

Flaxlands Solar Farm

Statement of Community Involvement

Ampyr Solar Europe

Project number: 60727989

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Prepared for:

Ampyr Solar Europe

Prepared by:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) provides an overview of the stakeholder and community consultation undertaken by Ampyr Solar Europe to inform the proposed installation of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array with an installed capacity of up to 49.9 MW and up to 49.9 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) within 87.09 hectares (ha) of land north of Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire.
- 1.1.2 This SCI has been submitted to Wiltshire Council by Ampyr Solar Europe, henceforth referred to as 'the Applicant', alongside the planning application for the solar farm and BESS, henceforth referred to as 'the Proposed Development'.
- 1.1.3 This SCI outlines the consultation methods used during the consultation. It also provides a summary of the feedback received as a result of these activities and the Applicant's response to this feedback.

1.2 Project overview

- 1.2.1 It is anticipated that the Proposed Development could supply enough energy to power 21,000 homes each year. The clean energy generated could save on average up to 17,900 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per year, which adds up to just over 716,000 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 40 years.
- 1.2.2 The Proposed Development will consist of:
- Fixed-tilt solar PV panels. This means that they are fixed in position facing south and do not move during the day;
 - Solar panels will cover approximately 26 ha (64 acres) with a power generation capacity of up to 49.9 megawatts (MW) peak;
 - Solar panels set on lightweight frames with interrow spacing of minimum 2.5m apart with a minimum ground clearance of 0.6m and a maximum panel height of up to 3m;
 - Power will be converted from Direct Current to Alternating Current, and the voltage stepped up suitable for the UK national electricity network ("the grid") via onsite inverters and transformers;
 - An on-site substation, BESS and associated infrastructure covering 0.84 hectares (2.08 acres);
 - A security fence up to 2.5m high, and CCTV cameras and a thermal imaging detection system located on 3m high poles;
 - Internal access tracks; and
 - Ecological mitigation and enhancement areas to protect the ecology and habitats of the Site. The project will utilise approximately 13.4 hectares (33 acres) of land for BNG purposes.
- 1.2.3 As a result of the Proposed Development, actual physical landtake by impermeable structures would be 0.25 ha, which includes 0.1 ha for poles piled into the ground for the solar panel frames (approximately 47,000 poles), and 0.15 ha for the BESS, MVS, switchyard, and the control building with associated structures. This comprises 0.29% of the total Site. If viewed from the sky, the panels would cover approximately 26 ha, or 30% of the Site area; however, there would be grassland underneath the panels, and the land will remain as its native soil seeded with grass, being both permeable and usable for either grazing (e.g. sheep) or wildlife habitat.
- 1.2.4 The Applicant has carefully considered the best location for the Proposed Development both operationally and in terms of minimising impacts on the community and environment. Key considerations and activities have included: availability of a grid connection; a desktop assessment to identify environmental constraints, land availability; and a detailed assessment of the suitability of the chosen Site.
- 1.2.5 Surveys have been carried out to assess the Proposed Development's likely effects on the environment, landscape, and heritage.

- 1.2.6 The Proposed Development will be reversible, with an operational period of around 40 years. At the end of the development's lifespan, the Site will be decommissioned, and the land returned to its original use, with improved soil quality.

2. Approach to pre-application consultation

- 2.1.1 The Applicant's approach to pre-application consultation is informed by the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ which states that *"early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties"* and that *"good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community"* (Paragraph 40).
- 2.1.2 Wiltshire Council's Statement of Community Involvement (July 2020)² outlines how the Council will involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation and review of planning policy documents and also the consideration of planning applications but also provides guidance to developers on pre-application consultation.
- 2.1.3 Paragraphs 8.7 to 8.14 of Wiltshire Council's Statement of Community Involvement outlines the council's expectations for pre-application consultation with the community and pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.1.4 Of particular note is paragraph 8.11: *"We also encourage developers and applicants to engage with local people and communities including Town and Parish Councils and with neighbours, when appropriate, before submission of a planning application. This might be in the form of a public meeting or display of materials (online and/or at a public exhibition) when local people can make the developer aware of any views they have prior to the submission of an application. A reasonable time frame should be allowed by the developer for feedback. This will enable the developer to consider amending the plans in response to such suggestions before submission. The government have stated that such engagement is discretionary, but it is strongly encouraged by the Council prior to the submission of applications for ten or more houses, or other large development on sites of 1 hectare or more."*
- 2.1.5 And paragraph 8.8: *"Once a planning application has been made valid and registered, the assessment of it can commence. Part of the process involves consultation which may include consulting with specialist organisations such as Natural England, Environment Agency and utility providers and consulting with internal Council teams, such as education, ecology, highways. These consultations are to establish whether the proposal is acceptable as it stands; what mitigation may be required to satisfactorily deal with its impacts, or whether the development would be contrary to the policies of the development plan and would have an unacceptable impact on important aspects of the environment and people's lives."*
- 2.1.6 In line with the above, the Applicant held a pre-application consultation on the emerging proposals for the Proposed Development between Tuesday 5 November and Tuesday 3 December 2024 and held a consultation event on the 19 November.

¹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>

² https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/4622/Wiltshire-Statement-of-Community-Involvement-2020/pdf/DM20_535_-_Statement_of_Community_Involvement_part_1_online6.pdf?m=1658214324197

3. Pre-application consultation

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 Pre-application engagement, consultation and continued engagement with technical consultees at Wiltshire Council, as well as local representatives and the community formed the foundation of the Applicant's approach to engagement and iterative design process. Key milestones of engagement on the Proposed Development were as follows:
- Initial engagement with local political stakeholders and community representatives – 5 July 2024.
 - Pre-application enquiry request sent to Wiltshire Council – 8 July 2024.
 - EIA screening request sent to Wiltshire Council – 8 July 2024. *No response received by October 2024.*
 - EIA screening request sent to Secretary of State (SoS) – 15 October 2024.
 - Consultation with local community and stakeholders – 5 November to 3 December 2024.
 - Pre-application response received from Wiltshire Council – 6 December 2024.
 - SoS response received – 17 March 2025.
- 3.1.2 For detailed information regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening and pre-application engagement with Wiltshire Council, and subsequently the Secretary of State request can be found in Section 1 of the Planning and Design Access Statement (PDAS).
- 3.1.3 This section outlines the engagement with stakeholders throughout the pre-application period, with a focus on early engagement with local representatives and the pre-application consultation held with the community between Tuesday 5 November and Tuesday 3 December 2024.

3.2 Engagement with stakeholders in advance of application submission

- 3.2.1 To inform consultation on the Proposed Development, several stakeholders likely to have an interest in the Proposed Development were identified. This included local political stakeholders representing the area the Proposed Development is within, residents and businesses from the local area. A list of these stakeholders is included in **Appendix A**.
- 3.2.2 In line with the pre-application enquiry and EIA screening request issued to Wiltshire Council in July 2024, the Applicant made initial contact via email with local political stakeholders representing the area on 5 July 2024 to inform them that the project was in the early stages of planning, advising that the project would look to launch a public consultation after the summer holidays and offer pre-consultation briefings. The aim of these meetings was to provide details on the proposals in advance of the launch of the public consultation, and to discuss points of detail relevant to the stakeholders involved. The invitations were sent to the following stakeholders:
- Wiltshire Council, Royal Wootton Bassett East Ward (Ward Councillor for Proposed Development area);
 - Wiltshire Council, Purton Ward (Ward Councillor immediately to the north of the Site);
 - Lydiard Tregoze Parish Council; and
 - Lydiard Millicent Parish Council.
- 3.2.3 Given the proximity of this initial engagement to the General Election, which was held on the 4 July 2024, the Applicant adapted its approach to take account of the election. It was decided to not engage the MP at this time. The revised approach instead engaged the new MP at the next project milestone (consultation), when contact details for the new MP were able to be confirmed.
- 3.2.4 The Applicant delivered a joint briefing to Lydiard Tregoze and Lydiard Millicent Parish Councils on Monday 14 October 2024.
- 3.2.5 No other political stakeholders requested a briefing on the project.

- 3.2.6 Alongside engagement with political stakeholders during the pre-application period, the Applicant also engaged with several officers from Wiltshire Council departments, including Planning, Ecology, Landscape and Public Right of Way (PRoW), Archaeology and Historic Environment, and Highways representatives. In addition, Natural England was also contacted directly about the Proposed Development. Most of this engagement took place via email, with one online meeting occurring with Wiltshire Council's Landscape Officer. Table 1 gives an overview of outgoing contact with stakeholders between July 2024 and March 2025.

Table 1: Stakeholder contact and meetings

Stakeholders	Type	Date
Introductory email to local political stakeholders	Outgoing via email	5 July 2024
Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council – pre-application and EIA screening request	Outgoing via email	8 July 2024
Planning (Noise), Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	23 July 2024
Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	1 August 2024
Planning (Noise), Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	7 August 2024
Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	7 August 2024
PRoW and Landscape teams, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	8 August 2024
PRoW and Landscape teams, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	27 August 2024
Planning (Ecology), Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	10 September 2024
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	26 September 2024
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	2 October 2024
Highways Team, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	8 October 2024
Joint briefing with Lydiard Tregoze Parish Council and Lydiard Millicent Parish Council	In-person meeting	14 October 2024
Ecologist, Natural and Historic Environment Team, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	5 November 2024
Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	7 November 2024
Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council	Teams meeting	18 November 2024
Ecologist, Natural and Historic Environment Team, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	19 November 2024
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	29 November 2024
Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council – pre-application advice	Outgoing via email	December 2024
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	December 2024
Ecologist, Natural and Historic Environment Team, Wiltshire Council	Outgoing via email	2 January 2025
Wessex Team, Natural England	Outgoing via email	16 January 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	13 January 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	23 January 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	29 January 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	6 February 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	26 February 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	28 February 2025
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	5 March 2025

Stakeholders	Type	Date
Wiltshire Council Archaeologist and Wiltshire Historic Environment Record	Outgoing via email	14 March 2025
Wessex Team, Natural England	Outgoing via email	20 March 2025

3.2.7 On 4 November 2024, the Applicant contacted all previously engaged stakeholders, alongside additional political stakeholders, ahead of the consultation launching on 5 November 2024. These stakeholders were advised of the consultation launch and offered project briefings. The invitations were sent to the following stakeholders:

- MP for Chippenham;
- Wiltshire Council Leader, Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment, Member for Royal Wootton Bassett East Ward, Member for Brinkworth Ward, Member for Royal Wootton Bassett North Ward, Member for Royal Wootton Bassett South and West Ward, Member for Purton Ward;
- Lydiard Tregoze Parish Council; and
- Lydiard Millicent Parish Council

3.2.8 No stakeholders requested an invitation for a briefing during the consultation.

3.3 Public consultation period

3.3.1 Public consultation on the emerging proposals took place from Tuesday 5 November to Tuesday 3 December 2024, with an in-person event being held on the 19 of November. The sections below set out how the public consultation was publicised, what consultation materials were shared, and the details of the public consultation drop-in event.

3.4 Publicising the consultation

3.4.1 To inform the local community about the public consultation and drop-in event, postcards were mailed to 824 residential and business addresses in the area. The postcard and distribution area are shown in **Appendix B.1**.

3.4.2 To inform local and technical stakeholders about the consultation, emails were sent to identified stakeholders and community groups (see **Appendix A**) informing them about the proposals, the public consultation, and the consultation event, as well as encouraging them to share the information within their networks. A copy of the stakeholder email can be found in **Appendix B.2**.

3.4.3 A press release was issued to local media *Wiltshire Times*, *Your Wiltshire* and *Hook Focus* on the day of the consultation launch (5 November 2024). A copy of the press release and local media coverage can be found in **Appendix B.3**.

3.4.4 A social media post about the consultation was also shared on the local Hook Village Facebook page and on Cllr Steve Bucknell public page. A copy of the posts can be found in **Appendix B.4**.

3.5 Consultation materials

3.5.1 A range of consultation materials were used to inform stakeholders and the community about the proposals. The materials were all available online (at <https://www.flaxlandsolar.co.uk/> as well as in hard copy at the drop-in event. The event and the website were both advertised in all consultation publicity. Copies of website can be found in **Appendix B.5**.

3.5.2 The project website was launched on 24 June 2024 with outline information about the Proposed Development. It was then updated for consultation on 5 November 2024 and has been updated following the consultation, retaining copies of all the consultation materials set out in paragraphs 3.14 to 3.18.

3.5.3 Exhibition boards were created to provide information on the project for the consultation. The boards were hosted online, on the project website, and used at the drop-in event. Copies of the exhibition boards can be found in **Appendix B.6** and included the following boards:

- Introduction.

- Summary of the proposals and site selection process.
- How the solar farm will look and how it will work.
- Environment, including information on ecology and biodiversity, agriculture, noise, traffic, flooding, and heritage.
- Community benefits and next steps

3.5.4 A series of plans were available to complement the exhibition boards, including a site location plan, a proposed site layout, an environmental constraints plan and a plan of the proposed PRow diversion.

