that residential and commercial development is expected to account for nearly 37% (15GW) of the total 2030 solar PV deployment with the remaining 63% (25GW) coming from large scale ground mounted solar farms.

2 https://solarenergyuk.org/resource/lighting-the-way-making-net-zero-a-reality-with-solar-energy/?cn-reloaded=1



Solar Energy UK's Lighting the Way Report[2] estimates the type and amount of solar deployment needed to reach the target of 40GW of solar by 2030.

The UK Government has committed to decarbonising the electricity system by 2035 to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and exposure to volatile global wholesale energy prices.

The UK Government's Energy Security Plan, published in March 2023, states *"Energy security necessarily entails the smooth transition to abundant, low-carbon energy. If we do not decarbonise, we will be less energy secure"*. Furthermore, it calls for energy to be *"cheap, clean and British"*. The government has also established a solar government-industry taskforce and will be publishing a solar roadmap setting out a clear step by step deployment trajectory to achieve 70GW of solar by 2035. The report recognises that ground-mounted solar is one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation and is readily deployable at scale and encourages deployment of solar technology that delivers environmental benefits, with consideration for ongoing food production or environmental improvement.

Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind is now the cheapest form of electricity generation[3]. This makes developments like the Proposed Development not just good for the environment but also for the consumer. If consented, the Proposed Development would be capable of producing clean, green electricity for approximately 8,000 homes[4] every year.

6.2. Loss of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Land Classification

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"The area of agricultural land which would be covered is massive. It is far too large an area."
"If agriculture is compromised I would not support the site."

Applicant response:

The Proposed Development would not pose a threat to food security. One of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. This is clear from reports on the 2022 heatwave in the UK affected fruit and vegetable harvests[5].

3 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6556027d046ed400148b99fe/electricity-generation-costs-2023.pdf

4 The homes equivalent figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Leaford has a predicted capacity factor of 11.2% and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (December 2022).

5 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/01/uk-farmers-count-cost-as-heatwave-kills-fruit-and-vegetable-crops.

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), climate change could reduce the UK's stock of high-grade agricultural land by nearly three-quarters by 2050[6]. Solar farms help to tackle the effects of climate change.

Agricultural land covers between 56% and 70% of UK land. Solar farms in the UK currently have a combined capacity of around 15GW which makes up just under 0.1% of land in the UK. By comparison, the total land used by the UK's golf courses is 0.5% and airports is 0.2%. The UK Energy Security Strategy[7] commits to increase the UK's current 14GW of solar capacity by up to 5 times by 2035. If the government meets its target of increasing solar capacity fivefold, ground-mounted solar would cover a total of around just 0.3% of the UK's land surface[8].

Typically, solar farms are designed in such a way that around just 5% of the land is physically occupied by the solar infrastructure. This allows remaining land to be accessible for plant growth, wildlife enhancements and complementary agricultural activities such as grazing.

The application is for temporary consent for dual purpose – enabling agricultural use in the form of sheep farming and generating renewable electricity using solar as a green energy source. It should be noted that the Proposed Development is fully reversible, and the site can therefore be reinstated back to its current state following the operational period. Furthermore, where a solar farm is installed on land which has been previously farmed, it enables the ground underneath to recover, while providing income for the farming business. This means solar farms help to regenerate soil quality, and so are helping to ensure the continued availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for future generations.

Sheep farming provides employment, supports rural economies and can produce a much more diverse ecological mosaic across the site. Landscapes managed by grazing sheep support a rich diversity of wildlife, while producing food.

An **Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey** accompanies the planning application. More than 95% of the land to be used by the Proposed Development has been classified as Subgrade 3b and is not considered Best and Most Versatile.

6.3. Location/Visual Impact

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"Future design of panels may be less intrusive on the landscape"
"It is going to be relatively out of sight for villagers"
"I am concerned about the visual pollution"
"Screening hedges to be planted and left to grow to full height"
"A few wind turbines might look better"
"Ensure the solar farm takes into account the topography of the land. Only place panels where they cannot be seen from Fulford Village, on the other side of the hill"

Applicant response:

Our iterative design process is informed by site surveys and assessments, and feedback from the community and stakeholders.

As a direct result of feedback following the public exhibition, we have made a number of design changes to reduce potential visibility including:

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6 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources#united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme2-indicator-2-1-15

7 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy

8 https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-is-solar-power-a-threat-to-ukfarmland/#:~:text=This%20is%20significant%20because%2C%20as,to%20grow%20biofuels%20for%20cars.

- Removal of solar infrastructure from the fields to the southwest and southeast, reducing potential visibility from Fulford village and from Saverley Green Road.
- Additional planting on the western boundary to reduce potential visibility.

As well as appropriate setting back of the solar infrastructure, potential visibility will be reduced by extensive existing trees and hedgerow and proposed new and infill native woodland and hedgerow planting. As well as providing screening, the planting will provide wildlife corridors and vital resources for mammals, birds, and insect species. New planting proposed includes:

- Trees planted along the southwest boundary in order to screen potential views from elevated parts of Fulford
- Tree and hedgerow planting on the western boundary to help screen potential views from the west including properties on the east side of Stallington
- Tree planting on the northern boundary to screen potential views from the north including residential properties at Gorsty Birch

The existing mature perimeter hedgerow of the entire site would be maintained to a minimum of 3.5m in order to help screen potential views towards the site generally.

A **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA),** which accompanies the planning application, provides an assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the existing landscape and visual amenity of the site and the surrounding area. The LVA considers the landscape character of the site and the surrounding areas and the features that define it, as well as views from key points locally.

The project proposals have been developed iteratively in conjunction with the production of the LVA with the intention of incorporating mitigation into the project from the outset. A **LEMP Figure 19** also accompanies the planning application and provides detail on where hedgerow reinforcement is proposed, as well as the location and detail of planting.

The LEMP also provides further details on measures to protect existing vegetation, proposed species and specifications for new vegetation, and other enhancement measures.

6.4. Traffic and Construction

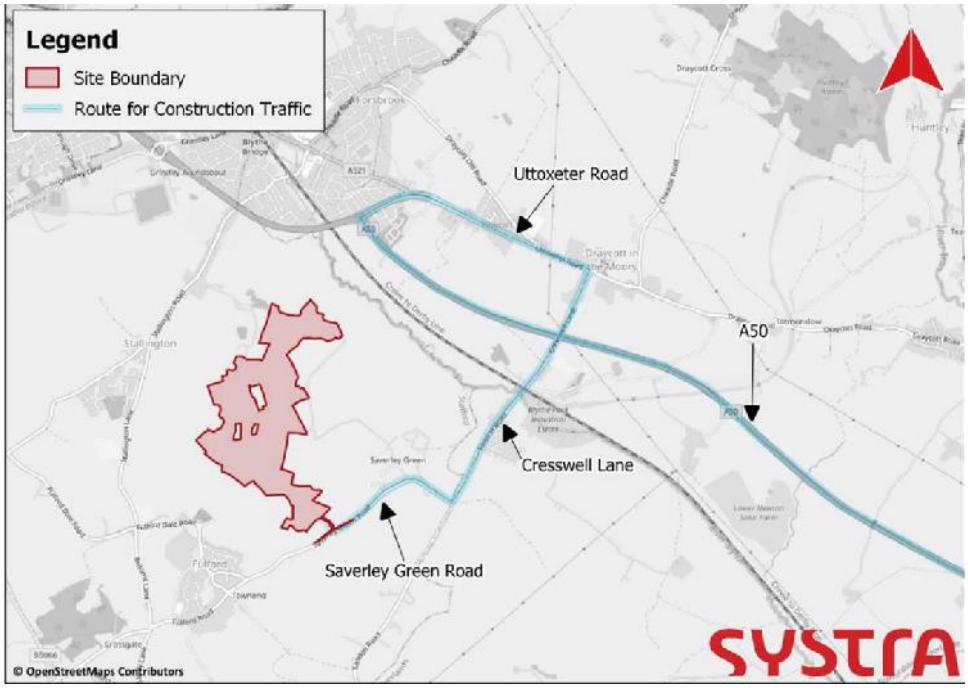
Sample of Comment(s) received:

"I would have vehemently opposed any traffic through narrow roads such as Stallington road or Fulford lane (where I live and can witness daily near misses on the road. However, the approach to the site via Cresswell Road seems just as hazardous"
"I am eager to know what the proposed transport arrangements would be in terms of how many lorries per day and over what length of time with regards to installing the proposed solar panel farm and if installed how often and what type of vehicles will be entering the field for maintenance in terms of traffic in the road and the field adjacent"
"There is only one entrance/exit, quite a narrow country lane"
"Traffic through very narrow lanes"
"Access point is a very narrow lane used by walkers, horses, farm vehicles, etc. This leads (by the Hunter Pub) to a very fast, busy road and the junction is almost lethal. Must have traffic calming in place, this is not a good location."
"The lanes in and out of our village are narrow. Please don't ruin them with heavy lorries moving in and out of the village"
"I would have preferred the entrance to be in another location but logic says that Saverley Green is the better place. have some concerns regarding the extra traffic during construction"

Applicant response:

Traffic is one of the key considerations when selecting a site for a potential solar farm and safety is of primary importance. The Applicant has undertaken detailed swept path analysis of the delivery route, as well as careful assessment of the site access options.

The Application Site is located in a semi-rural area, but with good access to the local and strategic road network. Access would be taken from the strategic road network via the A50. Traffic will then take Uttoxter Road east from Tean Roundabout. After approximately 1.8km, vehicles will take the right-hand turn into Cresswell Lane. Vehicles will then travel along Cresswell Lane for approximately 2km. Traffic will then take the right-hand turn into Saverley Green Road before travelling approximately 1.1km to the proposed site access. The proposed delivery route is shown on the plan below.



A **Transport Statement and Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan** accompanies the planning application and outlines the overall framework for managing the safe movement of construction and delivery traffic as well as itemising expected traffic movements and hours of operation.

Hours of operation and traffic movements will be limited to avoid morning and evening peak times. There will also be a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to engage with local residents, throughout the construction and operational phases.

It is anticipated that the construction phase would span a period of around 12 months, with the peak number of vehicles movements occurring in months 4 to 9.

It is anticipated that there will be approximately 825 one-way HGV trips over the 12-month construction period, equating to an average of 5 two-way HGV trips per day. The number of trips per day will fluctuate depending on the construction phase.

Operational traffic movements are generally low, on average once a month for maintenance purposes, and site inspections. Active monitoring is carried out by the Operations & Maintenance (O&M) team and site manager which can reduce site attendance through early fault detection.

The Applicant is consulting on meaningful local benefits which could be delivered by the Proposed Development, if it is consented. From feedback received to date, from the local community and stakeholders, a road safety initiative would be one such initiative which could be delivered. The Applicant looks forward to continuing further discussion regarding this.

6.5. Ecology and Biodiversity

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"Impact on wildlife"

Applicant response:

The site of the Proposed Development lies outside of any ecological designations and a **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal** has been undertaken to assess its potential impacts on local ecology and accompany the planning application. The short-term disturbance resulting from the Proposed Development will not be significant. There will be no adverse impacts upon Designated or Non-Statutory Designated Sites.

Perimeter fencing for the Proposed Development would be in the form of deer fencing, with mammal gates to allow the free movement of small mammals. Deer fencing is typically situated inside of any boundary vegetation.

Creating and infilling hedgerows will benefit a range of local species including Priority Species. If the correct species are planted and maintained correctly, a hedgerow's potential can be maximised, providing food and shelter throughout the year, as well as connecting existing green infrastructure and wildlife movement corridors. Where possible, measures have been implemented as part of the iterative design process to prevent potential effects on sensitive ecological features.

Such measures include:

- 5m buffer from hedgerows
- 5m drainage ditch buffer
- 10m buffer from woodland

Through significant planting and biodiversity enhancement measures, put forward as part of the Proposed Development, there is potential to deliver a 74% biodiversity net gain (BNG) for habitat units and a BNG net gain of 22% for hedgerow units.

6.6 Public Rights of Way

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"Please keep the public footpaths and other permissive paths that are used."
"The proposed Solar Farm is far too near our walking routes and rides and our homes."
"The position of inverters and storage should be installed away from any PRoW/highway. Sudden noise and continuous levels of noise can be a hazard for equestrians as horses are flight animals, therefore the further away these elements can be located, the better it will be for safety"

Applicant response:

The Applicant understands the importance of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to the local community.

The design of the Proposed Development illustrates the Applicant's commitment to retain and protect existing PRoW with a minimum setback of 7.5m applied from all PRoW, with larger setback distances achieved in some areas.

Landscape planting is also proposed to protect the amenity value of existing PRoW both on and near to the site. This includes tree and hedgerow planting on the western boundary to reduce potential visibility from the footpath between Stallington and Fulford (Fulford 3 Footpath) and hedgerow planting along the PRoW which runs through the site to the south (Fulford 12 Footpath). Further details can be found in the **LEMP Figure 19**.

The Applicant has taken into account the BHS' proposed DMMO application for Footpath 15 and has considered the footpath as a bridleway. The design of the Proposed Development has been adapted accordingly.

All inverters and potential energy storage units have been positioned specifically away from PRoW to further protect the PRoW amenity value.

6.9 Flood Risk

Sample of Comment(s) received:
"I also have concerns with regards to drainage of the field"
"Flooding in the area which occurs regularly"

Applicant response:

A small area to the north area of the site lies within an area identified as being at risk of flooding (Flood Zone 2 and 3). This Flood Zone is associated with the water course that crosses the site.

Any critical infrastructure is sited outside the Flood Zone. It is considered that through the implementation of surface water drainage, impacts upon the water environment are not considered to be significant. However, a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been undertaken and submitted in support of the planning application to ensure that the site has been assessed fully.