3.5.5 A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document was created and made available both online and in hard copy to take away from the consultation drop-in event. Topics covered included community, environment, and project specifics. A copy of the FAQs can be seen in **Appendix B.7**.

3.5.6 A feedback form was also created and made available online (linked from the project website) and in hard copy at the consultation drop-in event. At the event, attendees could complete the form and hand it in to the project team or take it away and return it via the Freepost address set up for this purpose (Freepost ASE). The feedback form asked questions about the proposals, the respondents, and their experience of the consultation. A copy of the feedback form can be found in **Appendix B.8**.

3.6 Consultation event

3.6.1 An in-person consultation event took place at Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall, Hook, SN4 8EA on Tuesday 19 November 2024 between 2pm and 7pm.

3.6.2 64 people attended the event.

3.6.3 Members of the project team working on the Proposed Development were in attendance to answer questions.

3.6.4 At the event, all the materials listed in paragraphs 3.14 to 3.18 above were available to view and feedback forms were available to fill-in.

3.6.5 The setup of the event is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall

4. Feedback summary

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 This section outlines the feedback received on the Proposed Development during the public consultation, categorised by theme, and the Applicant's response to that feedback. It also summarises the number and type of responses to the consultation.
- 4.1.2 During the public consultation (Tuesday 5 November to Tuesday 3 December 2024), 18 responses were received in total. One of these was received after the close of the consultation and has been incorporated into the analysis.
- 4.1.3 Feedback could be submitted to the consultation via a number of channels, including:
- A hard copy feedback form (filled in at consultation drop-in event or returned via Freepost);
 - Online feedback form (linked from the project website);
 - Project email address: flaxlands@aecom.com; and
 - Write to us at Freepost ASE.
- 4.1.4 The following sections summarise the data analysis process and results.

4.2 Analysis Process

- 4.2.1 All responses, regardless of the channel they were received through, have been processed and analysed in the same way.
- 4.2.2 Upon receipt, all responses were logged within a consultation database and the response given a unique ID for identification purposes.
- 4.2.3 Once added to the database, each response was read and split up into individual comments. Each comment was then assigned a theme, to allow the Applicant to respond to feedback on similar topics.

4.3 Responses

- 4.3.1 Of the 18 responses received, 10 feedback forms were received, eight were completed online and two were hard copies. Eight responses were received via email.
- 4.3.2 The feedback form was split into three sections which asked respondents about the proposals, the consultation process and the respondents themselves. The following sub-sections of this report summarise the responses in relation to each of these sections.

4.4 Who responded

- 4.4.1 Of the 18 responses received, no responses were submitted on behalf of organisations who the Applicant contacted as interested stakeholders at the launch of the consultation. Emails were received from two landowners identifying themselves as near neighbours to the site.
- 4.4.2 Respondents were asked to share how they were connected to the scheme (Figure 2). 14 people responded to this question, with the majority stating they lived in the area.

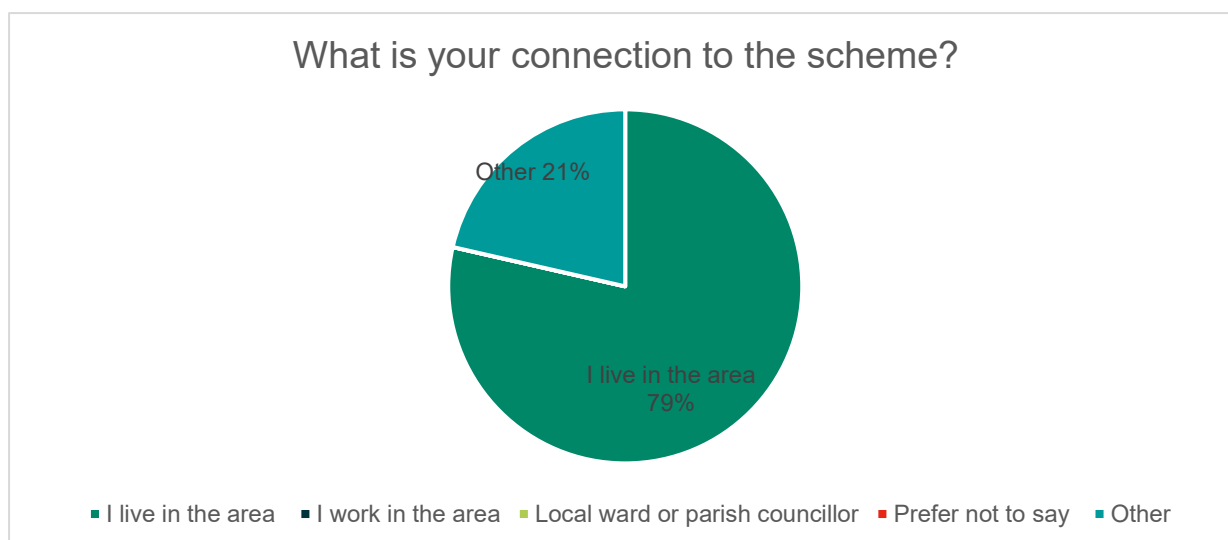


Figure 2: Respondents' connection to the scheme

- 4.4.3 Respondents were asked if they were responding on behalf of an organisation or business. 11 people responded to this question, with all stating they were not responding on behalf of an organisation or business.
- 4.4.4 Respondents were asked to provide their home or organisation/business postcode. The distribution of respondents' postcodes can be seen in Figure 3.

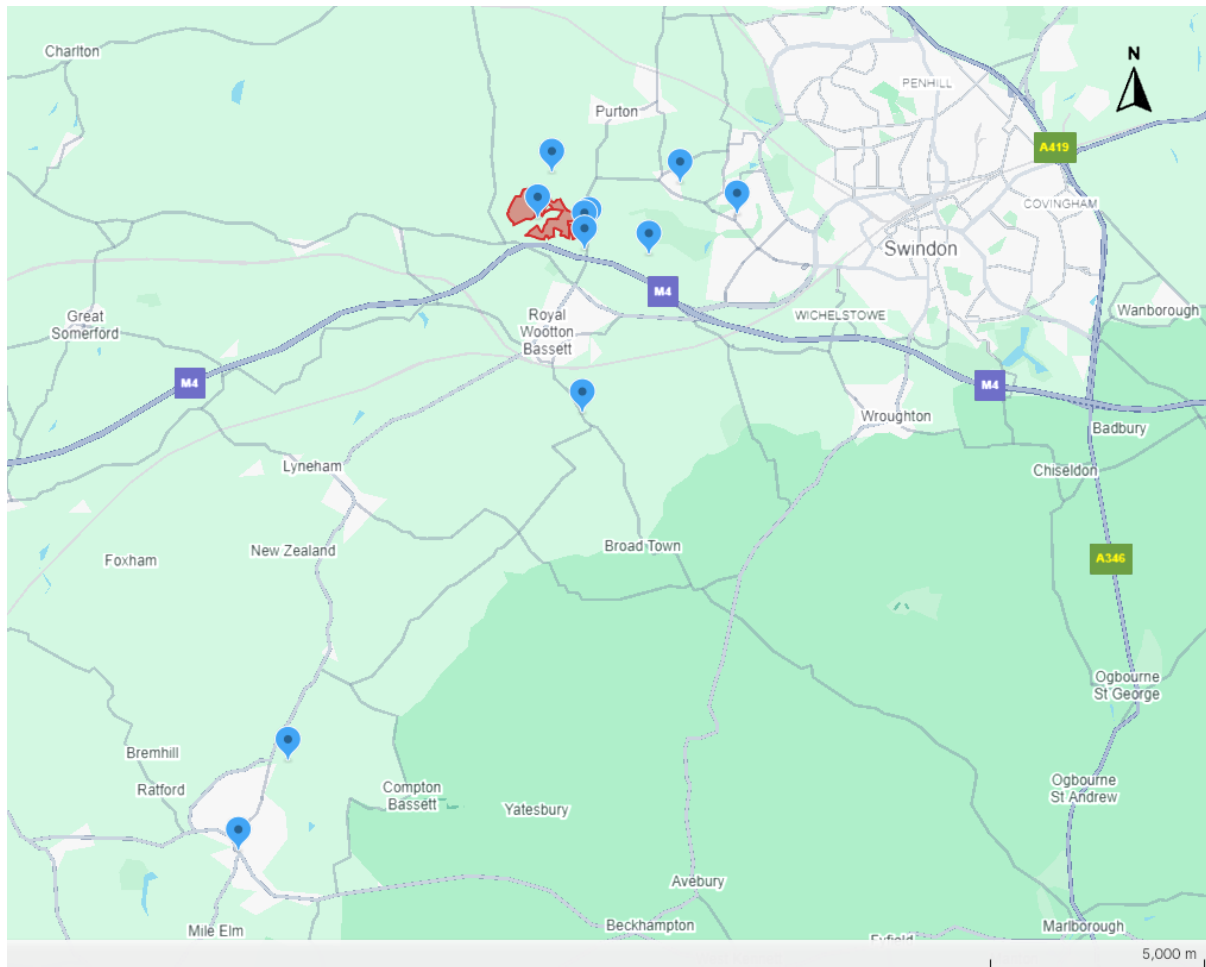


Figure 3: Distribution of all respondents who provided a postcode (the Proposed Development site location is shown in red)

4.5 Feedback on the proposals

- 4.5.1 This section analyses the responses received from respondents when asked about their support for renewable energy and the Proposed Development, and any feedback they had on the proposals. A summary of changes made to the proposals following the consultation is given in **Section 5** of this document.
- 4.5.2 Respondents were asked about the extent of their support for renewable energy in the UK (Figure 4). Seven people responded to this question, with three expressing *strong support* and one *slight support* for renewable energy, one *opposing* renewable energy, and two *neutral or unsure*.

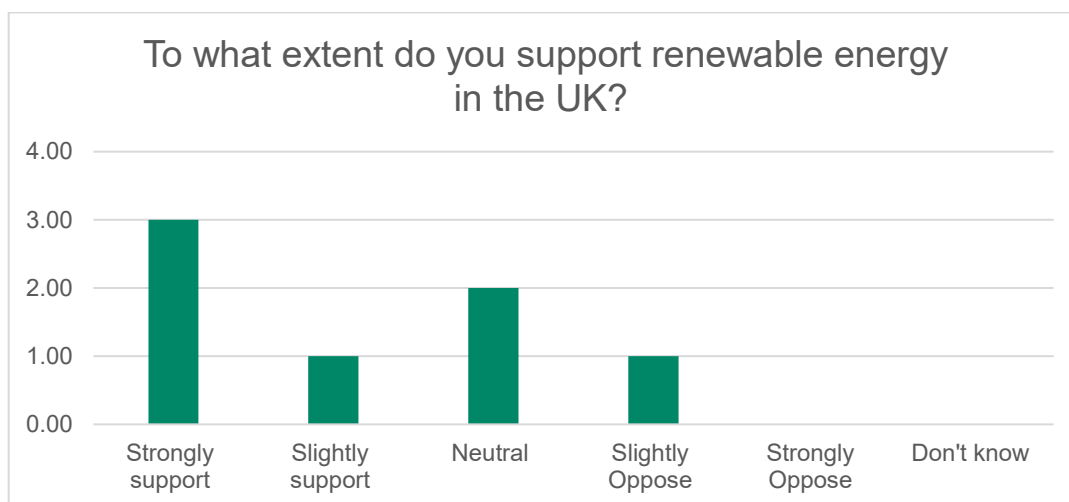


Figure 4: Respondents' support for renewable energy in UK

- 4.5.3 Respondents were asked about the extent of their support for the proposed development (Figure 5). Seven people responded to this question, with two expressing *strong support* for the proposal, three *strongly opposing*, one *slightly opposing* the proposal, and one *neutral or unsure*.

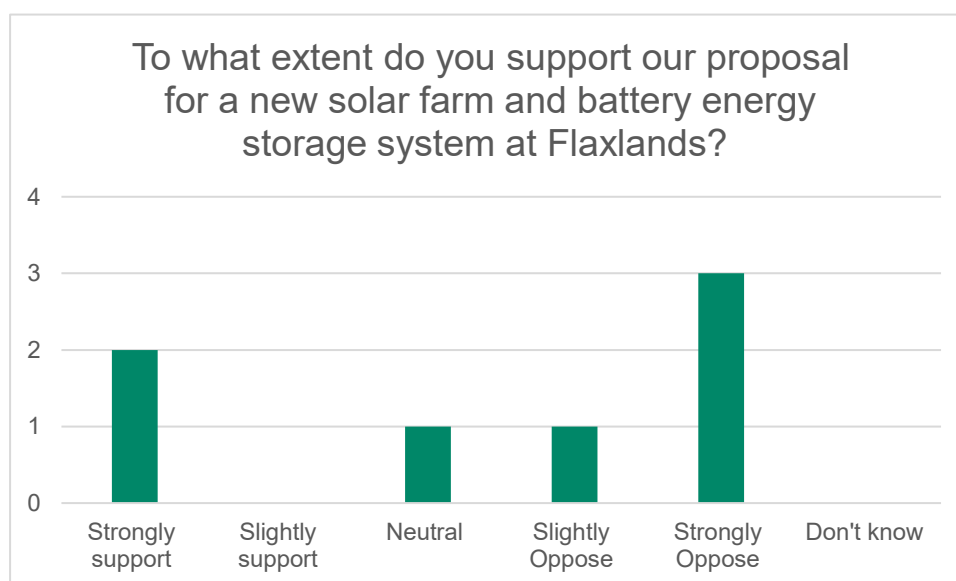


Figure 5: Respondents' support for a new solar farm and battery energy storage system at Flaxlands

- 4.5.4 Respondents were asked about the extent of their support for the proposed LTRE 28 and sections of PRoW LTRE 26 diversion (Figure 6). Seven people responded to this question, with two *supporting* the diversion and five *neutral*.

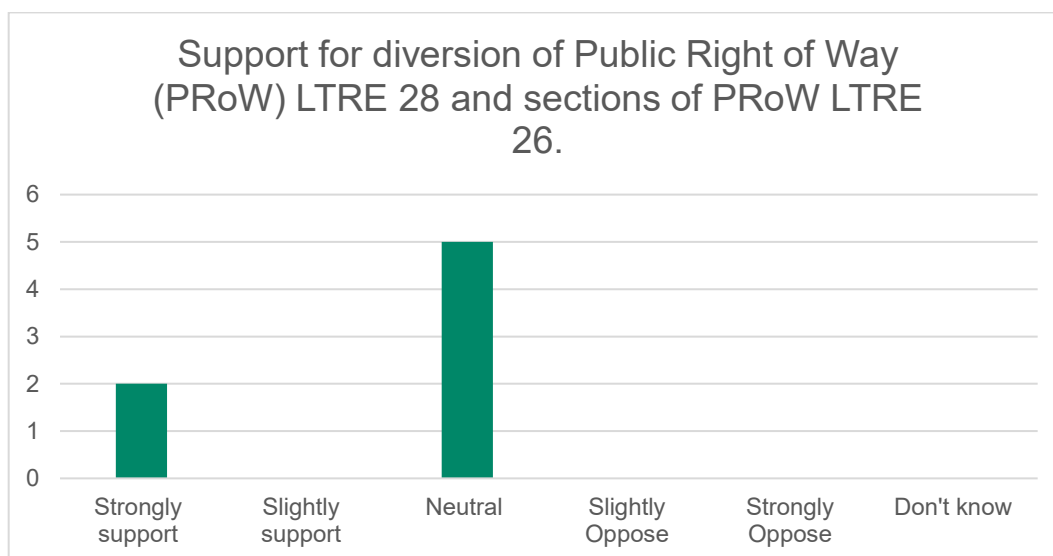


Figure 6: Respondents' support for proposed Public Right of Way diversion

- 4.5.5 Respondents were asked how often they use a route running to the Site via the M4 J16 and then following the A3102, Greatfield Lane and Flaxlands Lane (Figure 7). This was due to potential impacts from construction traffic. Eleven people responded to this question, with two using the route *very often*, one using the route *fairly often*, five using the route *occasionally*, two using the route *not very often*, one *never* using the route.

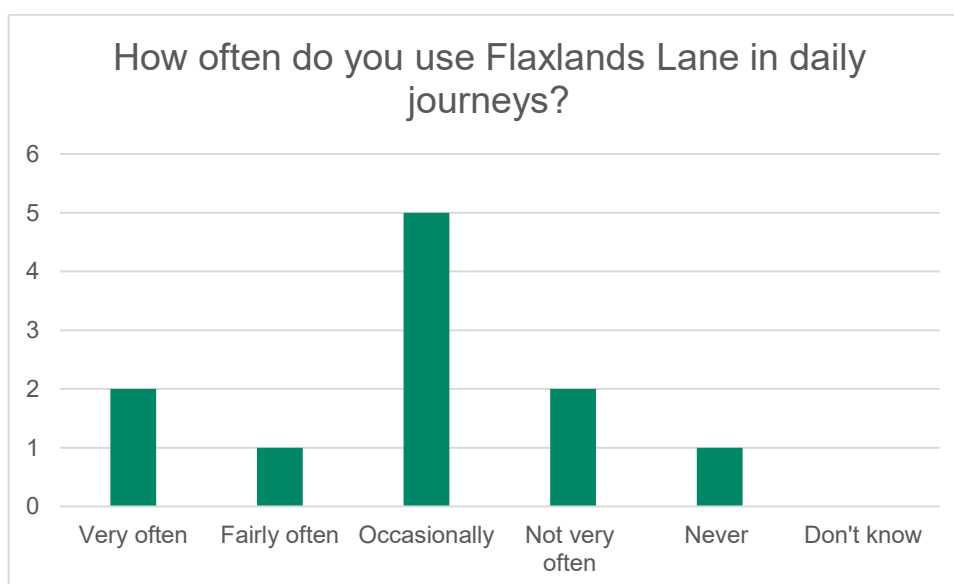


Figure 7: Respondents' use of Flaxlands Lane as part of daily journeys

- 4.5.6 Table 2 provides a summary of the feedback received from respondents explaining their answers to the previous three questions.

Table 2: Themes in responses to request for proposal feedback

Themes and comments	Applicant response
Landscape and Views (8 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Concern about loss of natural beauty/amenity. Landscape and view impacts should be mitigated and request for additional screening for local residents. Concern about glint and glare impact on nearby property. Concern about views from property. Concern about views on the north western corner of the Site, as land is higher. Landscape screening will be ineffective. Screening vegetation will take too long to mature. General support for screening and that location would be a low visual impact.	With regards to visual impact, a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVA) has been produced in accordance with established guidelines and submitted alongside this planning application. This document considers the potential effects on a range of receptor groups (included residential receptors) of the Proposed Development on the landscape character, the visual amenity including representative views, and cumulative effects. The LVA is accompanied by an outline landscape masterplan indicating proposed landscape mitigation measures. It identifies areas of new hedgerow planting, additional planting to strengthen existing hedgerows / bands of trees as well as new grassland areas. The iterative design process has resulted in the removal of solar panel areas in the southwestern and southern sections of the Site in order to move solar panels further away from residential receptors and to take more advantage of screening provided by existing vegetation. The layout of the Proposed Development has been designed to minimise the loss of, and avoid significant impacts on, existing landscape features, where possible. This includes minimum offsets from existing woodland, hedgerows, trees, watercourses and the PRow network. A Glint and Glare assessment has been submitted to Wiltshire Council as part of the Planning Application and considered the visual effects of glint and glare from the panels, metal framework, and mounts within a 1km radius of the Site.
Wildlife and Habitats (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Concern for wildlife safety. Concern about habitat impact. Concern for composition of nature areas. Concern about loss of biodiversity. Concern of air pollution. Concern of damage to the environment from decommissioned solar panel materials.	An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) has been undertaken for the proposals and has been submitted with the planning application. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has also been carried out and indicated that no negative impacts on wildlife are anticipated. Conclusions from the EclA suggest that most ecological receptors will only be affected by minor-adverse impacts, with small impacts on several receptors. In a worst-case scenario there may be moderate-adverse impacts on bats. The Applicant has aimed to minimise impacts to hedgerows. Where impacts to hedgerows are anticipated and unavoidable (for example to facilitate construction access or for potential visibility splays), existing areas of hedgerow will be coppiced (cutting hedge back in a way that encourages new growth) rather than removed. Where this is not practicable hedgerow will be translocated temporarily and replanted after construction, supported by new infill hedge planting of locally sourced native species.

Themes and comments	Applicant response
	Wildflower planting is proposed for the Site, and new hedges will be created. A biodiversity net gain of at least 10% will be delivered across the Site.
Scale of Development (4 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Development is too large for the village Property prices will decrease Proposal is driven by profit Concern about scale of substation and BESS Concern the development exploits the 50MW threshold to avoid environmental regulations	The Applicant has sought to avoid, minimise or mitigate effects of the Proposed Development on residential properties during the planning stages. After 40 years, the Applicant will decommission the solar farm and restore to its original use. Further detail on the scale of the Proposed Development and any anticipated cumulative impacts is available in the Planning Statement submitted as part of the planning application.
PRoW Diversion (5 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Closure of the PRoW would cause disruption. Concern and unhappiness with the proposed diversion. Support for PRoW diversion provided it is 'not far'. Support for PRoW diversion and suggested opportunity to make current routes more accessible. Request the new footpath is sufficiently maintained and wide enough Request for improved style for dog walkers.	The proposed re-routed PRoW would be made available in advance of the existing route being closed. A 15m width has been provided for the PRoW from the fence line. It will be appropriately signed and surfaced with planting maintained to ensure sight lines. Comments in support of the PRoW diversion have been noted.
Alternative proposals (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Site should be built on brownfield land Panels should be placed on rooftops Panels should be placed on warehouses or industrial buildings	The Applicant has undertaken a detailed four stage Site selection process. Further detail is provided in the Planning Statement. Panels fitted to the rooftops of large buildings or homes would likely not be able to produce the same amount of electricity with the same efficiency as the Proposed Development. This is because it is inefficient and technically challenging to link together a network of multiple small generators.
Traffic management (5 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Concern about impact of construction traffic. Traffic Management will increase light pollution. Request for information about traffic disruption mitigation. Concern that lanes to Site are unsuitable for construction traffic. Concern about the route into the Site through village of Hook and suggestion to change route in from opposite end of Flaxlands Lane.	During construction there is likely to be more traffic due to materials being delivered to the Site, but when the Proposed Development is operational the Site will be remotely operated and would only be visited for periodic maintenance and inspection purposes. All construction materials will be delivered by Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) lorries with no abnormal indivisible loads (AILs) required. The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Transport Statement has assessed the impacts of construction traffic and has found that there will not be a significant impact on local roads. Traffic management is detailed in the CTMP that will outline routing for vehicles accessing and egressing the Site, as well as access points (which are also shown on the plans submitted with the planning application).

Themes and comments	Applicant response
	The local highways authority will also be consulted on the planning application and will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed site access.
Safety (3 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Proposal needs appropriate health and safety plans in place. Hazardous materials from the running and decommissioning of solar panels. Concerns about electromagnetic fields (EMFs). Concerns of cyber-attacks on BESS leading to fires.	The Applicant will liaise with the local Fire and Rescue Service and the Council on battery safety and will produce a Battery Safety Management Plan and Emergency Response Plan following consent. An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan has been included as part of the planning application and demonstrates adherence with the National Fire Chief's safety guidelines.
Agriculture and food supply/ security (5 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Arable land should not be used for solar developments because they could impact food security. Questioning whether the land will be returned to agriculture following decommission.	An Agricultural Land Classification assessment identified two soil types – Subgrade 3a Best and Most Versatile (BMV) and Subgrade 3b and of good to moderate quality. Further detail is available in the Agricultural Land Classification Report. Food security is important and the National Food Strategy notes that the next big shock to our food supply will almost certainly be caused by climate change in the form of extreme weather events and catastrophic harvest failures. It follows that addressing climate change, including by using solar energy, will improve the security of our food supply. At the end of the Proposed Developments' lifespan, the solar PV panels and other infrastructure would be removed, and the Site restored. Tree and hedge planting will not be removed by the Applicant or operator. The decommissioning activities are anticipated to be similar in nature to those during the construction phase. The restoration process is intended to ensure that the land is restored to the same or better quality as it was prior to construction. Further information on restoration of the Site is detailed within Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. But as per the pre-app response, we expect that the details of the decommissioning phase would be subject to condition.
Other (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Concern about proximity to proposal. Concern raised about water mains across Site.	The Applicant recognises the concern of the local community and is committed to reducing impacts on the communities living close to the Proposed Development wherever possible. A key objective of the public consultation was to obtain views from the local community on opportunities to support the community, should planning permission be granted. The Applicant has received a number of suggestions through the consultation process which are under consideration.
Noise (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Site operation will cause noise pollution. Site construction will cause noise pollution.	There will not be any noise created by the solar panels themselves. When the solar farm is operational, low levels of noise can be generated by the electrical system (such as from the BESS), transformers and inverters. The BESS, transformers and inverters are proposed to be located away from the PRoW and nearby properties at a distance to

Themes and comments	Applicant response
	minimise noise impacts. A Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted as part of the application which includes detailed noise modelling and an assessment of likely noise impacts.
Greenfield (1 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Solar farms should not be built on greenfield, brownfield sites should be used.	Although the Site is located on greenfield, the Applicant believes it is still appropriate to develop the Site for four reasons: • The development is reversible and will be returned to its previous state when it is decommissioned. • The development benefits are believed to outweigh any harm resulting from developing on greenfield. • There is a lack of suitable alternative sites including brownfield sites in the area offering connections into the grid. • The Proposed Development meets the relevant criteria due to the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. Further detail can be found in the Planning Statement.
Appreciates need for scheme (1 respondent)	
Respondent commented: Supports for renewable energy and lives near another solar farm and with no issues.	The Applicant welcomes support for the Proposed Development.
Livestock grazing (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Sheep grazing is not delivered at solar sites. Request for information about the feasibility of sheep grazing at the Site.	The Applicant will seek to find a balance between agricultural use, including grazing and wildflower planting, as they are compatible practices. Livestock grazing will be at the discretion of the landowner. It is possible for the Site to be retained in agricultural use for the life of the Proposed Development, should an arrangement be agreed for sheep grazing with a willing farmer. This would include land between and underneath the panels.
Construction (4 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Disruption caused by construction. Concern about construction noise. Concern about Flaxlands Lane unsuitability for construction traffic.	It is estimated that the main construction period (not including enabling works) will be approximately 16 to 24 weeks. Enabling works would start from six to 12 months prior to construction, although some landscaping works (e.g. any tree planting) could occur sooner if required. Facilities would be provided on-site for construction workers, including provision of a site office and welfare facilities. Fencing would be installed around the perimeter of the Site, and temporary parking would be provided for the construction workers. During the 16 to 24-week construction period, it is proposed that construction working hours would be as follows: • 08:00 – 18:00 Monday to Friday; and • 08:00 – 13:00 Saturday.