The Environment Agency mapping did not identify risk of flooding from any other sources at the Application Site.

6.10 Green Belt

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"This is not, in my view, how green belt should be used"
"Greenbelt land used for farming. Plenty of brown sites not being used"
"Alternative places were not considered, for example, brownfield such as old quarries and factory sites"
"It is proposed to cover a vast area of Greenbelt"
"Once developed, it will no longer be Green Belt and it will be downgraded to brownfield land"

Applicant response:

All of the area proposed for the Proposed Development is in the Green Belt. It is considered that the benefits of renewable energy production and net biodiversity gain from the development will outweigh any potential negative impacts on the Green Belt as demonstrated in the 'Very Special Circumstances' section of the Green Belt Assessment.

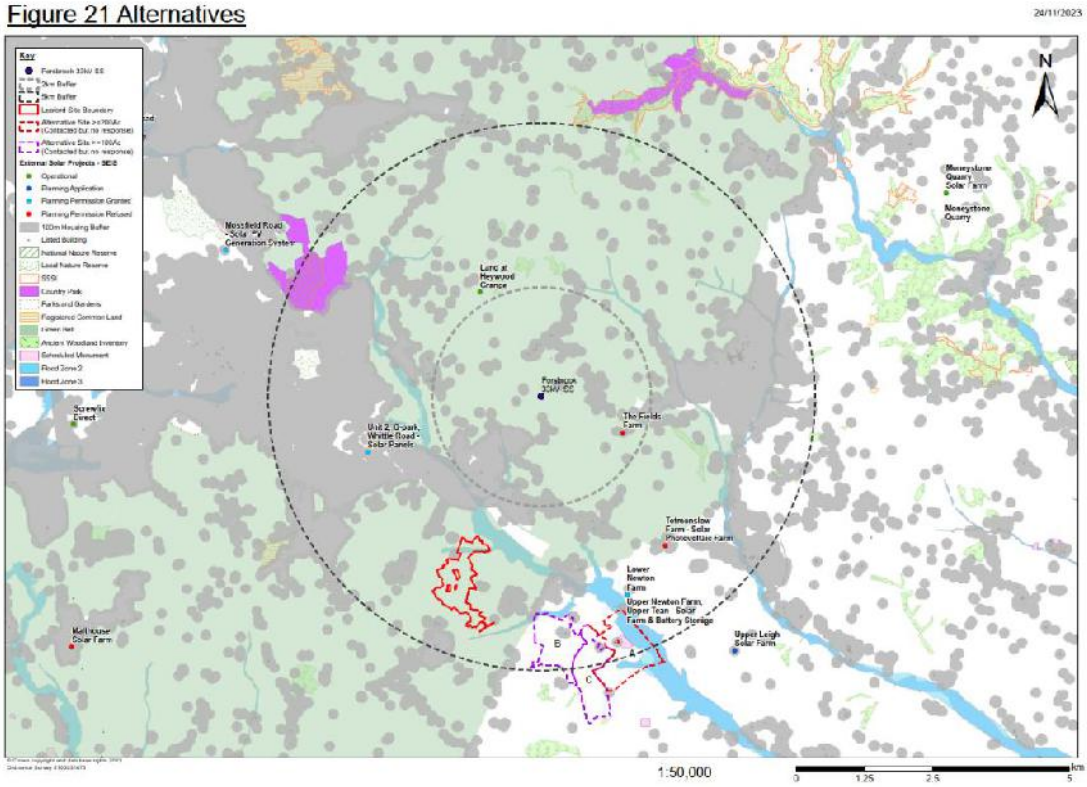
There will not be a long-term loss or reclassification of Green Belt land as the Proposed Development is temporary in nature and can be returned to purely agricultural practices at end of life.

There are strong local and national policies demonstrating the need for renewable energy projects in order to tackle climate change and to meet the UK Government's targets for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Proposed Development aligns with these policies and the benefits of the renewable energy generated by the project would be realised locally and nationally.

The Applicant has reviewed the Stafford Borough Council brownfield register. There is just over 48 hectares of brownfield land spread across 23 different locations in the area, with an average area of 2 hectares. These are not practicable for ground-mounted solar projects.

An **Alternatives Assessment (Figure 21)** has been undertaken which shows that there are no viable alternative sites within 5km of the grid point of connection. This is discussed in more detail in the **Planning Statement** which accompanies the Planning Application, and the associated drawing can be found below.

Figure 21 Alternatives



6.10 Property Values

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"Once the site has been built in your own back garden….property values will be negatively affected"

Applicant response:

Queries are often raised in relation to the potential of solar farms to impact upon the value of house prices as there can be a perception that there must be a negative effect on house prices. Property value is subjective and can be affected by a range of factors. There is no firm evidence on whether UK solar farms do or do not affect house prices. The Applicant is aware of residents close to other renewable energy projects, who enjoy having renewable energy projects close by and believe that they add value to their community.

All solar infrastructure is located a minimum of 100 metres from residential properties. In many cases, the distance between residential property and solar infrastructure, is considerably larger.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has provided an overview of the engagement and consultation activities that have been, and continue to be, undertaken by the Applicant on the Proposed Development.

7.2. The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has allowed the Applicant to identify and respond to local issues and potential concerns.

7.3. Analysis from the comment forms has shown that of those who completed a comment form, as part of the public consultation, 50% were happy with or were neutral towards the proposed layout.

7.4. Of the issues raised during the consultation, issues relating to the visual impact and delivery traffic were of particular importance to the community. Constructive comments on these and other topics have been taken into consideration by the Applicant before the submission of the planning application.

7.5. This feedback has resulted in the Applicant undertaking an iterative design process in order to integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding site as sensitively as possible, while taking account of comments received during the pre-application consultation.

7.6. Changes that have been made throughout the pre-application process include:

- A reduction in the size of the site by nearly 40 acres from c. 208 acres to c. 170 acres.
- Removal of solar infrastructure from the fields to the southwest and southeast, reducing potential visibility from Fulford village and from Saverley Green Road.
- Additional planting on the western boundary to reduce potential visibility.
- A minimum setback of 7.5m from the Public Rights of Way (a larger setback has been achieved in some areas).
- Repositioning of the site entrance to prevent any tree loss.

7.7. The Applicant is committed to continuing the open dialogue it has established with the local community during pre-application public consultation as the application process continues, as outlined within this SCI.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Introductory letter to elected representatives

Renewable Energy Systems Ltd
Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley
Hertfordshire, W4 8LR, England, UK
+44 (0)1923 299 200 | info@res-group.com

[redacted]

28th June 2023

[redacted]

RE: Leaford Solar Farm Proposal

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Stallington and Saverley Green, Staffordshire. The solar farm would include energy storage to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities of the site.

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy business active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution. At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe.

Solar projects like Leaford can be quick to deploy, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply and contribute to Net Zero targets. They are also the cheapest form of new electricity generation, alongside onshore and offshore wind. This makes developments like Leaford not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.

Leaford Solar Farm is being specifically designed to be dual purpose, enabling continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing. Furthermore, the solar farm would be completely reversible at the end of its life and the low intensity regime allows the regeneration of soil quality, ensuring the availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for the future.

Solar farms also have significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. A typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to provide a range of ecological benefits.

Detailed technical and environmental assessments will be carried out during the planning and design stages to ensure any potential impact upon the environment, landscape, heritage and local residents is appropriately assessed. The findings from the surveys and assessments will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application. At this early stage, we are liaising with Staffordshire Borough Council on the proposal, and we will shortly be submitting an EIA Screening request.

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. We will shortly be undertaking a range of consultation activities, including a public exhibition and launching a dedicated website. Further information will be provided soon. Feedback from the community and stakeholders will be taken into consideration, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed Leaford Solar Farm in more detail with you and would be happy to arrange a meeting at a convenient time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Claire Chamberlain
Project Development Manager
E: claire.chamberlain@res-group.com

Appendix B - Public exhibition newsletter

LEAFORD SOLAR FARM

JUNE 2023

RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Stallington and Saverley Green, Staffordshire. The solar farm would include energy storage to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities of the site.

Initial environmental and technical surveys have been undertaken to ensure the site is suitable for solar farm development, and to inform a preliminary layout and design.

RES is now at the stage of consulting with the local community to get feedback on our early stage proposal. The feedback will be taken into consideration, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design.

Public Exhibition

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding a public exhibition in the local area to share more information about the project and to enable you to provide us with your feedback. RES staff will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

WEDNESDAY 12th July

4pm to 8pm

Fulford Village Hall
Fulford Road, Fulford,
ST11 9QT

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk from 12th July 2023.

The public exhibition initiates a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the proposal. Please provide feedback on the preliminary design by Wednesday 2nd August 2023.

Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development. Comments on the proposal should be provided in writing by filling out a comment form at the public exhibition. Comment forms will also be available at www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk from 12th July 2023 which can be submitted by email to carey.green@res-group.com or by post to RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Staffordshire Borough Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

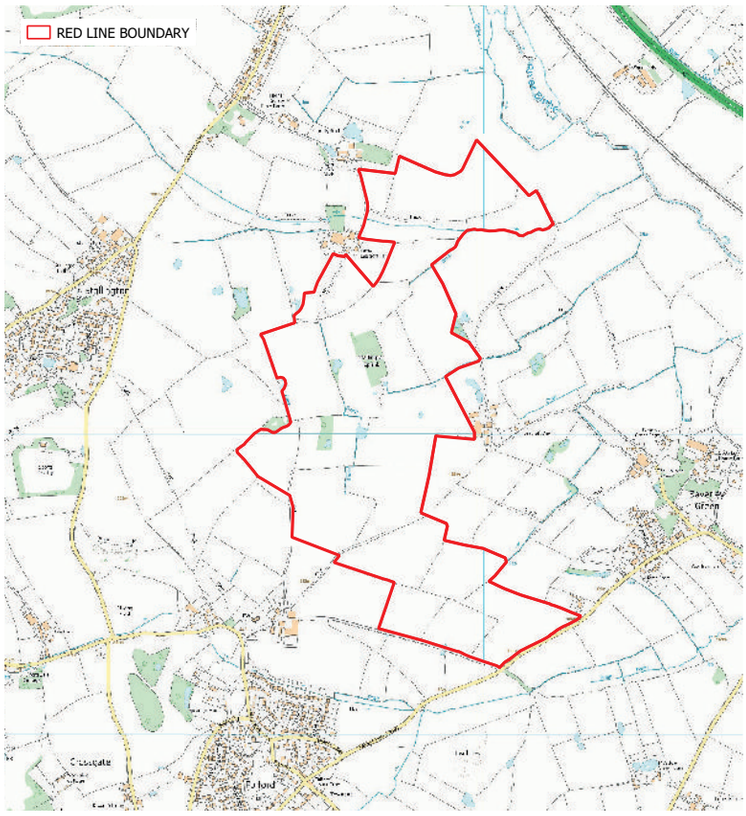
Leaford Solar Farm at a Glance

The proposed Leaford Solar Farm is located on land between Stallington and Saverley Green, Staffordshire.

It is anticipated that the solar farm would be capable of generating up to 30MW of clean, low cost renewable electricity, enough to power approximately 8,000[1] homes.

The site has been chosen as it has good solar irradiation levels, lies outside of any statutory environmental, archaeological and landscape designations with a viable grid connection.

Solar projects like Leaford contribute to Net Zero carbon emission targets, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply, and are the cheapest form of new electricity generation[2], alongside onshore and offshore wind. This makes developments like Leaford not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.



About RES

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy company with operations across Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific. At the forefront of renewable energy development for over 40 years, RES has developed and/or built more than 23GW of renewable energy capacity worldwide.

RES is developing a number of projects, ranging from 12MW to 120MW, across the UK & Ireland using the latest solar technology. We also provide full scope asset management and operations and maintenance services across a wide portfolio, and in 2021 were voted the fastest growing solar O&M provider in the UK, by a report published by Wood Mackenzie.

Claire Chamberlain
Development Project Manager
✉ claire.chamberlain@res-group.com

Carey Green
Community Relations Manager
✉ carey.green@res-group.com
01872 226 931

RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR

If you require information in Braille, large text or audio, please let us know.

[1] The homes equivalent figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Leaford has a predicted capacity factor of 11.2% and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (December 2022).
[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf

Appendix C - Public exhibition newspaper advert

#localandproud

News

Vandals target shops raising vital funds for the Dougie Mac

Dave Knapper
david.knapper@reachplc.com

Cash for care will fund cost of repairs

STAFF at the Douglas Macmillan Hospice say they have been left 'devastated' after yobs twice targeted one of their charity shops.

The windows at the store in Longton were targeted on two separate occasions last month leaving the charity with a 'substantial' repair bill.

And the charity - which provides care for those with life-limiting illnesses all across North Staffordshire - has revealed how a small number of its other shops have suffered 'unacceptable and unpleasant behaviour' from a minority of the public.

Now senior staff with Dougie Mac say they are working with MPs and Stoke-on-Trent City Council to help make their volunteers and staff feel 'more comfortable'.

The latest attack at the charity shop on The Strand - which opened just over a year ago - took place just before midnight on June 29.

No items were stolen due to the security measures at the shop but the hospice has still been left counting the cost of the vandalism.

Liz Clarke, who is head of retail, said: "We are devastated by these two incidents. Our dedicated shop staff and volunteers along with the remarkable kindness of local people together generate more than £5million each year which truly demonstrates the community coming together to make every £1 count.

"Some of this income will now have to be diverted from providing specialist end of life care to fix the damage and replace the window. It's incredibly disheartening for everyone."