Themes and comments	Applicant response
	Should work be required to be undertaken outside of these times, this would be agreed in advance and in writing with the local planning authority. The Applicant has undertaken a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) which has been submitted in support of the Proposed Development. The NIA provides an assessment of the noise and vibration impacts of the Proposed Development on local sensitive receptors. The NIA concluded that the noise levels in relation to the construction of the infrastructure and the vehicle movements are considered to have no significant effects at all receptors in accordance with both national and local policy. More detail can be found in the Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) document.
Flood Risk (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: Proposed Development would increase flood risk. Concern about existing drainage issues on site.	A Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy has been submitted as part of the application, which demonstrates that the Site will not be affected by flood risk, or impact flood risk elsewhere. Drains and watercourses near the development will not be impacted by the solar farm's development.
Quality of Life (2 respondents)	
Respondents commented: General concern for impact of the Proposed Development on local residents.	The Applicant recognises the concern of the local community and is committed to reducing impacts on the communities living close to the Proposed Development wherever possible. A key objective of the public consultation was to obtain views from local people on opportunities to support the community, should planning permission be granted. The Applicant has received a number of suggestions through the consultation process which are under consideration.

4.5.7 Respondents were invited to suggest what they would like to see included in the community benefit aspect of the Proposed Development.

4.5.8 Table 3 provides a summary of the suggestions received for local community benefits.

Table 3: Community benefit related suggestions

Themes and comments	Applicant response
Community electricity cooperative / cheaper energy (3)	
Respondents requested: Cheaper electricity for the local community. Community electricity cooperative.	There are a number of ways that community cooperative electricity could be delivered to provide cheaper energy to the local community. This will be considered further should the scheme be granted planning permission.
Scepticism over community benefits (2)	
Respondents stated: The community won't benefit from the project Community benefit aspect of the project is a bribe. Only the landowner will benefit from the scheme.	The Applicant is looking at ways to help ensure the local community benefits from the Proposed Development, which may include setting up a Community Benefit Fund to support local projects. It

Themes and comments	Applicant response
	is noted that community benefit is not contingent on support for the Proposed Development, and that a planning decision will be made on the scheme's benefits, independent of the community benefits.
Local road improvements (1)	
General - Traffic management/disruption - traffic calming measures.	The suggestions made for the types of community benefit that could be delivered have been captured and will be considered further should the scheme be granted planning permission.
Support for local sustainability initiatives (1)	
Request to see the community benefit fund used to support sustainable education initiatives in local schools, alongside school visits to the solar farm.	The suggestions made for the types of community benefit that could be delivered have been captured and will be considered further should the scheme be granted planning permission.
Other (2)	
Request to see local businesses advertised at events and consultations. Concern that profits from the solar farm will be taken by international companies and away from local communities.	Comments noted for future consideration. As the Proposed Development is still at an early stage of development and planning permission has not yet been granted, contractors have not yet been appointed.
Public Rights of Way (1)	
Respondents requested: Accessibility and maintenance of PRoW should be improved – specifically consideration for accessible gates.	The Applicant is considering how the PRoW will be diverted and upgraded and proposes “kissing gates” should be used on the PRoW network. The suggestions made for the types of community benefit that could be delivered have been captured and will be considered further should the scheme be granted planning permission.

4.6 Feedback on the consultation

- 4.6.1 This section analyses respondents’ feedback about the consultation, which the Applicant will use to inform future consultations for other schemes.
- 4.6.2 Respondents were asked how they heard about the consultation (Figure 8). 11 people responded to this question, with some respondents choosing multiple options. The three most common ways people heard about the consultation were through the postcard, local newspaper and social media.

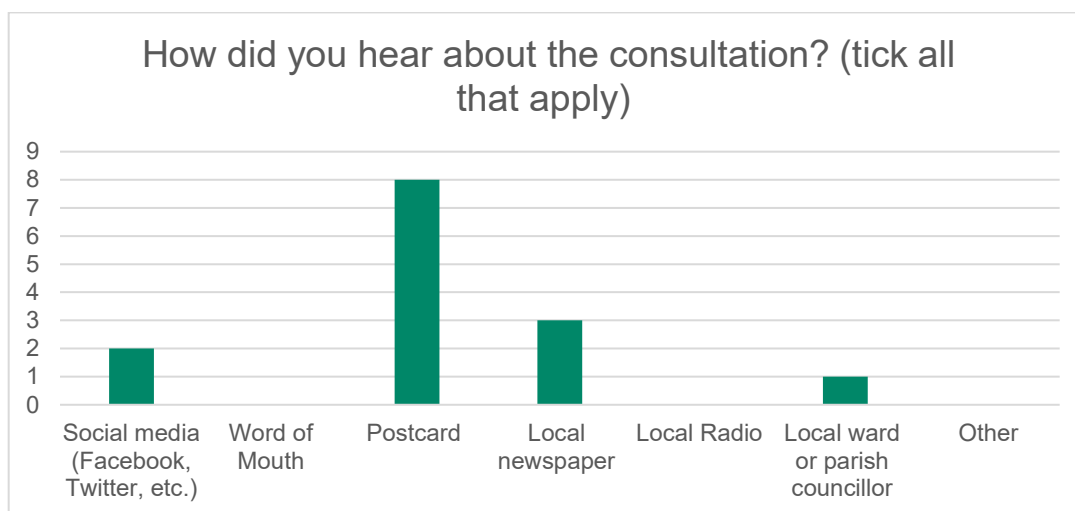


Figure 8: How respondents heard about the consultation

4.6.3 Respondents were asked to share their opinion on how useful the consultation materials were in helping them to understand the scheme (Figure 9). 12 people responded to this question, with six stating they found the materials *useful*, two *not useful*, and four *neutral*.

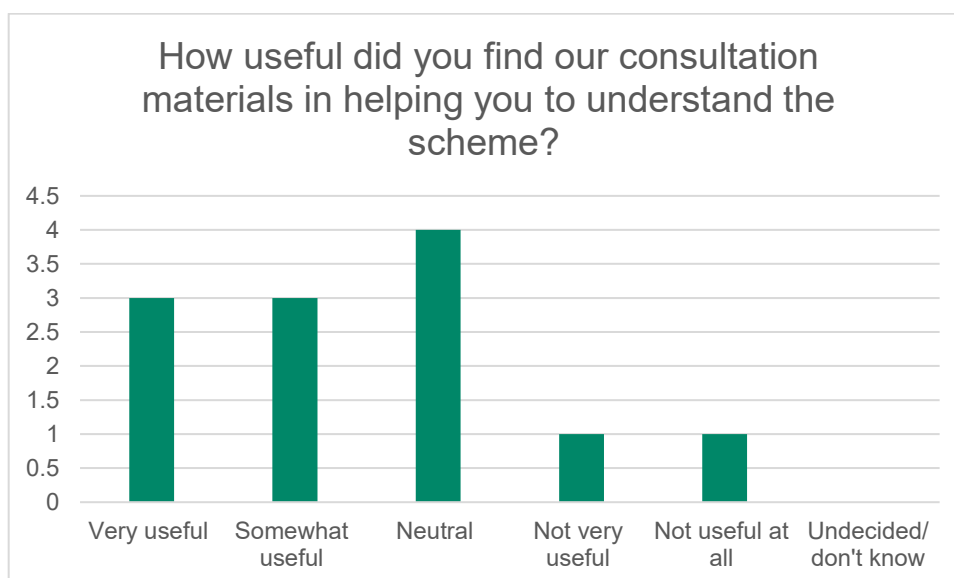


Figure 9: How useful respondents found the consultation materials

4.6.4 Table 4 summarises the feedback received related to the consultation process.

Table 4: Themes in responses to request for feedback on the consultation

Themes and comments	Applicant's response
Consultation events (5)	
Suggested ways to improve consultation events: Provide more events. Event answered most questions. Further information was required at event including proposed timescales for the Proposed Development. Had not received postcard – felt deliberately ignored and excluded.	Hearing from communities, landowners, and other stakeholders is a central part of the planning process. The drop-in event lasted for four hours and was well-attended by 64 people, who were able to speak with the Applicant and a member of the project planning team. The project team and the Applicant were made aware that some members of the local community did not receive (or received late) the information leaflet notifying

Themes and comments	Applicant's response
Postcard arrived late, so notification of the event felt 'last minute'.	them of consultation start on 5 November. These were sent using Royal Mail 2nd Class post on 1 November (18 days prior to the consultation event) to 824 addresses locally (see Appendix B.1). The Applicant also took steps to ensure that the project postcard was not the only way information was shared. The event was publicised through multiple other channels, including the local Facebook noticeboard, local newspapers and local representatives. Royal Mail normally offers the most effective and reliable means of direct communication, but respondents comments have been noted for future consideration.
Materials (4)	
Suggested ways to improve materials included: Offering a larger range of materials. Consultation materials were lacking detail.	Comments noted for future consideration.
Visuals (3)	
Suggested ways to improve visuals included: Providing 3D visualisations of the Proposed Development.	Comments noted for future consideration.
Other (1)	
Request for Respondent details to be collected with feedback forms and at events.	Comments noted for future consideration.

5. Changes to the Proposed Development following consultation

5.1.1 As a result of the consultation feedback, further assessment and design work, the following changes have been made to the design since the consultation took place:

- Revision to the BESS and substation layout;
- Revisions to the width of access roads within the Site;
- Revisions to perimeter fence lines to avoid impacts to trees and hedgerows;
- Reduction in number of fields with solar panels to avoid impact to lowland meadow Priority Habitat and to align design with landowner agreements; and
- Revision to the red line boundary to align with the above changes.

5.1.2 More detail on the development process, design approach and evolution of the Proposed Development can be found in Section 5 of the Planning and Design Access Statement (PDAS).

5.1.3 The updated design and proposed layout of Flaxlands Solar Farm is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Flaxlands Solar Farm Proposed Layout



6. Next steps

- 6.1.1 The Applicant will continue to keep the local community updated on its proposals as they develop and go through the planning process. This will primarily be through the project website, and emails to identified stakeholders at key milestones in the project's lifecycle. Following the submission of the planning application, the Applicant will also send a letter to the local community to provide an update on the outcomes of the consultation, including an overview of the key feedback received and any changes made to the proposals in response to these, next steps will also be set out in the letter.
- 6.1.2 If the planning application for the Proposed Development is approved, the Applicant expects construction will start approximately 6 months after consent and take 24 weeks. Expected timescales for connection is 2029, however its operational start date is dependent on current grid reforms.

Appendix A : Consultees

Political

- Member of Parliament for Chippenham
- Wiltshire Council Leader
- Wiltshire Council Waste and Environment Cabinet member
- Royal Wootton Bassett East ward representatives on Wiltshire Council
- Brinkworth ward representatives on Wiltshire Council
- Royal Wootton Bassett North ward representatives on Wiltshire Council
- Royal Wootton Bassett South ward representatives on Wiltshire Council
- West and Purton ward representatives on Wiltshire Council
- Members of Lydiard Tregoze Parish Council
- Members of Lydiard Millicent Parish Council

Local community and interest groups

- Local residents and businesses
- Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall

Landowners

- Proposed Development site landowner, and any renters and owners close to it
- Neighbouring landowners

Appendix B Consultation materials

B.1 Postcard and distribution area

We anticipate that Flaxlands Solar Farm will be able to supply enough energy to power approximately 21,000 homes each year. The clean energy generated could save up to 17,900 tonnes of CO₂ per year, which adds up to just over 716,000 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 40 years.

We are now consulting on our proposal and will be holding a drop-in event at the **Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall on Tuesday 19 November, from 2pm to 7pm**. Please come along to find out more about the proposal and to ask the project team any questions.

You can also read our consultation materials and send feedback via our project website:

<https://www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk>

We are particularly interested in hearing about what more we could do to help ensure the local community benefits from the project.

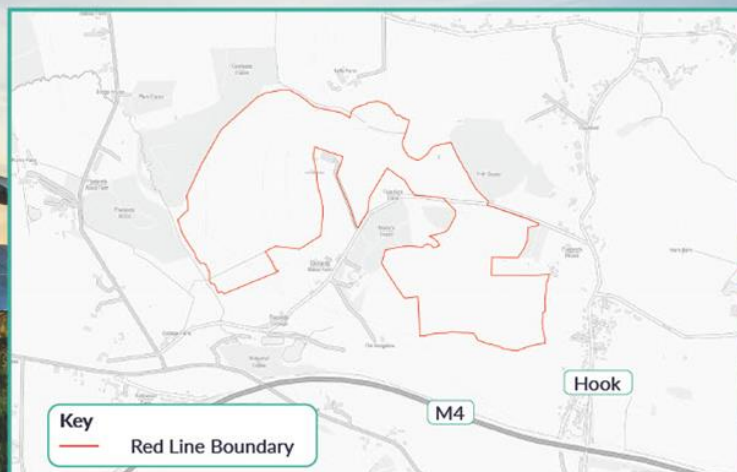
 flaxlands-solar@aecom.com
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Flaxlands Solar Farm

You are invited to have your say

Ampyr Solar Europe is developing a proposal for a solar farm and battery energy storage system on land north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook. Our consultation runs until **23:59 on Tuesday 3 December 2024** and we want to hear your feedback.



www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk

 **AMPYR** Solar Europe

B.2 Stakeholder email

Flaxlands Solar Farm Stakeholder Email

SUBJECT LINE: Public Consultation on proposals for Flaxlands Solar Farm

Dear [insert name/title],

I am emailing on behalf of Ampyr Solar Europe, as we are launching a public consultation on our proposals for a new solar farm at Flaxlands located north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook in Wiltshire. I am the Consents Manager overseeing the development of the project.

We anticipate that Flaxlands Solar Farm will be able to supply enough energy to power 21,000 homes each year, and the clean energy generated will save on average 17,900 tonnes of CO2 per year. That is a saving of just over 716,000 tonnes of CO2 over the solar farm's life (40 years).

The consultation period will launch on **Tuesday 5 November to 23:59 on Tuesday 3 December 2024.**

You can find out more about our proposals following the consultation launch by visiting our project website www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk. Here you can also find our online feedback form and submit your response to the proposals.

We'll be holding a drop-in event at the Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall on **Tuesday 19 November**, from **2pm to 7pm**. Please come along to find out more about our proposals, to meet the project team, and to ask any questions you may have.

I have attached a copy of our consultation postcard in case you would like to share it within your networks.

Feedback can be submitted in several ways:

- Completing and submitting a feedback form online at www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk
- Emailing your completed form to **flaxlands-solar@aecom.com**
- Posting a printed copy of the form to **Freepost ASE**.
- Filling in a hard copy form at the drop in event and giving it to a member of the project team.

All feedback received during the consultation will be reviewed and considered by the project team.

If you have any questions or would like to receive any of the consultation materials in a different format, please do not hesitate to get in touch by emailing **flaxlands-solar@aecom.com**.

Kind regards,

B.3 Press release and coverage

Proposal for new solar farm to the west of Hook, Wiltshire

Press Release

For immediate release: 5 November 2024

Ampyr Solar Europe, an experienced solar farm developer, is launching a public consultation on a proposal for a new solar farm and battery energy storage system at Flaxlands Farm, to the west of the village Hook in Wiltshire.

The 87.5 hectare site is anticipated to supply the electricity to approximately 21,000 homes a year – this will supply an area nearly twice the size of Royal Wootton Bassett. The site will also have a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). This BESS will enable solar energy to be stored and later released to areas in need of power.

The clean energy generated will save on average 17,900 tonnes of CO₂ per year, which adds up to over 716,000 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 40 years.

The site was identified following a four-step selection process that considered demand for electricity and suitability for the area. The proposal has been carefully considered to minimise any impact on the community and the environment. The site layout has been designed, where possible, to protect local views and minimise disruption to the local community. The proposal has been carefully considered to minimise any impact on the community and the environment. The site layout has been designed, where possible, to protect local views and minimise disruption to the local community. Ampyr Solar Europe is therefore developing landscaping and wildlife enhancement measures, including improving the network of hedgerows within and around the site to screen the proposed solar farm and identifying space for new habitat creation.

The consultation on our proposals will take place from Tuesday 5 November until 23:59 on Tuesday 3 December 2024 and will include a drop-in event at the Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall on **Tuesday 19 November** from **2pm to 7pm**.

Local residents, stakeholders and members of the community are invited to share their views on the proposed solar farm and shape the proposal before Ampyr Solar Europe submit a planning application to Wiltshire Council early next year.

Representatives of Ampyr Solar Europe will be available to answer any questions residents may have. For those who are unable to attend the in-person event, the proposal can be viewed on the scheme website at www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk, which includes an online response form for people to submit their comments.

Michael Breslaw, Consents Manager at Ampyr Solar Europe, commented, “Ampyr Solar Europe is committed to supporting the UK’s transition to zero and low carbon sources of power and achieving energy security.

Solar energy will play an important role in this journey, and Flaxlands Solar Farm will be key to supporting this transition. The scheme will aim to leave a positive legacy for the area through both its’ provision of reliable and green energy to local communities and its’ ecological commitments.

We are looking forward to sharing our proposal with the local community and working with them to shape the project.”

To find out more about the proposal or the consultation, please visit www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk.

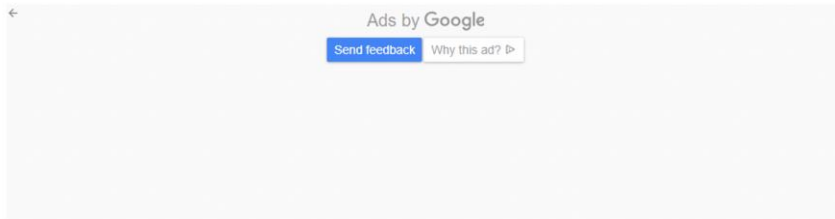
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Notes to editors

Ampyr Solar Europe (<https://www.ampyrsolareurope.com/>) was created in 2021 through the merger of NaGa Solar with the existing Ampyr Energy UK joint venture between AGP Group and Hartree Partners. Ampyr Solar Europe operated across Germany, UK and the Netherlands, with a 7+ GW solar portfolio in development, of which over 1GWp is operational, under construction or in advanced development.

Contact Details

flaxlands-solar@aecom.com



Consultation open for solar farm near Royal Wootton Bassett

7TH NOVEMBER 2024 PLANNING APPLICATIONS SOLAR POWER ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT WOOTTON BASSETT



By Jessica Moriarty

Local Democracy Reporter

[@jb_moriarty](#)

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A public consultation has been launched to gather feedback on a proposal for a new solar farm north of Royal Wootton Bassett.

Ampyr Solar Europe is inviting people to share their views on plans for Flaxlands Solar Farm on an 87.5-hectare site to the west of the village of Hook.

According to the developer, the project would supply electricity to approximately 21,000 homes a year, sufficient for an area nearly twice the size of Royal Wootton Bassett.

[READ MORE: Wiltshire Council approves major solar farms motion](#)



Ampyr Solar Europe has a 7+ Gigawatt solar portfolio in development. (Image: Google)

The same company is behind plans for another solar farm south of the A342, near Pewsey, 1.5km below the village of Wilsford.

Earlier this year, Wiltshire Council approved a motion that stated it was “increasingly concerned at the concentration of solar farms, battery storage and associated infrastructure in Wiltshire”.

It called upon the government to ensure solar developments are “more evenly spread across the UK”.

This site near Royal Wootton Bassett would also have a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), allowing solar energy to be stored and later released to areas in need of power.

Ampyr Solar Europe has explained that the clean energy generated will save on average 17,900 tonnes of CO2 per year, which adds up to over 716,000 tonnes of CO2 over the next 40 years.

The consultation will be held until Tuesday, December 3, and will include a drop-in event at the Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall on Tuesday, November 19, from 2pm to 7pm.

The developers plan to submit a formal application to Wiltshire Council early next year.

SEE ALSO: Consultation feedback reviewed for Lime Down Solar Park

Michael Breslaw, Consents Manager at Ampyr Solar Europe, commented: "Ampyr Solar Europe is committed to supporting the UK's transition to zero and low carbon sources of power and achieving energy security.

"Solar energy will play an important role in this journey, and Flaxlands Solar Farm will be key to supporting this transition.

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The Flaxlands site was identified following a four-step selection process that considered demand for electricity and suitability for the area.

Ampyr Solar Europe has said the proposal has been "carefully considered to minimise any impact on the community and the environment".

According to the developer, the site layout has been designed, where possible, to protect local views and minimise disruption to the local community and will include landscaping and wildlife enhancement measures.

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Consultation open for solar farm near Royal Wootton Bassett

8TH NOVEMBER 2024 PLANNING APPLICATIONS SOLAR POWER ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Ampyr Solar Europe develops solar parks across Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom





By Jessica Moriarty
Local Democracy Reporter
[@jb_moriarty](#)

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A public consultation has been launched to gather feedback on a proposal for a new solar farm north of Royal Wootton Bassett.

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[READ MORE: Wiltshire Council approves major solar farms motion](#)



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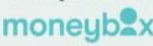






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PLANNING APPLICATIONS SOLAR POWER ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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B.4 Social media posts

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Flaxlands Solar Farm public consultation details.

Flaxlands Solar Farm

You are invited to have your say

Ampyr Solar Europe is developing a proposal for a solar farm and battery energy storage system on land north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook. Our consultation runs until 23:59 on Tuesday 3 December 2024 and we want to hear your feedback.

Key
— Red Line Boundary

Hook
M4

www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk

We anticipate that Flaxlands Solar Farm will be able to supply enough energy to power approximately 21,000 homes each year. The clean energy generated could save up to 17,900 tonnes of CO₂ per year, which adds up to just over 716,000 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 40 years.

We are now consulting on our proposal and will be holding a drop-in event at the **Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall** on **Tuesday 19 November**, from 2pm to 7pm. Please come along to find out more about the proposal and to ask the project team any questions.

You can also read our consultation materials and send feedback via our project website:

<https://www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk>

We are particularly interested in hearing about what more we could do to help ensure the local community benefits from the project.



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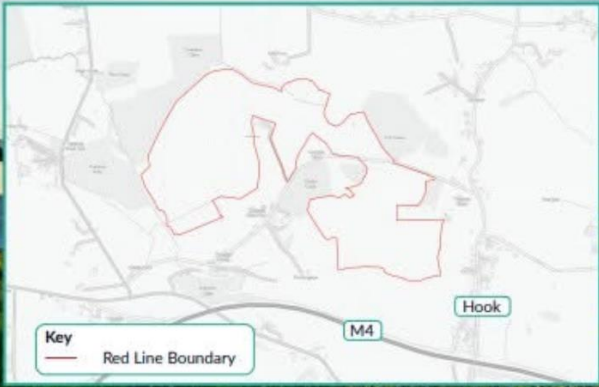
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Key
— Red Line Boundary

Hook
M4

www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk

 **AMPYR** Solar Europe

We anticipate that Flaxlands Solar Farm will be able to supply enough energy to power approximately 21,000



Hook Village Hall

Hook Village Hall, SN4 8EA · 48 km



1 went · 24 interested



Public · Anyone on or off Facebook

About

Discussion

What to expect

Have you seen the proposals for a huge solar array on farmland at Hook? Flaxlands solar has started a consultation ahead of a planning application to build on over 200 acres of farmland between Hook and Lydiard Plain.

See <https://www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk/> for more information about the project and the consultation, which is live now and runs until 3rd December. There is an exhibition and drop-in event at Hook Village Hall on Tuesday 19 November from 2pm to 7pm.