Liz added: "We are working closely with the local authority and our local MPs across the area who have been supportive of us to implement efforts so our staff, volunteers and supporters all feel more comfortable."

Now the hospice has issued a plea for more donations and has reminded shoppers the branch in Longton will stay open while works are done to fix the window.

Liz added: "Our clinical teams do an incredible job in caring for our local community so it's very frustrating when a minority of individuals think it's acceptable to cause such damage and behave inappropriately with no thought to the impact their actions may result in.

"We're just trying to help people during the most difficult time of their lives.

"The Longton shop will remain open as work begins to replace the glass, so please do consider dropping off any donations to support us."

■ *Anyone with information on the vandalism should contact Staffordshire Police on 101.*

DEVASTATED: Staff say cash earmarked for specialist end of life care will now have to be redirected to pay for damage caused at the Dougie Mac shop in Longton.

Return of the 25p-a-day library fines

LIBRARY users are facing a 25p-a-day penalty for breaking the rules.

Staffordshire County Council had suspended its financial penalties for overdue books, cassettes, videos and DVDs since the start of the pandemic.

But the penalties - 25p-a-day up to a maximum of £6 - were reintroduced on Saturday and anyone over the age of 18 can fall foul of the rules.

Councillor Victoria Wilson, cabinet member for libraries, said: "Where library borrowers still had items on loan from before March 2020, there was a fines amnesty throughout the month of June so long-overdue books could be returned and any charges would be waived.

"There are also lots of things you can do to avoid any late return charges in the future."

'FLATS WILL BRING TOWN TO LIFE': P14

In Brief

LONGTON
THE petrol station at supermarket giant Tesco is currently shut and not due to reopen until Friday, July 21. A notice at the Baths Road store states: "It is temporarily closed while we make improvements."

Appendix D - Correspondence to local recreation group

From: Carey Green
Sent: Fri, 7 Jul 2023 15:02:33 +0000
To: srg.information@gmail.com
Cc: Claire Chamberlain
Subject: Leaford Solar Farm Proposal
Attachments: Leaford Solar Farm Newsletter.pdf

Dear Ms Wiggin,

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Stallington and Saverley Green, Staffordshire. The solar farm would include energy storage to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities of the site.

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy business active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution. At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe.

Solar projects like Leaford can be quick to deploy, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply and contribute to Net Zero targets. They are also the cheapest form of new electricity generation, alongside onshore and offshore wind. This makes developments like Leaford not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.

Leaford Solar Farm is being specifically designed to be dual purpose, enabling continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing. Furthermore, the solar farm would be completely reversible at the end of its life and the low intensity regime allows the regeneration of soil quality, ensuring the availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for the future.

RES understands the importance of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to the local community. Our preliminary design illustrates our commitment to retain and protect existing PRoW with appropriate buffers and setback distances applied. Landscape planting will also be proposed along existing PRoW to ensure the sense of openness is not compromised and to reduce potential visual impacts. As part of the proposal, RES is investigating opportunities for improvements to the existing PRoW network, including the potential to create a permissive footpath.

Solar farms also have significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. A typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to provide a range of ecological benefits.

Detailed technical and environmental assessments will be carried out during the planning and design stages to ensure any potential impact upon the environment, landscape, heritage and local residents is appropriately assessed. The findings from the surveys and assessments will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application. At this early stage, we are liaising with Stafford Borough Council on the proposal, and we have recently submitted an EIA Screening request.

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding a public exhibition in the local area on 12th July, between 4pm and 8pm at Fulford Village Hall, to share more information about the project and to gather feedback. Further information can be found in the attached newsletter. Feedback from the community and stakeholders will be taken into consideration, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed Leaford Solar Farm in more detail with you and would be happy to arrange a meeting at a convenient time.

Kind regards,

Carey Green
Community Relations Manager

D +44 1872 226 931
carey.green@res-group.com

Committed to a future where everyone has access to affordable zero carbon energy

Appendix E - Presentation to locally elected representatives – July 23

Leaford Solar Farm

July 2023

power for good

Agenda

- Introductions
- Project Information
- Q&A
- Any Other Business

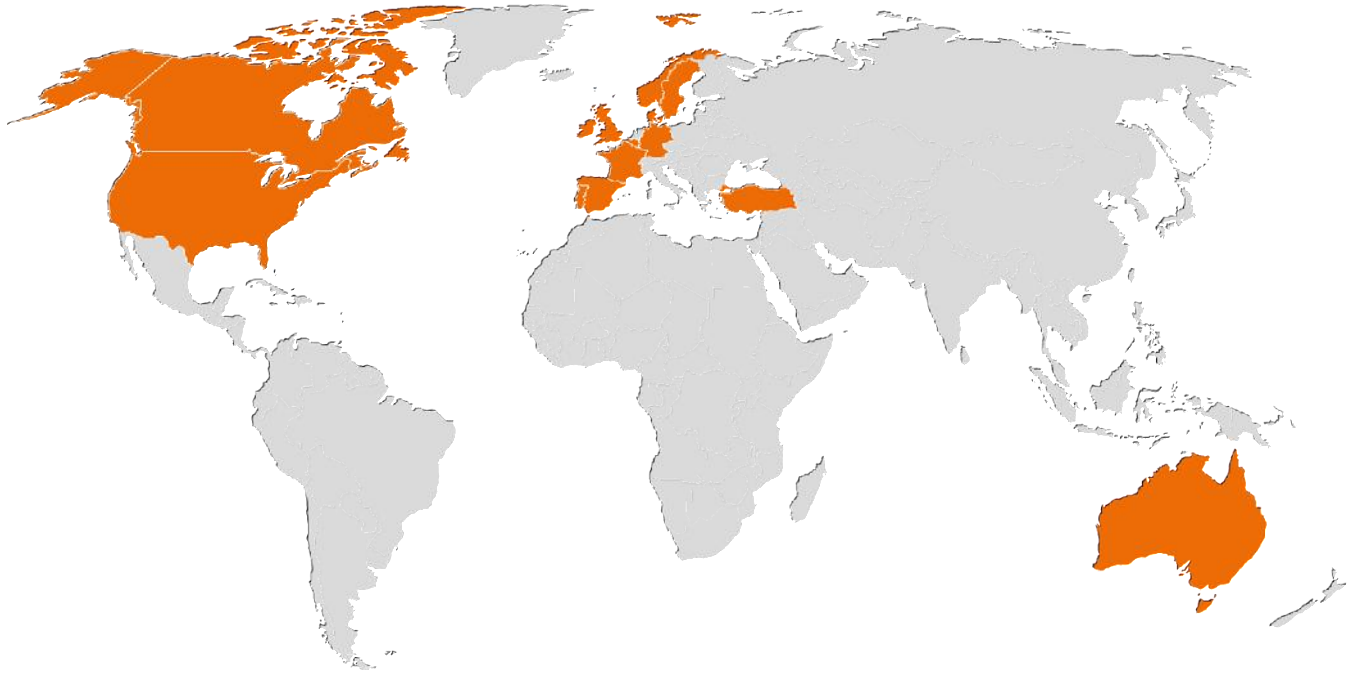
RES Overview

23GW
PROJECT PORTFOLIO

41
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

12GW
OF OPERATIONAL ASSETS SUPPORTED

2,500+
EMPLOYEES



ACTIVITIES

- DEVELOPMENT
- CONSTRUCTION
- SUPPORT SERVICES

TECHNOLOGIES

- WIND
- SOLAR
- STORAGE
- TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION
- GREEN HYDROGEN

Why Solar?

Renewable energy at lowest cost to the consumer

Tackling climate change by supporting the UK's target of net zero by 2050

Specifically designed to be dual purpose, combining continued agricultural use and renewable generation

Quick to deploy

Modern, efficient technology allowing more electricity generation in less space

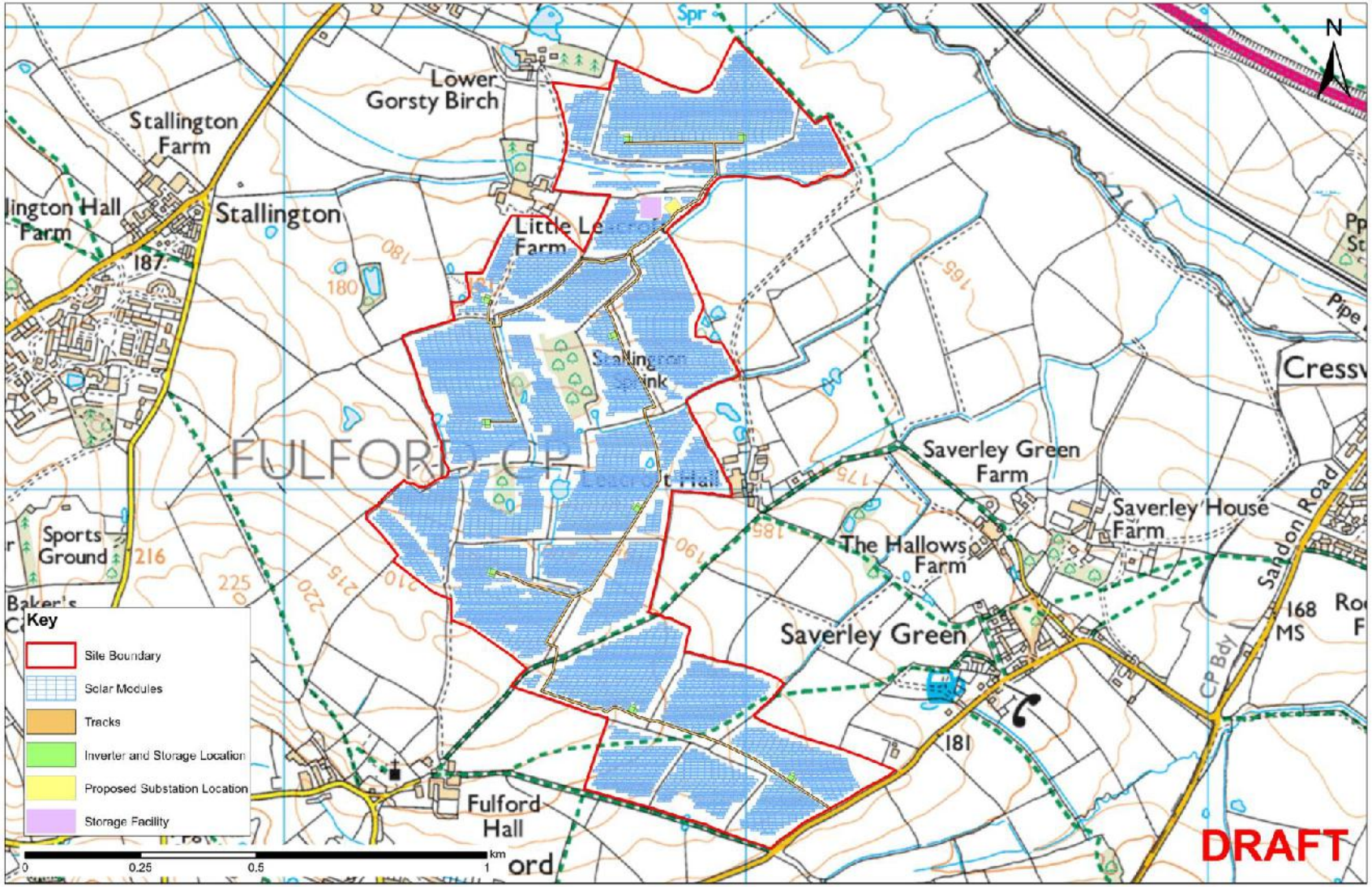
Diversification of agricultural business

Significant biodiversity enhancement opportunities, supporting new & existing plant & animal habitats

High level of public support

Design Layout and Infrastructure

LEAFORD SOLAR FARM - PRELIMINARY SOLAR LAYOUT



Approximate Location: 395700, 339160

Environmental Considerations

- Landscape and Visual
- Ecology
- Cultural Heritage and Archaeology
- Flood risk
- Traffic and Transport
- Noise
- Glint and Glare

Landscape and Ecology

New and infill native planting will enhance the existing plentiful trees and hedgerow to provide visual screening from the solar farm as well as wildlife corridors and vital resources for mammals, birds and invertebrates.

Reptile hibernaculum, hedgehog houses, bee banks, bird boxes and invertebrate hotels will enhance the biodiversity of the site.

Perimeter fencing will be in form of deer fencing. Mammal gates will allow the free passage of small mammals

Wildflower meadows will provide habitat for pollinators such as butterflies, bees and hoverflies.

The physical footprint of a typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area leaving a significant proportion available for agricultural purposes such as sheep grazing.

Solar infrastructure will be set back from existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and planting will be proposed along paths to ensure openness is not compromised. We are also investigating potential routes for a new permissive footpath.