Posts

About

Photos

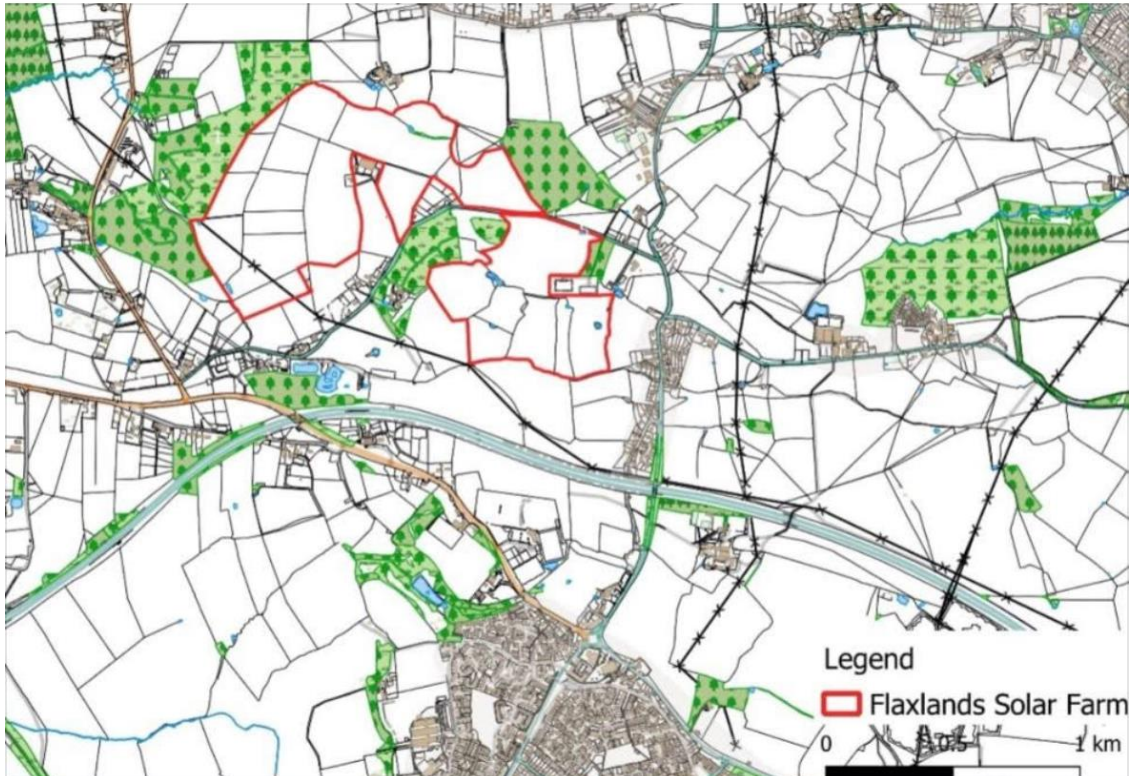
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Steve Bucknell for Royal Wootton Bassett East created an event.



7 Nov 2024 · 🌐



Tues, 19 Nov 2024

Flaxlands Solar Array Consultation

☆ Interested

Hook Village Hall



1



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Steve Bucknell for Royal Wootton Bassett East



4 Nov 2024 · 🌐

B.5 Website

WELCOME TO THE

Flaxlands Solar Farm Website



Project Introduction

Ampyr Solar Europe (ASE) is developing a proposal for an 87ha solar farm with 49MW of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) capacity north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook in Wiltshire.

Who is the developer?

This project is being developed by [Ampyr Solar Europe](#), a major new European solar enterprise. Ampyr Solar Europe was created in 2021 through the merger of NaGa Solar with the existing Ampyr Energy UK joint venture between AGP Group and Hartree Partners. Ampyr Solar Europe operates across Germany, UK and the Netherlands, with a 7+ GW (Gigawatt) solar portfolio in development.

We anticipate the solar farm to supply the electricity needs of approximately 21,000 homes a year, a significant proportion of households.

The clean energy generated will save on average approximately 17,900 tonnes of CO₂ per year, which adds up to 716,000 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 40 years or the equivalent of 835,951 acres of forest.

Biodiversity is particularly important to us and we are exploring opportunities for ecological enhancements and habitat creation by incorporating large areas designated for biodiversity net gain.

biodiversity net gain.

Community consultation

Public consultation will run from the 5th November until 23:59 on the 3rd December with an in-person event from 2-7pm on the 19th November at Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, SN4 8EA. The consultation aims to understand the thoughts of local communities regarding the project and to use community feedback to inform the project's design and focus any community benefits.

To provide feedback please send any questions/ queries/ comments to flaxlands-solar@aecom.com or in person at the consultation event from 2-7pm on the 19th November at Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, SN4 8EA





Why do we need the solar farm?

Climate change is already resulting in an increase in global temperatures and weather patterns affecting societies and ecosystems in the UK and around the world.

To combat climate change, the UK has set the ambitious target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. To do this, the UK will shut all coal-fired power stations by 2025 and needs to transition to zero and low carbon sources of power. This means the amount of energy generated from renewable sources, such as solar, needs to increase. Flaxlands Solar Farm will play an important regional and national part in this transition to renewable energy generation.

Currently the UK's electricity price is among the highest in Europe. The cause of this can be attributed to the lack of 'home-grown' energy and our susceptibility to outside influences on our energy prices. To combat this, the UK needs to find ways to increase its energy security, and renewable and clean energy generating power stations, such as solar and wind, play a vital part in achieving this goal.

Furthermore, National Grid expects the UK to double the amount of its energy usage by 2050, partly due to the growth in electric vehicle ownership and the proposed abolition of new petrol and diesel cars by 2035. To keep up with this increased demand while achieving our carbon targets, an increase in renewable energy generating stations is required across the UK.

Flaxlands Solar Farm is anticipated to power approximately 21,000 homes, whilst reducing CO₂ emissions by approximately 17,900 tonnes per year, over its 40-year lifespan and is therefore a key part of the UK climate and energy security targets, as well as Wiltshire's regional climate ambitions.



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Solar Farm, London, England, EC2N
1NH, United Kinddom

Consultation

Purpose of the public consultation

The aim of the consultation is for Ampyr to understand the local community's feelings – positive or negative – towards the proposal, and to have honest and transparent discussions on how best to mitigate for any potential negative impacts the proposal may have on the local community. The feedback provided through the consultation will be used to inform the scheme's design and will also enable Ampyr to understand how best to optimise community benefits.

Public consultation will run from the 5th November until 23:59 on the 3rd December with an in-person event from 2-7pm on the 19th November at Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, SN4 8EA

To provide feedback please complete the questionnaire – <https://forms.office.com/r/FBZWS94U3W> or send any questions/ queries/ comments to flaxlands-solar@aecom.com or in person at the consultation event.

Consultation Documents

- [Flaxlands Solar Farm Consultation Postcard](#)
- [Flaxlands Solar Farm Consultation Boards](#)
- [Flaxlands Solar Farm Feedback Form](#)
- [Flaxlands Solar Farm Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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Solar Farm, London, England, EC2N
1NH, United Kinddom

The Proposal

How does the solar farm work?

Solar panels are made of photovoltaic cells (which is why generating electricity with solar panels is also called solar PV) that convert the sun's energy into electricity.

Photovoltaic cells are sandwiched between layers of semi-conducting materials such as silicone. Each layer has different electronic properties that energise when hit by photons from sunlight, creating an electric field. This is known as the photoelectric effect, and this creates the electrical current.

Solar panels generate a Direct Current (DC) of electricity. This is then passed through an inverter to convert it into an Alternating Current (AC), and then to a transformer (sometimes a series of transformers) to upgrade the voltage so that the electricity generated can then be fed into the National Grid.

What does the project consist of?

Flaxlands Solar Farm has an expected generating capacity of c.49.9MW and 49MW BESS.

The solar farm will consist of:

- 87 hectare solar farm located north of Royal Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire.
- 49MW of BESS.
- Fixed Tilt solar panels – meaning the solar panels always faces south and don't move.
- Solar panels will be set on lightweight frames in rows spaced approximately 3m apart, with a minimum ground clearance of 0.6m and a maximum panel height of 3m (although more likely to be 2.5m).
- Inverters and transformers to convert the generated power from DC to AC to export the electricity to the grid.
- An on-site substation and site facility, which includes a control room and components storage.
- A security fence up to 2.4m high, CCTV cameras and a thermal imaging detection system located on 3m high poles, set at approximately 100m intervals on average around the site perimeter and pointed inwards. No permanent lighting is required for this proposal.
- Internal access tracks to enable operation and maintenance.
- Ecology mitigation and enhancement areas implemented to protect the ecology and habitats of the site, including the improvement of native grasslands and hedgerows.
- The proposed re-alignment and improvement of Public Right of Way network.
- New landscape planting to reduce visual impacts.

The plans show the proposed site location and layout, including the area the solar panels will cover, associated infrastructure, and the proposed ecological mitigation areas.



[click here to enlarge image](#) ➤



[click here to enlarge image](#) ➤

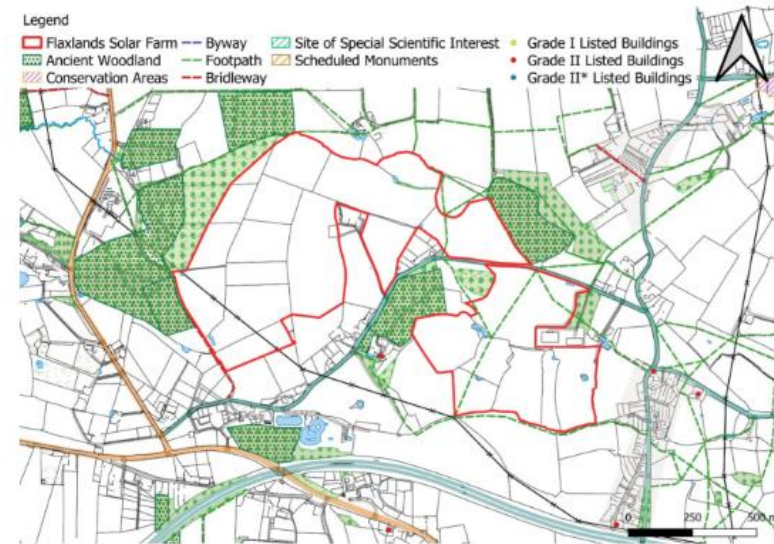
Has the impact on the environment been considered?

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening request was submitted to Wiltshire Council on the 11 July 2024 and we are still waiting for a formal response.

Environmental assessments are ongoing and include analysis detailing the existing site condition and potential impacts in relation to ecology, heritage and archaeology, landscape and visual, noise, traffic and transport, flood risk, glint and glare, arboriculture, and agricultural land classification. The outcome of these evaluations will be used to inform the design of the project and will be submitted with the planning application.

In designing the current site layout, the existing site ecology has been considered and buffer zones around important ecological features such as hedgerows, trees and watercourses have been incorporated into the design to minimise ecological impacts. Further ecological enhancements will be undertaken and could include the planting of native flowers and infilling and enhancing the existing hedgerows with native species. The site will, as a minimum, achieve the legislative target of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG).

The plans show the environmental constraints of Flaxlands Solar Farm.

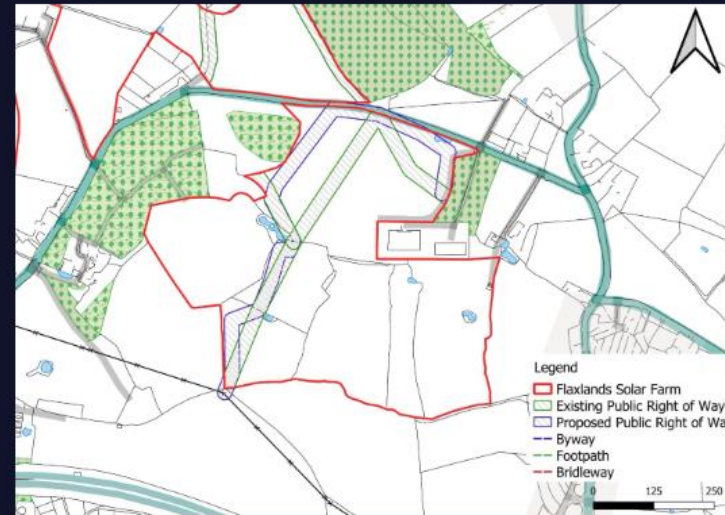


[click here to enlarge image](#) >

How will the Public Right of Way be impacted?

A number of Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) cross the Site and connect to the wider public right of way network. The proposal looks to re-align Public Right of Way LTRE26 and LTRE28 to go round the perimeter of the field network with the aim to make them more easily accessible as at present they are poorly marked and not well kept. As part of the proposal, the public right of way network within the red line boundary will be more easily identifiable and usable within the landscape through landscape and ecological mitigation measures.

All public right of ways will have a minimum 15m buffer zone and will likely be planting with native wildflowers to ensure increase amenity of the routes.



[click here to enlarge image](#) >

How will the solar panels be screened?

The proposal is sited in a location where visibility onto the site, and of the solar panels is extremely limited due to the existing hedgerows and woodlands and wherever feasible, existing trees and hedges will be maintained and where required, new screening vegetation such as infilling and enhances hedges will be planted. Further planting as recommended by the ecological and landscape assessments will be following and carried out on the site, and would be consulted on, and agreed with the local authority prior to their determination.

The landscape impacts to the existing public right of way network will be minimised as much as possible through enhancing the public right of way routes to make them more useable throughout the year, and by providing vegetation planting such as new hedges and native flower meadows.

How will the proposal impact local traffic?