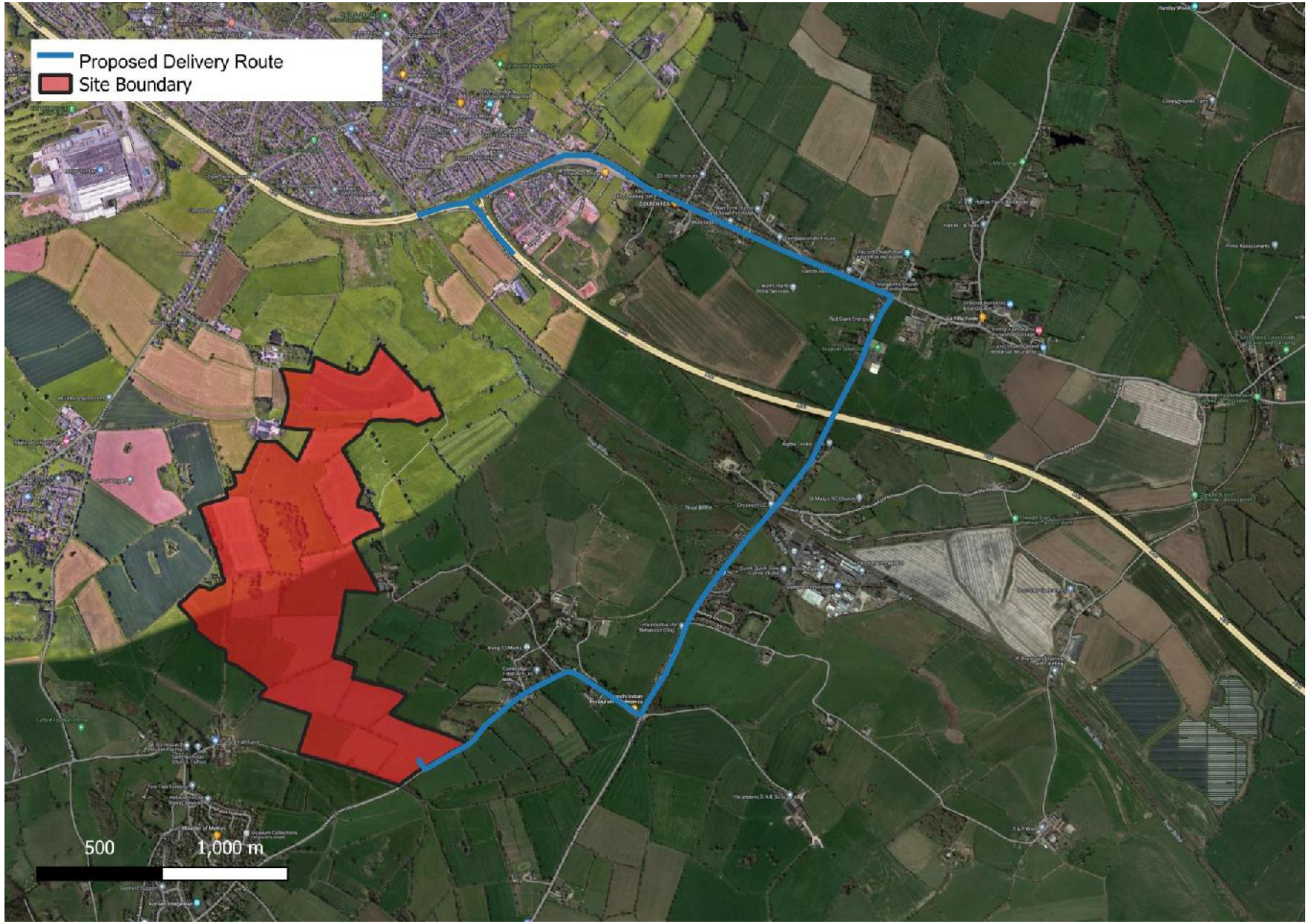
KEY

- Application Site Boundary
- Existing Ponds/Watercourses
- Existing Trees
- New Trees
- Existing Public Footpath
- Hedge Maintained to 3m
- Proposed Grassland Seed Mix
- Proposed Wildflower Mix
- Bee Bank
- Bird & Bat Box

Saverley Green

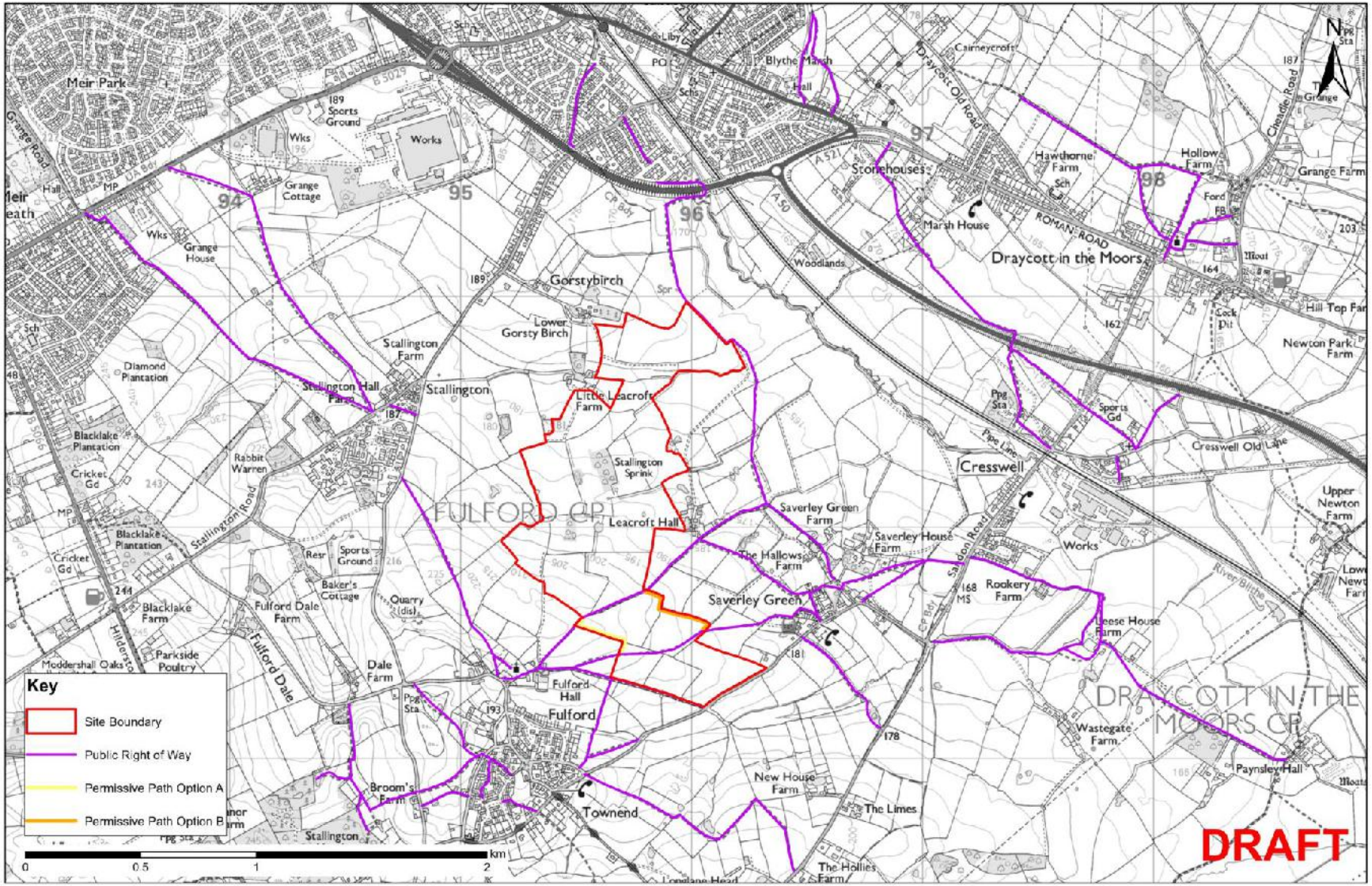
Plan for illustrative purposes only

Transport and Access



Public Rights of Way

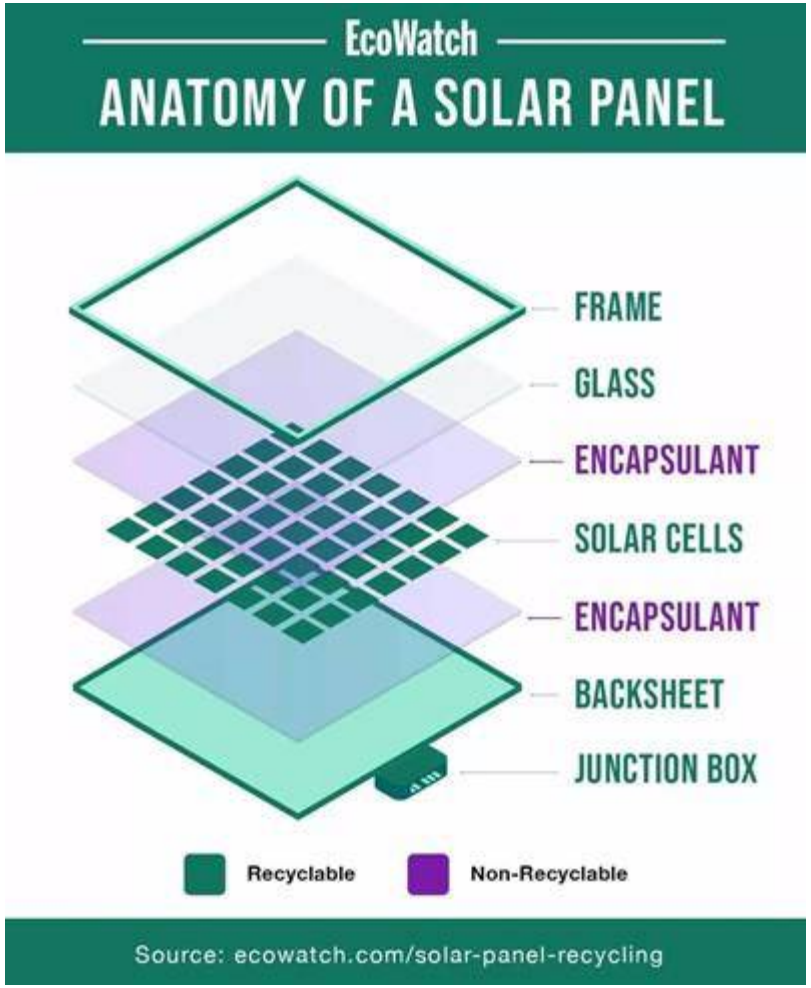
LEAFORD SOLAR FARM - PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY



Approximate Location: 395700, 339160

Decommissioning and Recycling

- Fully reversible
- Enables the continued availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for future generations
- 99% of a solar panel is recyclable in most cases



Project Benefits

- Renewable electricity at lowest cost to the consumer.
- Approximately 8,000 homes served.
- Significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including species rich grasslands, hedgerows, and woodland trees.
- Specifically designed to be dual purpose, combining continued agricultural use and renewable generation.
- Opportunities for inward investment through the use of local services.
- Potential support for community initiatives.
- Outreach opportunities.
- Estimated £1.2million in business rates over its lifetime supporting vital local services for all local residents.

Next Steps

- Public Exhibition
- Feedback opportunities at a time when it can have a direct influence on the final design of the project
- Comments taken into consideration during the iterative design process

Any Questions?

Claire Chamberlain
Development Project Manager
claire.chamberlain@res-group.com

Will Bridges
Development Project Manager
+44 7775 560 546
will.bridges@res-group.com

Carey Green
Community Relations Manager
+44 1872 226931
carey.green@res-group.com




Appendix F - Exhibition boards

power for good

WHY SOLAR?

- Renewable energy at lowest cost to the consumer[1]
- Tackling climate change by supporting the UK's target of net zero by 2050
- Specifically designed to be dual purpose, combining continued agricultural use and renewable generation
- Quick to deploy
- Modern, efficient technology allowing more electricity generation in less space
- Diversification of agricultural business
- Significant biodiversity enhancement opportunities by supporting new and existing plant and animal habitats
- High level of public support[2]

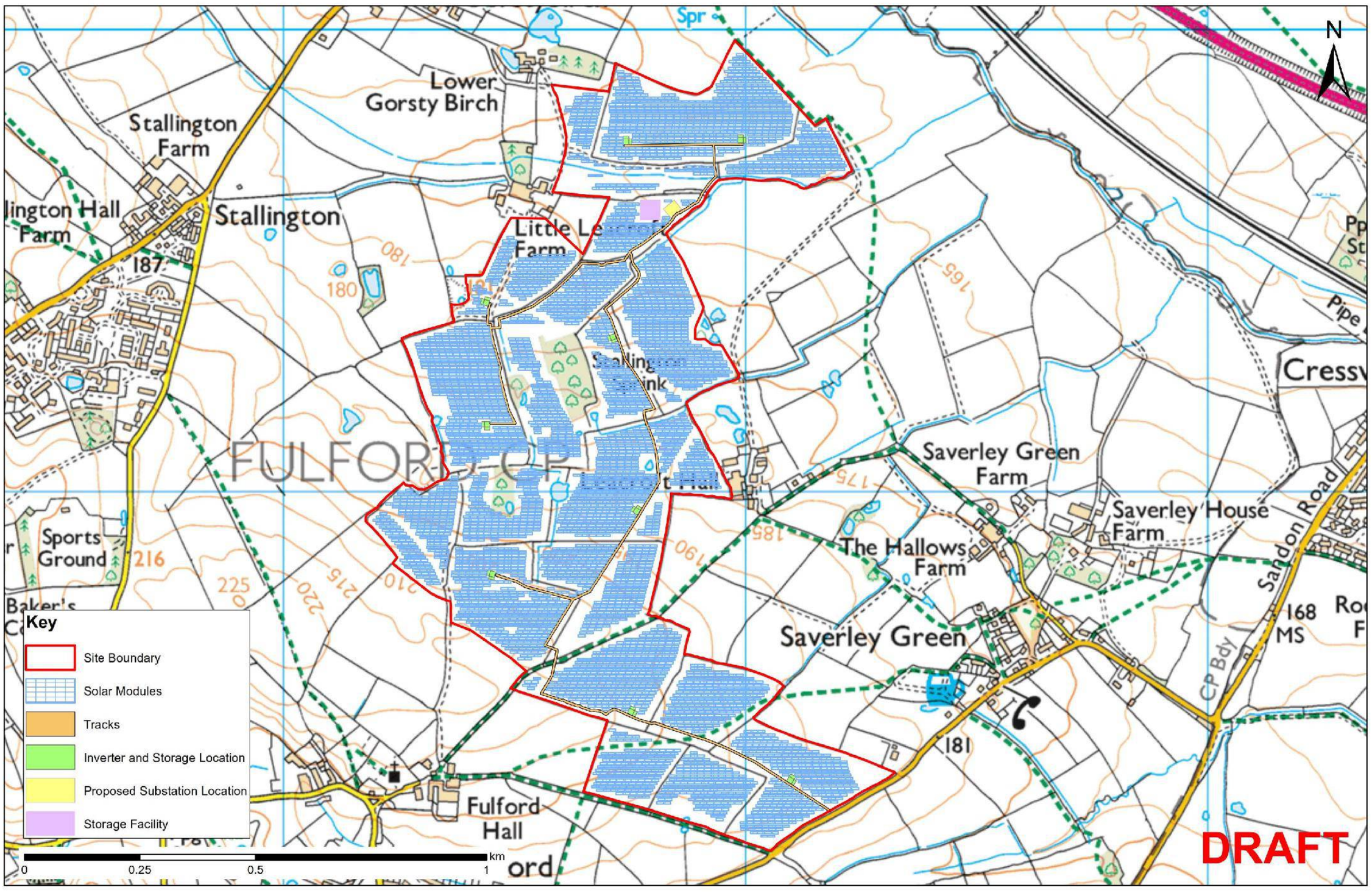
[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf

[2] https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Copper-Consultancy_Solar-Energy-UK_Public-attitudes-to-solar_January-2022.pdf

LEAFORD SOLAR FARM
PROPOSAL

Design Layout and Infrastructure

The plan below shows the preliminary layout for Leaford Solar Farm which will be capable of producing up to 30MW of clean, renewable electricity. The preliminary layout is based on initial findings from environmental and technical surveys which are ongoing. We are currently consulting on this layout and as such, it is subject to change.



Approximate Location: 395700, 339160

In addition to the solar panels, the site infrastructure is expected to include:

- A network of on-site access tracks
- A substation/transformer with security fencing
- Inverters on hardstandings
- Potential energy storage facility
- Temporary construction compound(s)
- Deer fencing around the perimeter of the solar farm

www.leaford.solarfarm.co.uk

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

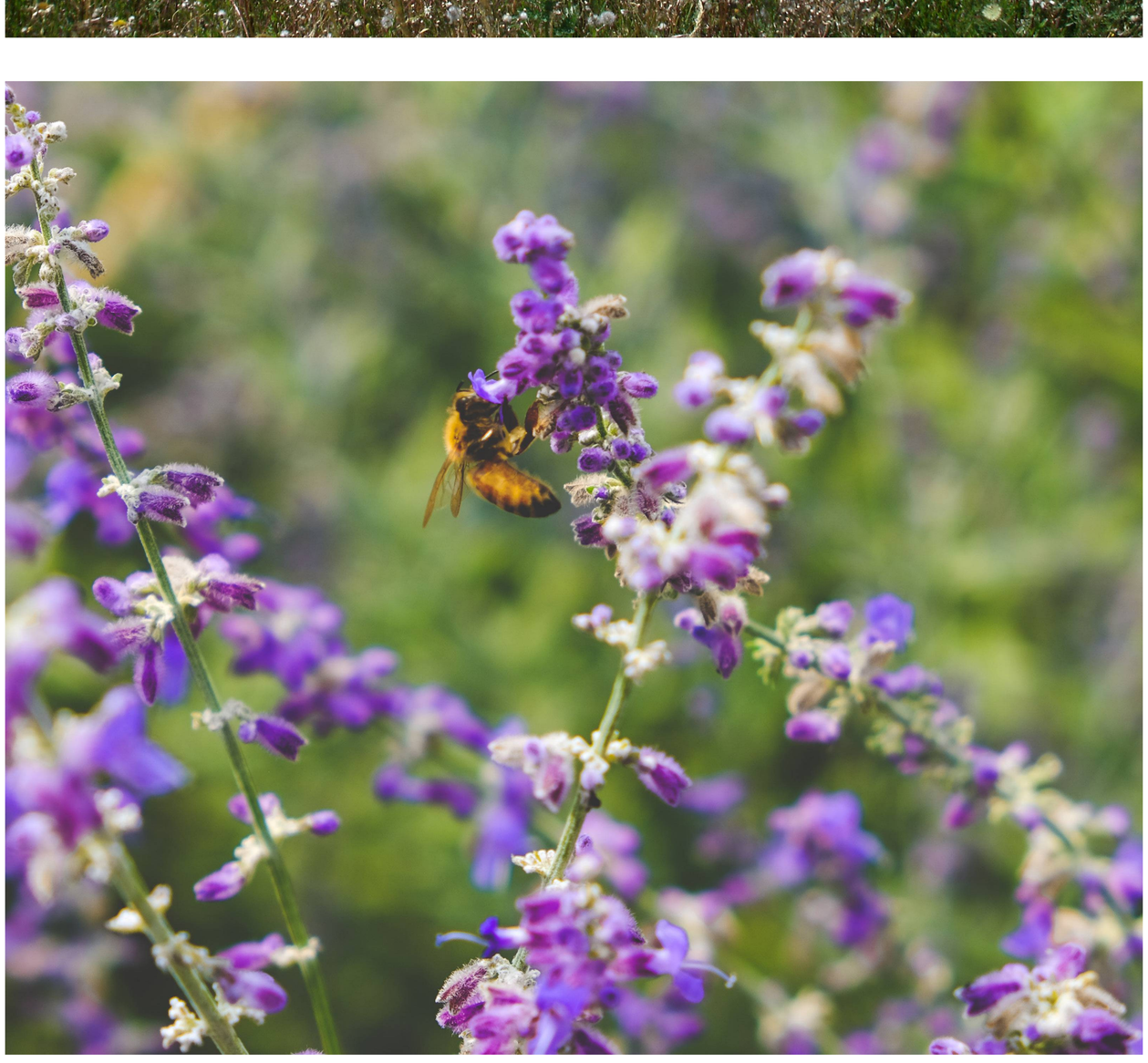
RES design their solar farms so that they will fit sensitively in the surrounding landscape

As part of the planning process, RES carries out a number of detailed technical and environmental surveys to ensure any potential impact upon the environment, landscape, heritage and local residents is appropriately assessed and mitigated. These assessments include:

- Landscape and Visual
- Ecology
- Cultural Heritage and Archaeology
- Traffic and Transport
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Noise
- Glint and Glare

The results of these surveys, along with feedback from the local community and stakeholders, are taken into account as the design of the solar farm is refined and finalised.

The assessments will accompany any planning application that is made.



LEAFORD SOLAR FARM
PROPOSAL

Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

The plan below shows a preliminary Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

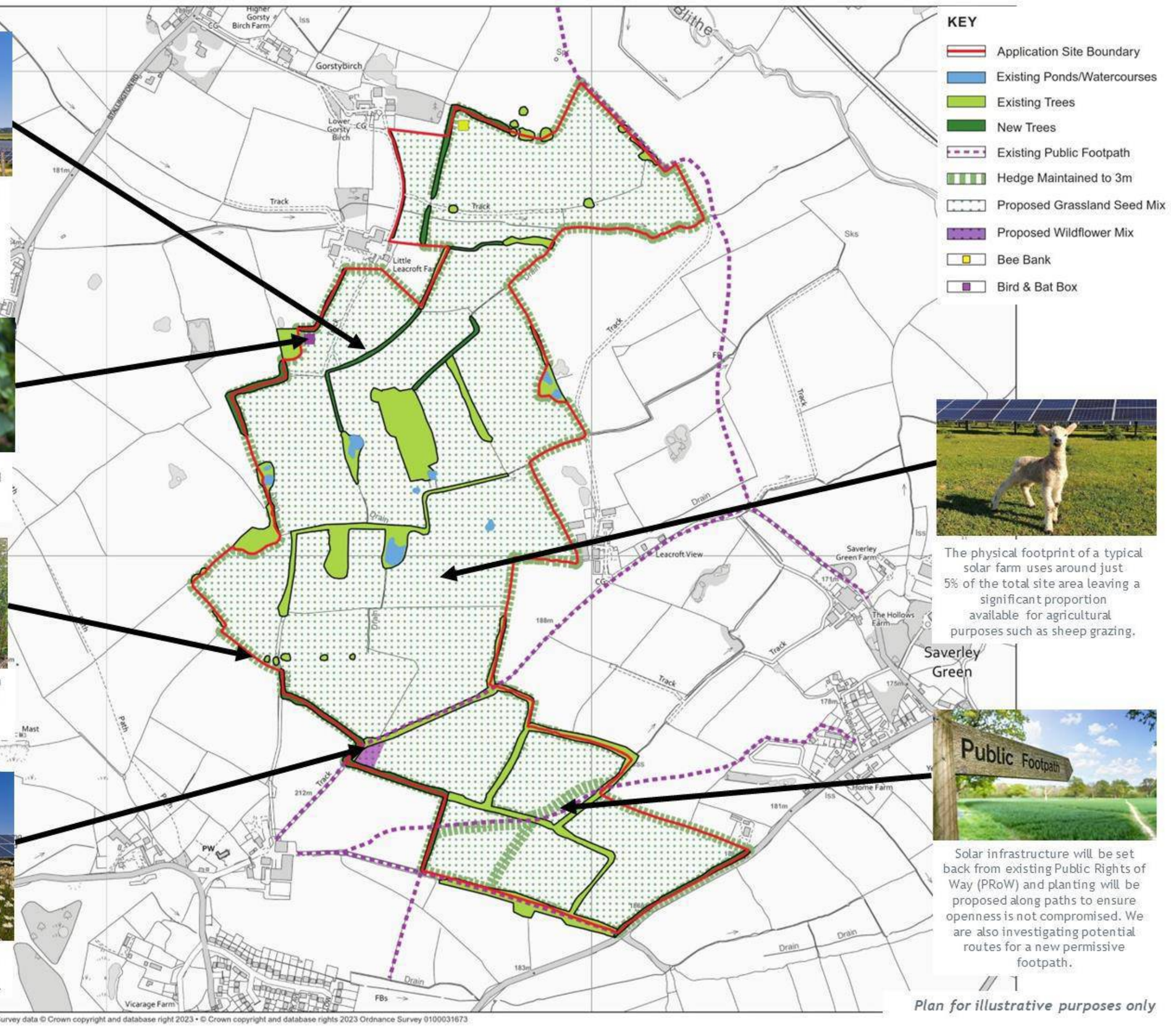
The Preliminary LEMP illustrates our immediate and long-term commitment to deliver landscape planting, retain and enhance Public Rights of Way as well as the protection and enhancement of biodiversity around the site.

New and infill native planting will enhance the existing plentiful trees and hedgerow to provide visual screening from the solar farm as well as wildlife corridors and vital resources for mammals, birds and invertebrates.

Reptile hibernaculum, hedgehog houses, bee banks, bird boxes and invertebrate hotels will enhance the biodiversity of the site.

Perimeter fencing will be in form of deer fencing. Mammal gates will allow the free passage of small mammals

Wildflower meadows will provide habitat for pollinators such as butterflies, bees and hoverflies.



The physical footprint of a typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area leaving a significant proportion available for agricultural purposes such as sheep grazing.

Solar infrastructure will be set back from existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and planting will be proposed along paths to ensure openness is not compromised. We are also investigating potential routes for a new permissive footpath.

Plan for illustrative purposes only

As the design progresses, the LEMP will be developed further with site-specific details on measures to enhance existing habitats, protect species and provide landscaping specifications for new vegetation in accordance with relevant standards.

In addition, the LEMP will provide information on the timings and aftercare regime for all planting.