Access to the proposal will be along an existing farm access track off Flaxlands Lane. A traffic and transport assessment are being undertaken and will determine the access and egress route of construction traffic. It is likely that construction traffic will use the M4 and then exit onto the local road network at J16 before using the A3102 and entering the Site from Flaxlands Lane and the Site either via Brinkworth Road and the B4696 or via Greatfield through the village of Hook. The final construction route will be determined following the outcomes of the traffic and transport assessment, and the construction route and access will be consulted on with the local Highway Authority, and mitigation measures where necessary will be implemented to reduce impacts.

Construction of the solar farm is estimated to take up to 6 months, and operational traffic will likely consist of a single monthly maintenance visit to the Site. Traffic movements will be limited to hours outside of rush hour.

How will the local community benefit?

We are looking at ways to help ensure the local community benefits from the development of the solar farm. This could include:

- A Community Benefit Fund to support local projects and initiatives.
- A Community Energy Co-operative, to enable locals to benefit from long-term savings from a local green source. This is a relatively new concept in the UK and relies on some regulatory changes to allow larger schemes such as this to work in this way.
- Creating opportunities for local businesses in the supply chain.

We would like to hear ideas from the local community on what they would like to see delivered. Please share any ideas or suggestions with us via email at Contact@ampyrsolareurope.com.

How long will the project take to develop?

We are currently undertaking surveys and assessments which will inform our proposal, alongside the feedback from community consultation. Following this, we aim to submit a planning application to Wiltshire Council later this year.

Once the planning application is submitted, Wiltshire Council will carry out a statutory consultation, where you will be able to comment further on the proposal, directly to the council. At this point, we will also share an update with the local community on how the consultation feedback has influenced our proposal.

If the project is granted planning permission by Wiltshire Council, Flaxlands Solar Farm would take approximately 6 months to be constructed with an operational lifespan of up to 40 years.

How will the solar farm connect to the grid?

An export cable will run from the solar farm and connect into the existing overhead cable approximately 1.7km north of the site. The cable route is still to be finalised but is likely to exit the Site onto Flaxlands Lane and then follow Greatfield Road north before connecting the existing overhead cable line.

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B.6 Consultation boards

Introduction

Welcome to our public consultation on Flaxlands Solar Farm.

Ampyr Solar Europe (ASE) is developing a proposal for a solar farm and battery energy storage system to the north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook in Wiltshire. The proposed solar farm will cover 87.5 hectares (216 acres).

We anticipate the solar farm being able to supply the electricity needs of approximately **21,000 homes a year**. This will supply an area nearly twice the size of Royal Wootton Bassett.

The clean energy generated will save on average **17,900 tonnes of CO₂** per year, which adds up to over **716,000 tonnes of CO₂** over the next 40 years.



Figure 1: Flaxlands as it is currently, looking south

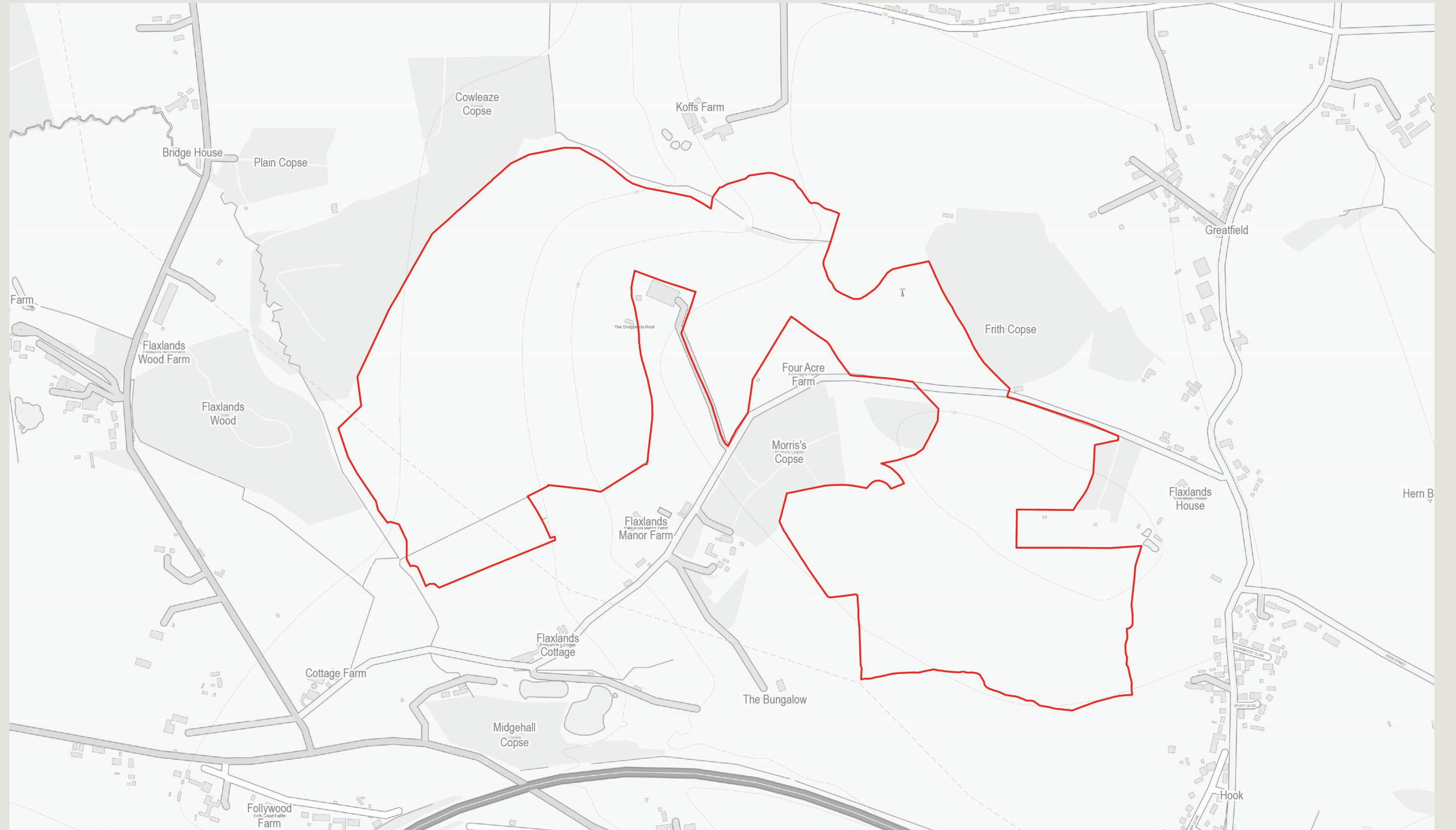
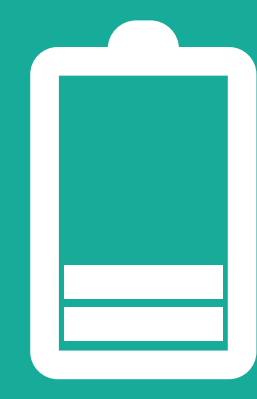


Figure 2: Flaxlands Solar Farm site location

Why do we need the solar farm?



The UK is transitioning to zero and low carbon sources of energy. All coal-fired power stations in the UK have now closed, meaning the amount of energy generated from renewable sources needs to increase. The UK's climate change ambitions are amongst the highest in Europe and the aim to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 is set in law.



By 2050 National Grid expect the UK to be using double the amount of electricity than we do today. For example, the growth in electric vehicle ownership has grown thirty-fold year-on-year since 2022 and is set to rise with the abolition of new diesel and petrol cars by 2035.



Currently the UK's electricity price is among the highest in Europe, meaning that we need to find ways of generating more affordable, renewable and clean electricity. Energy security for the country is also of paramount importance.

About us

Ampyr Solar Europe is the developer of this project and was created in 2021. Ampyr Solar Europe have operational solar farms across the UK, Netherlands and Germany, with multiple projects in different stages of development throughout the UK.



Our proposals

Our proposal is for a new solar farm and battery energy storage system at Flaxlands, to the north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook, with an expected generating capacity of up to 49.9 megawatts (MW) and 49.9MW of battery energy storage systems (BESS). The application area will cover 87.5 hectares.

The layout of the site (see Plan 2) has been designed, where possible, to protect local views and allow the continued use of relocated public footpaths, and to avoid disruption to the local community. As part of this, we are developing a landscaping approach that includes enhancing and improving the network of hedgerows around and within the site.



Figure 3: Proposed site layout

Site selection

We have carefully considered the best location for the solar farm, both operationally and in terms of minimising impacts on the community and environment. The steps we have followed are set out below.

- Securing connection agreement.** A 49.9MW connection agreement was secured with National Grid at the Minety Substation via a connection point on the existing 132kV overhead power line approximately 1.8km (1.12miles) north of the Site. This will be the point of connection with the grid and a separate application will be made at a later date a buried cable route between the connection point and the Solar Farm site.
- Conduct a desktop assessment.** Desktop assessments have been carried out to find suitable areas for the solar farms. These considered a number of factors including national and local designations, heritage, ecology, flood risk, agricultural land grading, neighbouring land uses, visual impacts, and proximity to homes and other committed developments.
- Identify land options in the search area.** Based on the search area identified during the desktop assessment, we then engaged with landowners to find suitable sites.
- Carry out a detailed assessment on suitability of the land.** Once we had identified a site in the right area, we conducted a detailed assessment of its suitability, including a number of environmental surveys.

The solar farm

The solar farm will consist of:

- Fixed-tilt solar photovoltaic panels. This means that they are fixed in position facing south and do not move during the day. Solar Panels will cover approximately 54ha (134 acres).
- Around 102,000 panels will be installed with a combined power generation capacity of up to 49.9 megawatts (MW) peak.
- Solar panels set on lightweight frames in rows spaced approximately 3m apart with a minimum ground clearance of 0.6m and a maximum panel height of up to 3m.
- Power will be converted from Direct Current to Alternating Current and the voltage stepped up suitable for the UK grid via onsite inverters and transformers.
- An on-site substation, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), and site facility covering just less than 1ha (2.2 acres).
- A security fence up to 2.5m high, and CCTV cameras and a thermal imaging detection system located on 3m high poles.
- Internal access tracks throughout the site to enable operation and maintenance.
- Ecological mitigation and enhancement areas to protect the ecology and habitats within the site. The project will set aside approximately 4ha (10 acres) of land for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) purposes.
- The substation, batteries, and transformers have all been located away from potential noise receptors, including the Public Right of Way.



Figure 4: Flaxlands as it is currently, looking south from Koffs Farm

Public Right of Way

It is proposed to divert Public Right of Way (PROW) LTRE 28 and sections of PROW LTRE 26 that currently run through an open field within the site. These diverted PROWs would instead follow the existing field boundaries and run alongside a new 30m wide new species-rich grassland which would be planted between it and the solar farm. The PROWs would be actively managed to ensure the routes are accessible and usable all year round and there is an opportunity to replace old styles with new gates that would be more accessible to all users of the PROW network.

How will it look and how does it work?

We know that the overall look of Flaxlands Solar Farm is likely to be a key point of interest for the local community.

The site is not located within any landscape designation, but we have been mindful of situating it carefully to reduce the overall impact on both the environment and the community. This board explains how the solar farm may look, as well as how the solar panels would work.



How will it look?

We have carefully considered how Flaxlands Solar Farm will fit into the landscape in order to reduce any visual effects on the community and impacts on local wildlife.

Height: The solar panels will be no more than 3m above the ground. This means that the visual effects of the solar farm will be limited for the communities surrounding the site.

The BESS consists of 14 battery units set in two separate groups, separated by transformers and switchgear. Each battery storage unit will approximately measure 12m in length, no more than 3m in height and 3m wide. The inverter substations will measure no more than 7m in length, 3m above ground and 2.5m wide.

Glint and glare: Glint and glare are visual effects that can sometimes affect nearby motorists or homes. Solar panels are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun's rays, and this means that glint and glare levels will be lower compared to surfaces such as window glass, water, or snow. We are also undertaking a Glint and Glare assessment that will look closely at any potential impacts for road users and homes near the site.

Screening: Existing hedgerows and trees will be retained as far as possible, we will also enhance existing hedgerows in to infill any gaps to screen the development from external views while also providing wildlife benefits. We will be developing a landscaping plan informed by a Landscape and Visual Assessment, which will be submitted with our planning application.

How does it work?

Solar panels are made out of photovoltaic cells (which is why generating electricity with solar panels is also called solar PV) that convert the sun's energy into electricity.

Photovoltaic cells are sandwiched between layers of semi-conducting materials such as silicone. Each layer has different electronic properties that energise when hit by photons from sunlight, creating an electric field. This is known as the photoelectric effect, and this creates the electrical current.

Solar panels generate a Direct Current of electricity. This is then passed through an inverter to convert it into an Alternating Current, which can then be fed into the National Grid, or directly to large local power users. See Figure 8 on this board for the typical components of a solar farm.

Solar panels need daylight and sunshine, not high temperatures, so solar panels can and do work well in England.