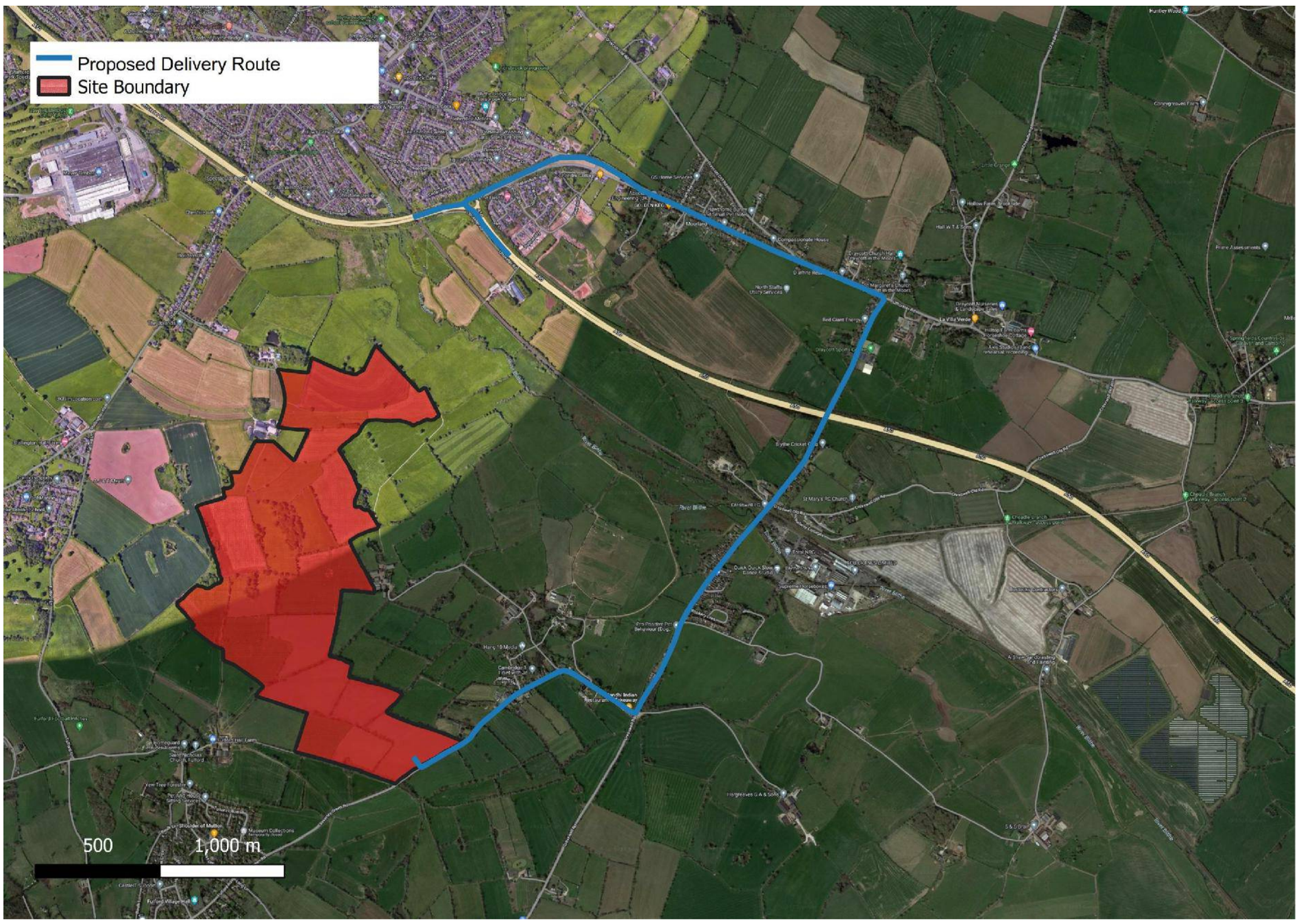
www.leaford.solarfarm.co.uk

LEAFORD SOLAR FARM
PROPOSAL

Delivery Route and Access

The equipment delivery route and access are important considerations when selecting a potential solar farm site.

The preliminary plan below shows the potential delivery route, and access point, currently under consideration which could be used for the delivery of materials and access for construction and maintenance.



We will consult with the Staffordshire Highways, Stafford Borough Council, local parish councils, the emergency services, the local community and other relevant bodies to produce a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to support any future planning application. The CTMP would outline the overall framework for managing the safe movement of construction and delivery traffic as well as itemising the expected number of traffic movements and timing restrictions.

The traffic movements will be limited to avoid morning and evening peak times, where possible. There will also be a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to engage with local residents throughout the construction and operational phases, if the solar farm is consented.

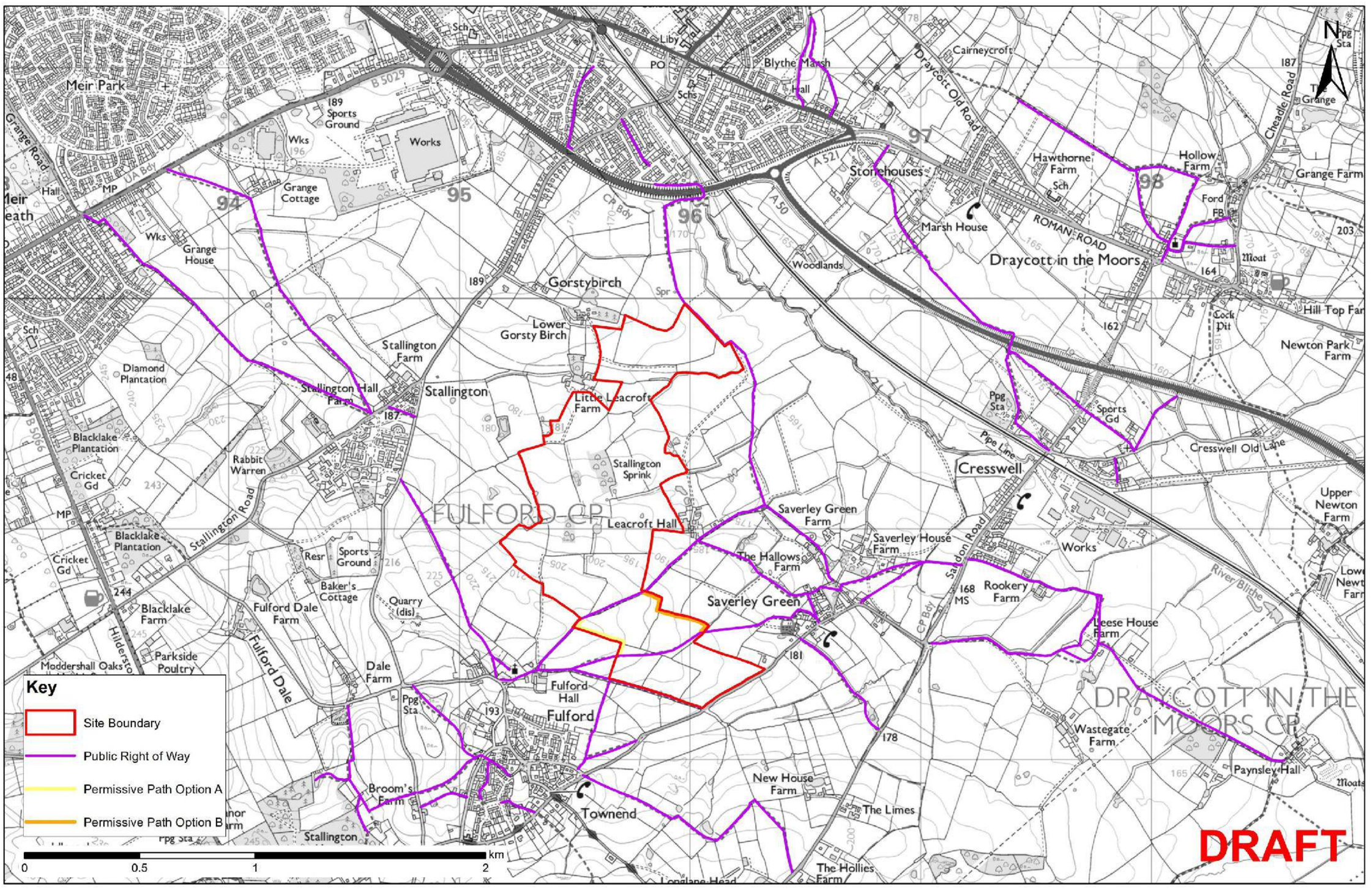
LEAFORD SOLAR FARM
PROPOSAL

Public Rights of Way

RES understands the importance of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to the local community.

The preliminary design illustrates our commitment to retain and protect existing PRoW with appropriate buffers and setback distances applied. Landscape planting will also be proposed along existing PRoW to ensure the sense of openness is not compromised and to reduce potential visual impacts.

As part of the proposal, RES is investigating opportunities for improvements to the existing PRoW network, including the potential to create a permissive footpath. The plan below shows the existing PRoW and indicative locations for a new permissive footpath.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2023
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Approximate Location: 395700, 339160

We are also keen to explore other opportunities for improvements to the Public Rights of Way network which can be considered as part of our proposal. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please let us know by filling in a comments form.

www.leaford.solarfarm.co.uk

LEAFORD SOLAR FARM
PROPOSAL

How Solar Works

Solar PV panels are typically made from silicon, which is a great semi-conductor, installed in a metal panel frame with a glass casing.

The sun gives off light, even on cloudy days, and when these light particles, or photons, hit the thin layer of silicon on the top of a solar panel, they knock electrons off the silicon atoms which creates a direct current (D C) of electricity. This is captured by the wiring in the solar panels.

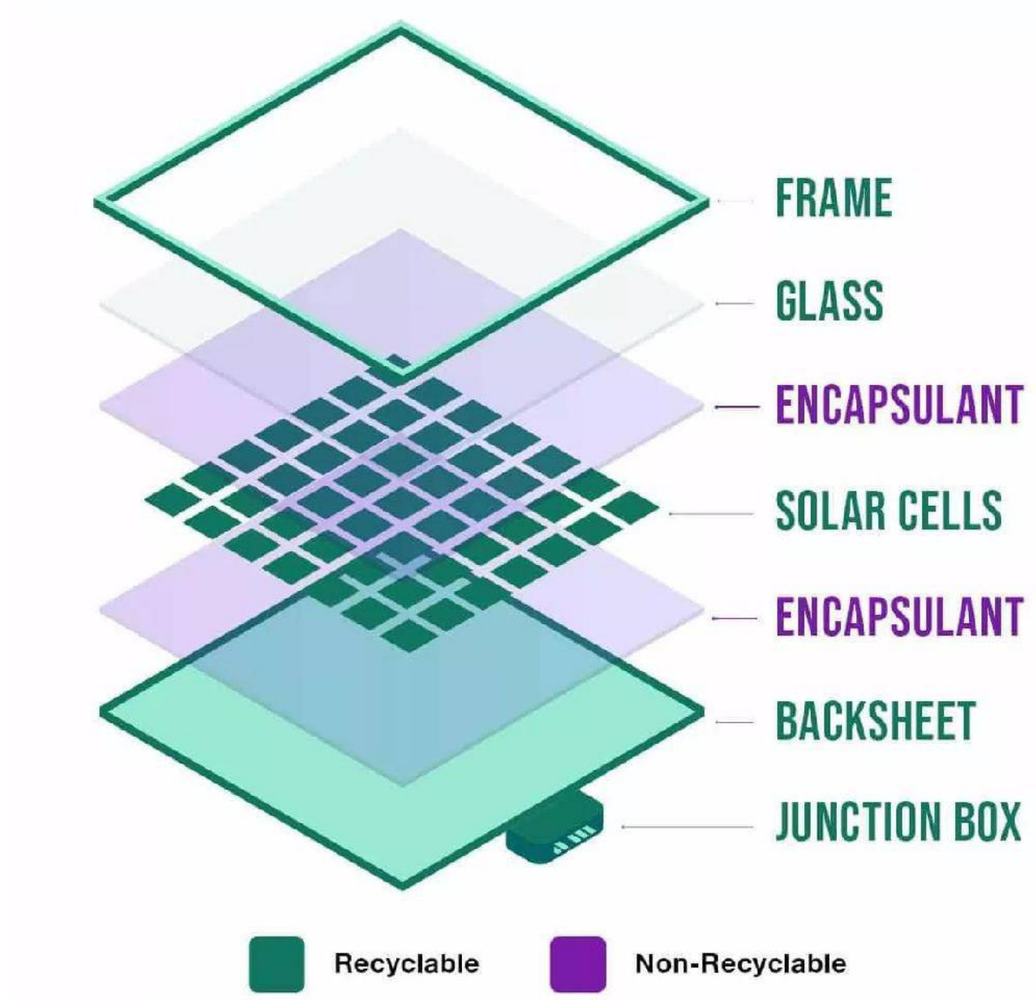
This DC electricity is then converted to alternating current (AC) by an inverter which is then funnelled into the grid network. AC is the type of electrical current used when you plug appliances into normal wall sockets.

Bifacial modules have two sides of solar cells, enabling additional energy generation from the diffuse light reflected off the grass, on the rear-side of the panels.

Recycling

In most cases solar panels are recyclable and there are well established industrial processes to do this. There are organisations around the UK and Europe specialising in solar recycling, such as PV Cycle and the European Recycling Platform.

They are working with solar developers to minimise electrical waste and recycle old panels in line with the Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations[1].



Source: ecowatch.com/solar-panel-recycling

1 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/waste-electrical-and-electronic-equipment-weee_en

HAVE YOUR SAY

We believe in meaningful and effective consultation

The aims of our consultation process are to:

- Engage early with the local community to facilitate a constructive consultation process to help identify and understand concerns.
- Assist the local community in understanding the benefits and potential impacts of the proposed solar farm.
- Add value and improve the quality of our proposal through meaningful and productive consultation.

Before we submit a planning application, we will create a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), that documents the community engagement process and any steps we have taken to adapt our proposal.

At this stage we are inviting the local community to submit comments directly to RES. If an application is submitted there will be the opportunity to submit representations to the determining Planning Authority at that time.

We are keen to understand your views on the proposal and the information available at this exhibition. Please take a few minutes to fill out a feedback form with your comments.

Appendix G - Comment form

Leaford Solar Farm Proposal

Comments Form

RES believes in meaningful and productive consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive consultation. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing the design of the proposal.

At the Public Exhibition we have presented preliminary design drawings. Feedback from the local community is important at this stage of our pre-application consultation when it can have a direct influence on the final design of the project.

We would be grateful if you could take the time to fill out this comments form with your feedback. Please provide feedback by **2nd August 2023**. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Stafford Borough Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

1 Leaford Solar Farm public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibitions?

- ☐ Newsletter through the door
- ☐ Advert in local newspaper
- ☐ Project website – www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Leaford Solar Farm?

- ☐ Knew a lot
- ☐ Knew quite a lot
- ☐ Knew a little
- ☐ Knew very little
- ☐ Knew nothing at all

1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Leaford Solar Farm?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Nothing at all

1.4 Do you have any suggestions for ways in which we could have improved our exhibition?

2 Leaford Solar Farm Proposal

Your views on the Leaford Solar Farm proposal - specifically the preliminary layout of the project where people's comments can have a direct influence – will be considered in relation to the design development of the project.

2.1 What do you think about the proposed preliminary design layout of Leaford Solar Farm?

- ☐ I am happy with the proposed layout
- ☐ I am neutral towards the proposed layout
- ☐ I have concerns about the proposed layout
- ☐ I don't like solar farms in general

Further comments:

2.2 Please provide us with any further suggestions or comments regarding the proposed Leaford Solar Farm

3 Local benefits

3.1 As part of the proposal, RES is exploring the potential to create a new permissive footpath to enhance the local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. The preliminary design identifies two locations for the potential new permissive footpath.

We are keen to develop this idea in collaboration with the community and are asking visitors to choose their preferred permissive footpath option.

Permissive Footpath A ☐ Permissive Footpath B ☐

We are also keen to explore other opportunities for improvements to the Public Rights of Way network which can be considered as part of our proposal. Examples could include picnic benches, information/educational boards and wildflower planting. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please let us know in the box below.

3.2 The Leaford Solar Farm, if consented, has potential to deliver significant biodiversity enhancement. Which biodiversity enhancement measures would you like to see?

Wildflower planting ☐ Bird and bat boxes ☐ Bee banks/hives ☐ Other ☐

If you have ticked Other above please provide any suggestions for biodiversity enhancement opportunities in the box below.

3.3 We firmly believe that solar schemes should provide meaningful benefits locally and we will work with the local community to gain feedback on local aims and priorities to deliver long-term economic, social and environmental benefits, which the Leaford Solar Farm could support, if consented.

If you have any suggestions for such benefits the solar farm may be able to support, please let us know in the box below.

4 Climate change, energy security and renewables

The below section is optional and designed to help us understand people's thoughts on how renewables can help to tackle climate change and improve energy security.

4.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

4.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

4.3 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to support greater energy independence and security for the UK?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

4.4 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to cut energy bills?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

5 Your details

Please provide your name and contact details below.

Your contact details will be treated by RES with the strictest of confidence, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We may at times share your contact details, in confidence, with third parties who we employ to help process your comments or update you on the project and by providing your details below you consent to this. You may write to RES at any time to ask that your contact details be removed from our records and from any third parties we work with.

Name	
Email	
Address	

If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please tick this box ☐

When you have completed the comments form, please send by email to carey.green@res-group.com or by post to: Leaford Solar Farm Project Team, RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Herts, WD4 8LR.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this comments form, your feedback is important to us.

Appendix H - Presentation to locally elected representatives – Aug 23

Leaford Solar Farm

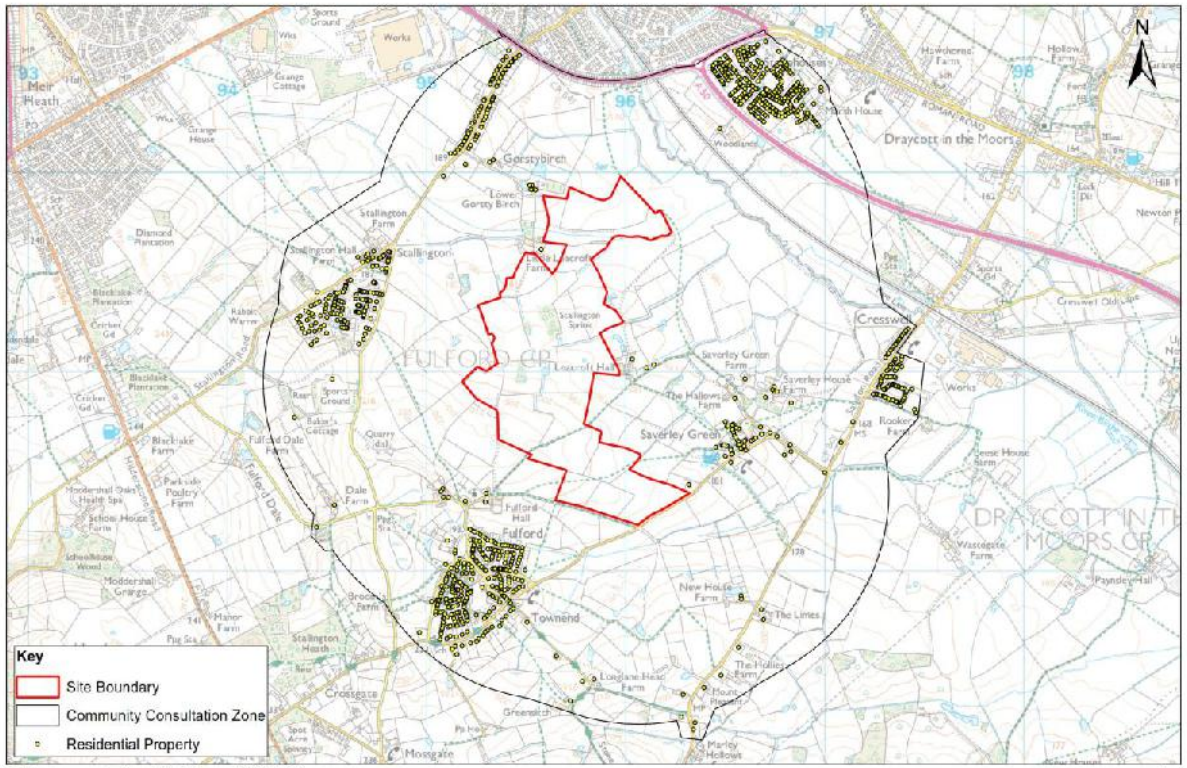
Consultation Feedback

9th August 2023

power for good

Public Exhibitions - Advertising

Fulford Community Consultation Zone



#localandproud News

Vandals target shops raising vital funds for the Dougie Mac

Dave Knapper
dave.knapper@sentinelpa.com

STAFF at the Dougie Macmillan Hospice say they have been left 'devastated' after yobs twice targeted one of their charity shops.

The windows at the store in Longton were targeted on two separate occasions last month leaving the charity with a 'substantial' repair bill.

And the charity - which provides care for those with life-limiting illnesses all across North Staffordshire - has revealed how a small number of its other shops have suffered 'unacceptable and unpleasant behaviour' from a minority of the public.

Now senior staff with Dougie Mac say they are working with MPs and Stoke-on-Trent City Council to help make their volunteers and staff feel 'more comfortable'.

The latest attack at the charity shop on The Strand - which opened just over a year ago - took place just before midnight on June 29.

No items were stolen due to the security measures at the shop but the hospice has still been left counting the cost of the vandalism.

Liz Clarke, who is head of retail, said: "We are devastated by these two incidents. Our dedicated shop staff and volunteers along with the remarkable kindness of local people together generate more than £3million each year which truly demonstrates the community coming together to make every £1 count.

"Some of this income will now have to be diverted from providing specialist end of life care to fix the damage and replace the window. It's incredibly disheartening for everyone."

Liz added: "We are working closely with the local authority and our local MPs across the area who have been supportive of us to implement efforts so our staff, volunteers and supporters all feel more comfortable."

Now the hospice has issued a plea for more donations and has reminded shoppers the branch in Longton will stay open while works are done to fix the window.

Liz added: "Our clinical teams do an incredible job in caring for our local community so it's very frustrating when a minority of individuals think it's acceptable to cause such damage and behave inappropriately with no thought to the impact their actions may result in.

"We're just trying to help people during the most difficult time of their lives.

"The Longton shop will remain open as work begins to replace the glass, so please do consider dropping off any donations to support us.

■ *Anyone with information on the vandalism should contact Staffordshire Police on 101.*

Cash for care will fund cost of repairs

DEVASTATED: Staff say cash earmarked for specialist end of life care will now have to be redirected to pay for damage caused at the Dougie Mac shop in Longton.

Return of the 25p-a-day library fines

LIBRARY users are facing a 25p-a-day penalty for breaking the rules.

Staffordshire County Council had suspended its financial penalties for overdue books, cassettes, videos and DVDs since the start of the pandemic.

But the penalties - 25p-a-day up to a maximum of £6 - were reintroduced on Saturday and anyone over the age of 18 can fall foul of the rules.

Councillor Victoria Wilson, cabinet member for libraries, said: "Where library borrowers still had items on loan from before March 2020, there was a fines amnesty throughout the month of June so long-overdue books could be returned and any charges would be waived.

"There are also lots of things you can do to avoid any late return charges in the future."

'FLATS WILL BRING TOWN TO LIFE': P14

In Brief

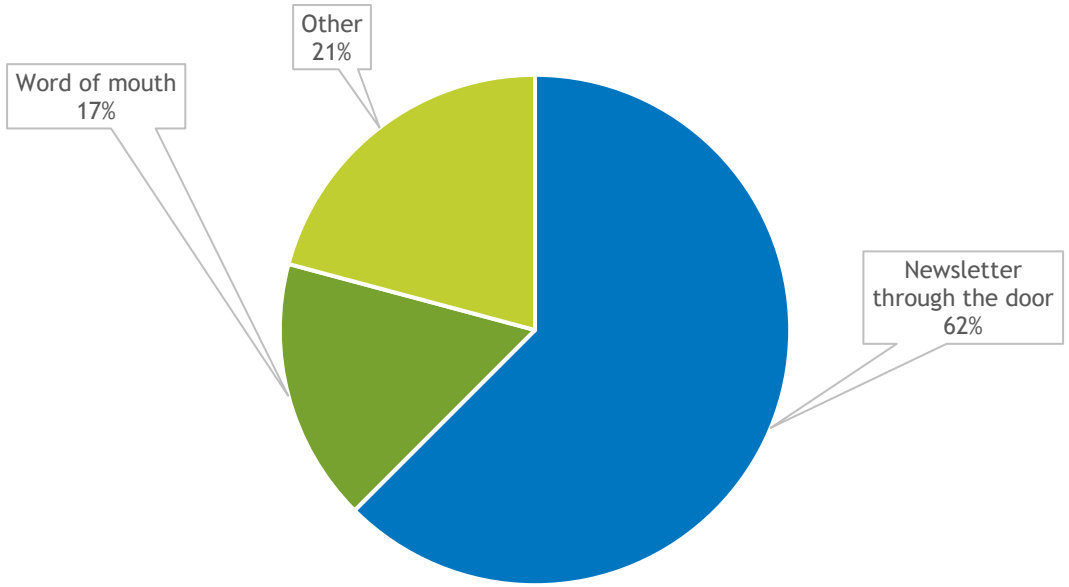
LONGTON

THE petrol station at supermarket giant Tesco is currently shut and not due to reopen until Friday, July 21. A notice at the Baths Road store states: "It is temporarily closed while we make improvements."

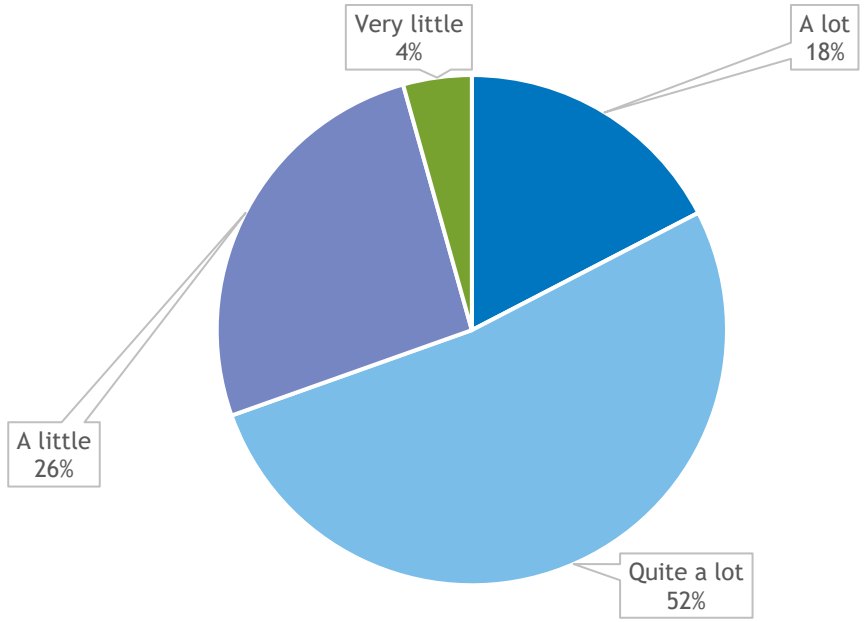
Public Exhibitions - Venues and Attendees

Public Exhibitions - Feedback

How did you find out about our public exhibitions?

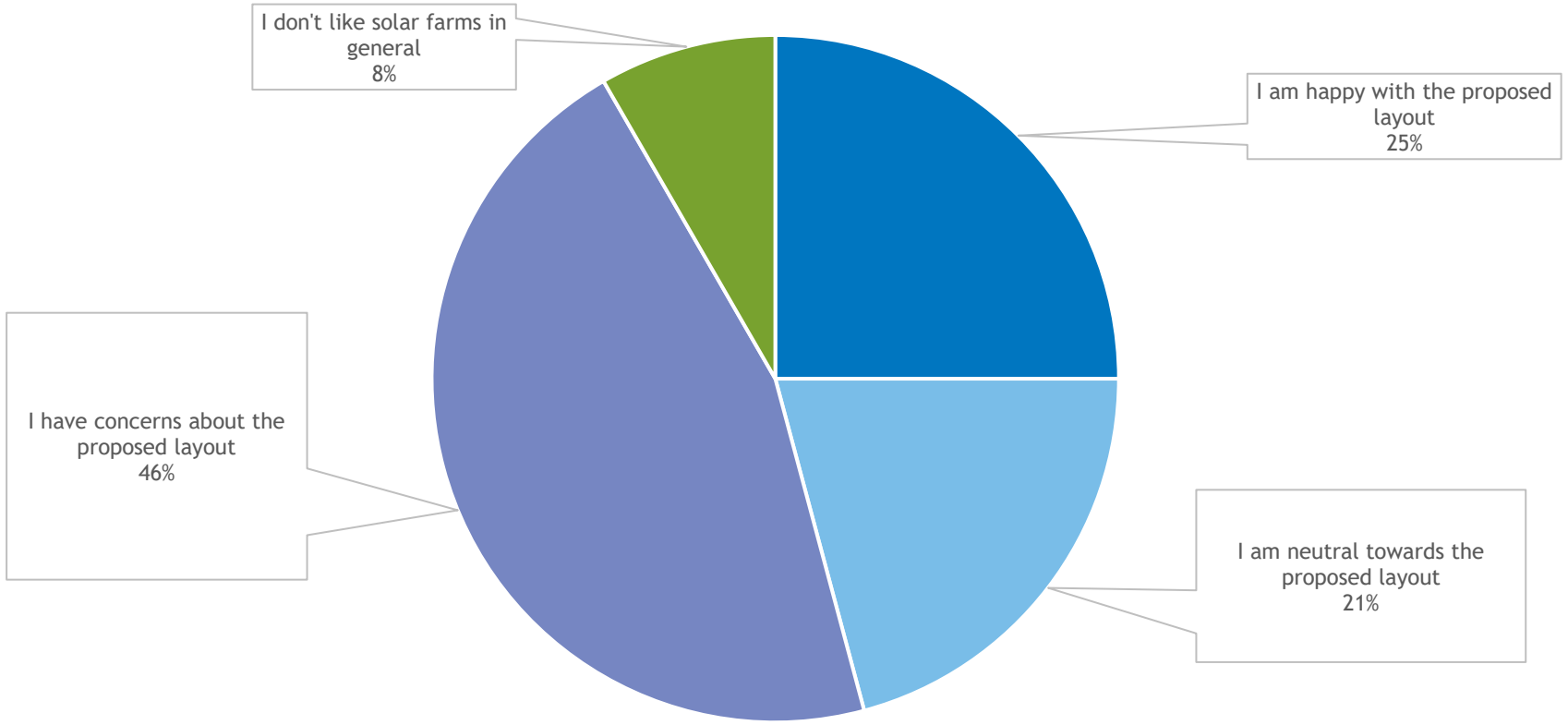


Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Leaford Solar Farm?



Public Exhibitions - Feedback

What do you think about the preliminary design layout of Leaford Solar Farm?



Public Exhibitions - Feedback

A few wind turbines might look better

A great idea. It may be needed in future to supply energy for the area. Better panels on the land than loads more houses being built.

Just learnt that you indicated the traffic of your lorries be 20 trips entering or leaving the site. This is in my opinion just unconceivable given the community is struggling with traffic as it is.

Over development of the local area

Loss of agricultural land

It is going to be relatively out of sight for villagers.

Future design of panels may be less intrusive on the landscape.

It is far too large an area.

Get on with it.

Must have traffic calming in place.

Traffic through very narrow lanes.

Site should be located in a more rural area.

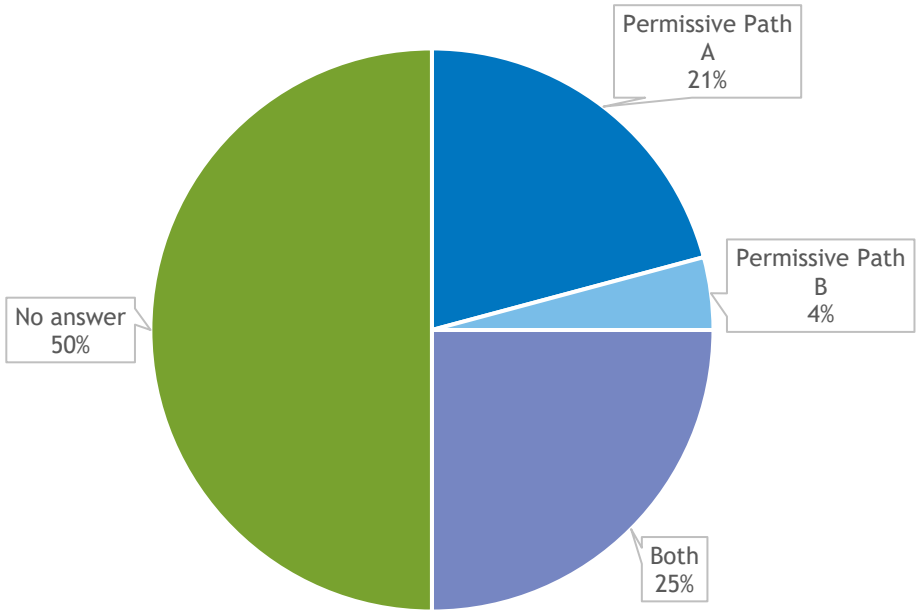
Plenty of brown sites not being used. Too close to the local villagers.

Only in terms of proximity to existing residential properties, which will overlook the project.

I am concerned about the visual, noise and environmental pollution caused by the solar farm

I'm horrified at the thought of the beautiful area of countryside being covered with ugly black panels.

Public Exhibitions - Feedback



I would suggest liaising with the local schools to establish if there is something specific that could be developed to support the educational opportunities this presents. Could also engage local schools in the design of such areas.

We need more not less

As much wildflower planting as possible

A few benches would be a good idea. You could liaise with local schools with regards to wildflower planting.

Public Exhibitions - Feedback

As a primary school teacher I feel there is huge potential to support the education of children in this area. Including exploring the planning process, looking at feedback from events such as this and use of space afterwards.

Local residents are used to the rural and undisturbed environment. If it goes ahead, local residents should benefit financially for the change in environment with reduced electricity supply costs

We enter the best kept village competition annually so the environs are important to Fulford.

Man-made homes for nocturnal animals

Affordable energy supply with priority to local residents. Transport facilities for the elderly to access libraries, surgeries, pharmacies, shops?

Funding for Fulford Primary School to get them involved in renewables. A visitor centre (small portacabin) open a few days a year to enable local schools to learn about sustainable energy, etc, how a solar panel works, etc

Community energy scheme. Could local people own a panel in exchange for reduced energy costs? Shared ownership, it makes sense that we are compensated.

All electricity produced would go into the National Grid and would not benefit the local community directly. A lot of natural, farmed countryside which nothing can replace or be better than.

There are no such benefits - just one big blot on the landscape

Next Steps

- Responding to feedback
- Open dialogue
- Design iterations
- Target date for submission
- Statement of Community Involvement

Appendix I - Project Update Newsletter – December 23

LEAFORD SOLAR FARM PROPOSAL

DECEMBER 2023

res power for good

30MW
Capable of producing up to 30MW of clean, low-cost electricity

8000 homes[1]
Equivalent to the average, annual electricity consumption of 8,000 homes

16,900 tonnes[2]
of carbon emissions saved every year

Project Update

Since our public exhibition in July 2023, we have been continuing to refine the design of the solar farm, taking into consideration the results of site surveys and assessments as well as any feedback from the community and stakeholders.

Overleaf is the updated layout for the proposed solar farm. As a direct result of feedback, we have made a number of design changes. We have also undertaken additional consultation with outdoor recreation groups and other stakeholders. This has taken a little longer than originally forecast, however, this has helped to further refine the proposal so that the solar farm may sit sensitively into the existing landscape whilst maximising the generation of clean, low-cost electricity.

Design changes which have been made include:

- A reduction in the size of the site by nearly 40 acres from c. 208 acres to c. 170 acres.
- Removal of solar infrastructure from the fields to the southwest and southeast, reducing potential visibility from Fulford village and from Saverley Green Road.
- Additional planting on the western boundary to reduce potential visibility.
- A minimum setback of 7.5m from the Public Rights of Way (a larger setback has been achieved in some areas).
- Repositioning of the site entrance to prevent any tree loss.

In the coming weeks, we will be finalising the planning application to submit to Stafford Borough Council which will be supported by a number of detailed environmental and technical assessments.

A Power for Good

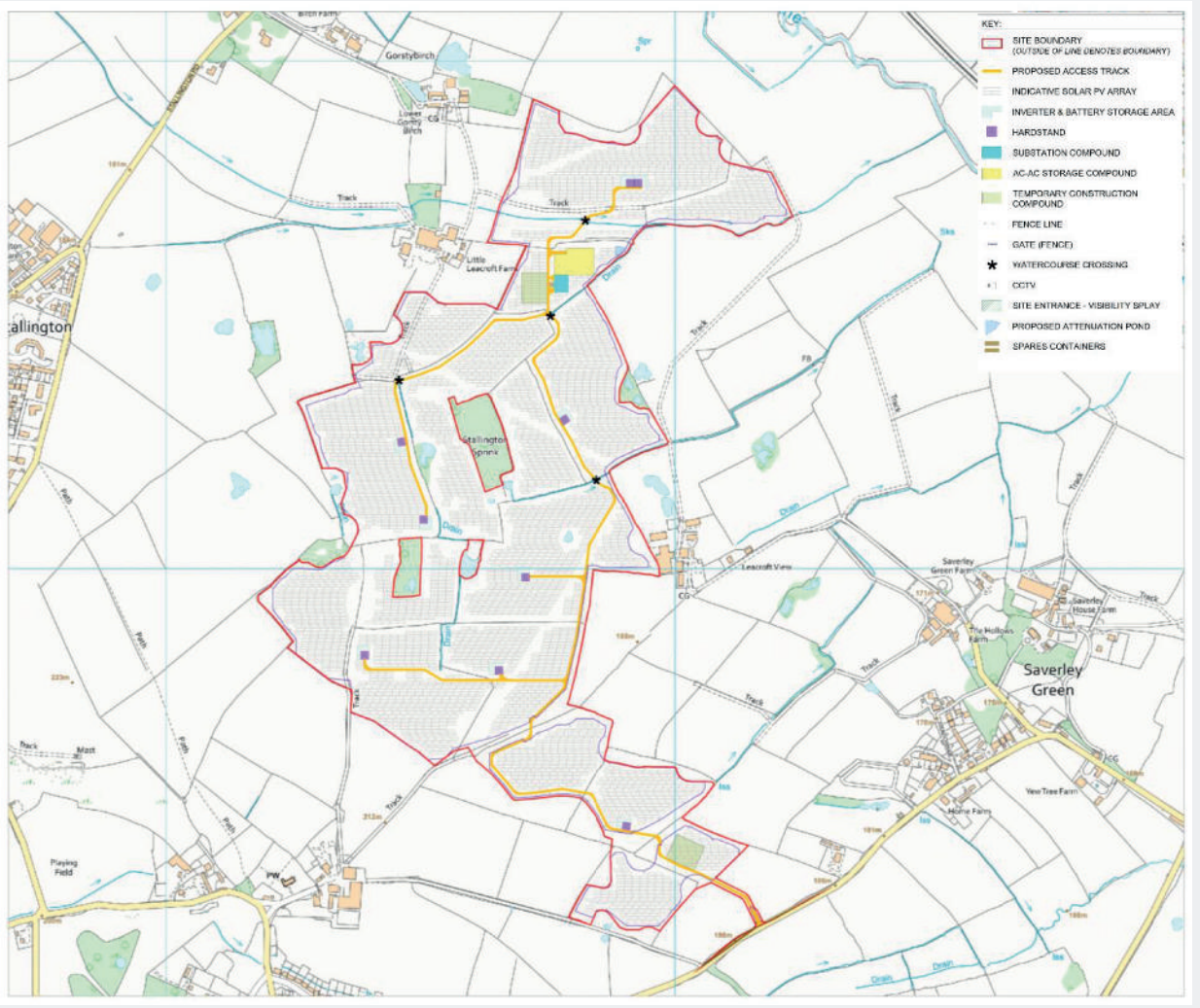
Solar farms contribute to Net Zero carbon emission reduction targets, can be quick to deploy, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply, and are the cheapest form of new electricity generation[3] alongside other renewable technologies. This makes solar farms, like Leaford, not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.

The Leaford Solar Farm proposal would deliver a biodiversity net gain for the site through a range of measures including native planting, wildflower areas and the installation of bird and bat boxes.

We are also consulting on meaningful local benefits which could be delivered by the solar farm, if it is consented. From feedback received to date from the local community and stakeholders, a road safety initiative would be one such initiative which could be delivered. We look forward to continuing further discussion regarding this and also welcome feedback on other suggestions and ideas.

Design Layout and Infrastructure

The plan below shows the updated layout for the proposed 30MW Leaford Solar Farm which includes energy storage enabling electricity to be stored and released back to the grid network when it is most needed. The plan can also be viewed on the project website at **www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk.**



The solar farm is being specifically designed to be dual-purpose allowing continued agricultural use in the form of sheep grazing and the production of renewable energy. Over 95% of the land has been classified as not being Best and Most Versatile.

There will be no long-term loss or reclassification of Green Belt land as a result of the development which is temporary in nature, and the site can be returned to agricultural use at the end of the solar project. Where a solar farm is installed on land which has been intensively farmed, it enables the ground underneath to recover, while providing income for the farming business. Solar farms help regenerate soil quality and can help to ensure the continued availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for future generations

Claire Chamberlain
Development Project Manager
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Carey Green
Community Relations Manager
carey.green@res-group.com
01872 226 931

RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Herts, WD4 8LR

If you require information in Braille, large text or audio, please let us know.

www.leaford-solarfarm.co.uk

1 The homes equivalent figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Leaford has a predicted capacity factor of 11.2% and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (December 2022).
2 RES uses DESNZ's "all non-renewable fuels" emissions statistic of 424 tonnes of carbon dioxide per GWh of electricity supplied in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (July 2023) Table 5.14 ("Estimated carbon dioxide emissions from electricity supplied"). Carbon reduction is calculated by multiplying the total amount of electricity generated by the solar farm per year by the number of tonnes of carbon which fossil fuels would have produced to generate the same amount of electricity)
3 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6556027d046ed400148b99fe/electricity-generation-costs-2023.pdf