The site will also have a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The BESS will enable solar energy to be stored and then released into the National Grid when the power is needed most. The BESS at Flaxlands Solar Farm would facilitate the storage of solar energy and supply power even when the sun doesn't shine. The battery storage uses computerised control systems to release energy during times of peak demand, helping to keep electricity flowing.

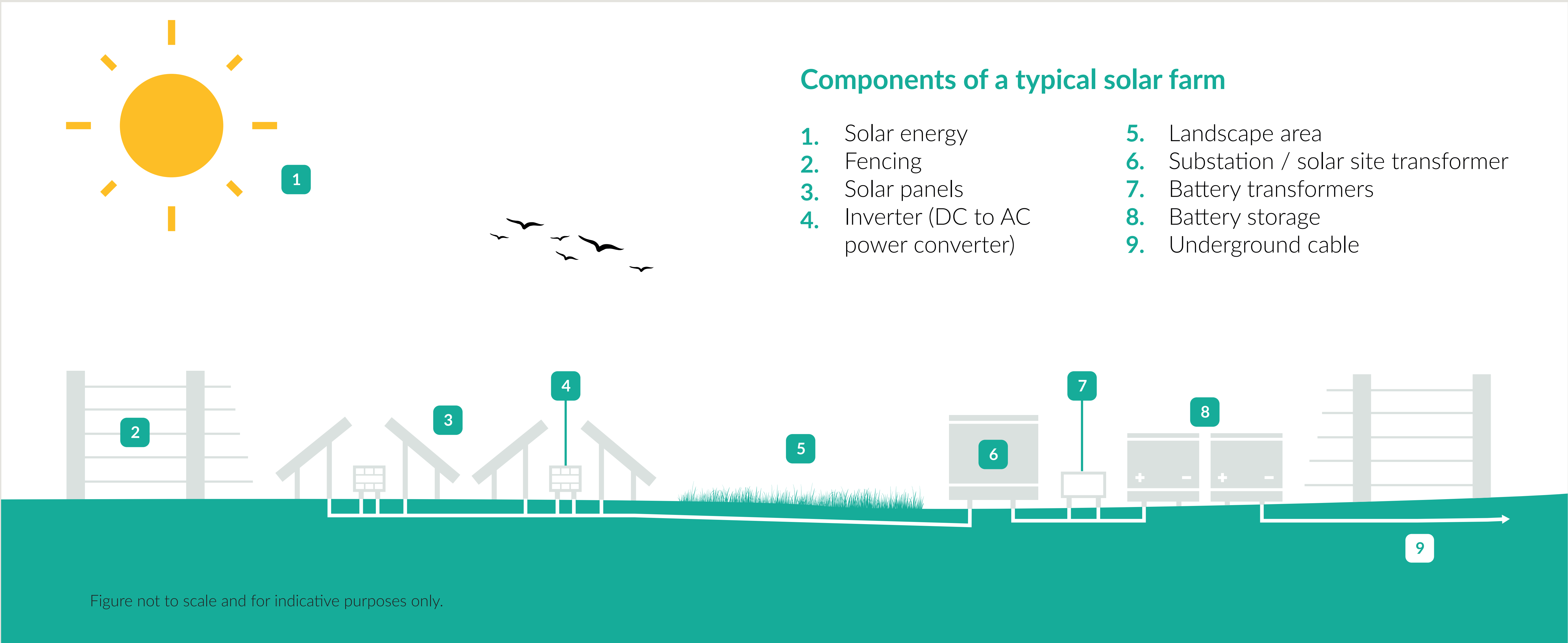


Figure 5: Example diagram of the typical components of a solar farm

Environment

We are mindful of the existing environmental context of the site. We are undertaking a number of surveys to ensure we understand the potential impacts the proposed solar farm may have.



Surveys are being carried out to assess Flaxlands Solar Farm's likely effects on the environment, landscape, heritage and local community. We are also looking at ways to enhance local ecology and biodiversity through the project.

Ecology and biodiversity

Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity around Flaxlands Solar Farm is important to us. We are undertaking surveys to understand if there are any protected wildlife and habitats at the site, as well as to identify any mitigation required to minimise impacts on them. Our surveys are still ongoing, but we are confident that with appropriate mitigation we do not expect Flaxlands Solar Farm to have significant impact on the local ecology, wildlife or habitats of the area.

Within the site, we will have a combination of solar panels and areas allocated and maintained specifically for ecological enhancement to protect the ecology of the site.

We will also be working to enhance the natural environment through our work at Flaxlands Solar Farm. Some options we are considering include:

- Site boundaries will be reinforced with native hedgerow species and trees - maintaining space between the solar farm and BESS from natural features within and outside the site.
- A 5m hedgerow buffer will be applied to the majority of the site and where we need to remove hedgerows, replanting will occur elsewhere on site.
- A 10m buffer will be applied between watercourses, and a 15m buffer will be applied to ponds.
- Where possible we will support, maintain and enhance connectivity between habitats on the site and the wider landscape.

We commit to delivering at least a 10% biodiversity net gain through habitat enhancement onsite, and it is currently expected that this can be substantially bettered through hedge and tree planting, bird mitigation and enhancement areas, and the planting of species rich grassland under the solar PV areas.



Agriculture

We know that food security is important. The next big challenge to our food supply is expected to be caused by climate change, so addressing this by using solar energy, will improve our food security.

The land proposed for the Flaxlands Solar Farm site is predominantly greenfield agricultural land, with the majority classified as Grade 3b "moderate" with areas of Grade 3a "good to moderate" land.

It is possible for the site to retain its agricultural use for the life of the solar farm, using the land between and underneath the panels. We are happy to work with willing sheep farmers to deliver sheep grazing in the operational solar farm.

After 40 years, the solar farm will be decommissioned and the land returned to the landowner ready for arable use. It is expected that the soil condition will be much improved following four decades of sensitive management.



Noise

Solar panels themselves do not make any noise and there are no known health issues associated with being near solar developments. When the solar farm is operational, low levels of noise can be generated by the electrical system, such as from the inverters, which can sound like a quiet buzz or fan noise, which decreases rapidly with distance from the infrastructure. The inverters will be located at least 250m away from the Public Right of Way (PRoW) and nearby properties to minimise noise impacts. The Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS) will be located around 10m away from the PRoW network to minimise noise impacts to those using the PRoW. We're also undertaking detailed noise modelling to understand any likely noise impacts on surrounding communities.

The construction of the solar farm will take approximately 6 months, as minimal digging is required. The potential effects of noise and vibration during construction will be limited to specific locations within the site and only for short periods. We will make the community aware when works are likely to take place and details of our limited working hours will be set out in our planning application.

Environment

Traffic

During construction, there is likely to be more traffic due to materials being delivered to the site. We estimate an average of five HGV arrivals and departures per day. This is considered very low volumes of traffic; however, we will ensure appropriate and proportionate management measures are implemented via a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) (or similar) which we will include as part of our planning application.

When the solar farm is operational, additional traffic would be limited to maintenance vehicles visiting the site monthly.

During the construction phase, access will be via the M4 J16, then following the A3102, before heading north on Greatfield Lane past the village of Hook, before turning left on Flaxlands Lane.

Flooding

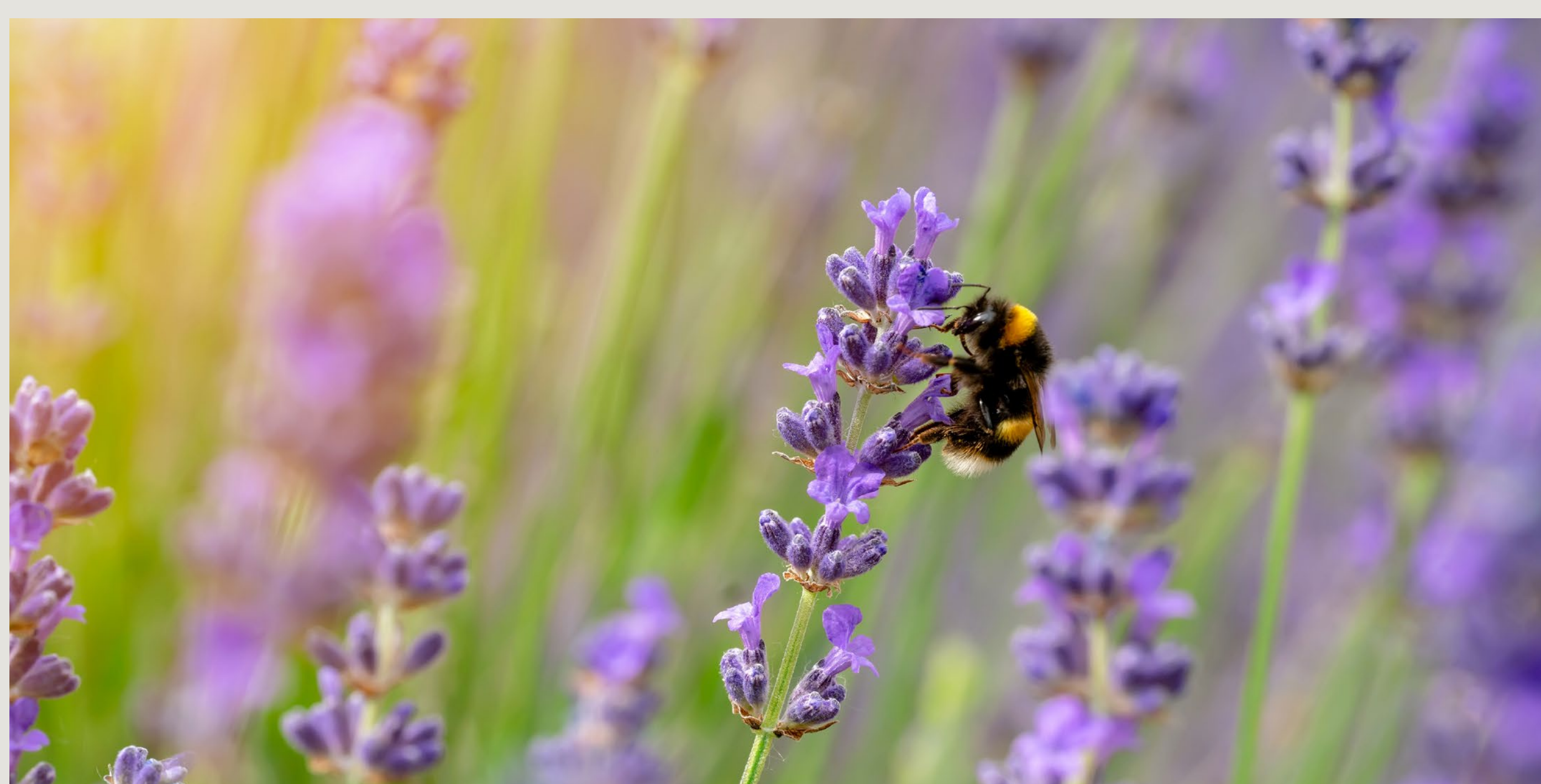
Rivers and water courses near the development will not be impacted by the solar farm's development. Maintaining and managing the grass below the solar panels will ensure that the land will remain permeable, meaning surface water can pass through the land easily and prevent surface water flooding.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding) and has been identified to be at a very low risk to surface water flooding.

As part of our planning application, we will submit a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, which will demonstrate that the site will not be affected by flood risk, nor affect flood risk elsewhere. It will also demonstrate how any residual risk of flooding will be managed.



Figure 6: Solar panel maintenance being undertaken



Heritage

Heritage assets are divided into two categories: designated assets (these have national protection due to their significance) or non-designated assets (these are identified by the local planning authority as having local interest).

While there are no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas within 1km of the site. We have identified:

- Eight Grade II Listed Buildings within 1km; and,
- One Registered Park and Garden, Lydiard Park, 960m east of the site.

We have also identified a few heritage assets located within 2km of the site, including:

- Ringsbury Camp hillfort Scheduled Monument located 1.2km northeast of the site;
- Rabbit warren east of Woodlane Farm located 1.6km west from the site; and,
- Lydiard Green and Wootton Bassett Conservation Areas are within 2km.

Alongside these, we have identified five non-designated assets:

- Infilled Post-Medieval Quarry in the northernmost part of the site;
- Ridge and Furrow Ploughing in the southeast of the eastern part of the site;
- Former Post-Medieval Field Boundary to the southeast; and,
- Two WWII Anti-Tank Ditch continuations – one south of Flaxlands Lane and one west of Morris Copse.

In our planning application we will include a Heritage Assessment that assesses any potential impacts on the setting and character of heritage sites. We will be undertaking geophysical surveys on the land to help identify the potential for undiscovered archaeological remains. We will then conduct any further archaeological evaluation and/or a mitigation strategy as required by Wiltshire Council's archaeologist.

Community benefits and next steps

This consultation is your opportunity to shape our proposal before we submit a planning application next year.

Community benefits

We are looking at ways to ensure the local community benefits from the development of the solar farm. This could include:

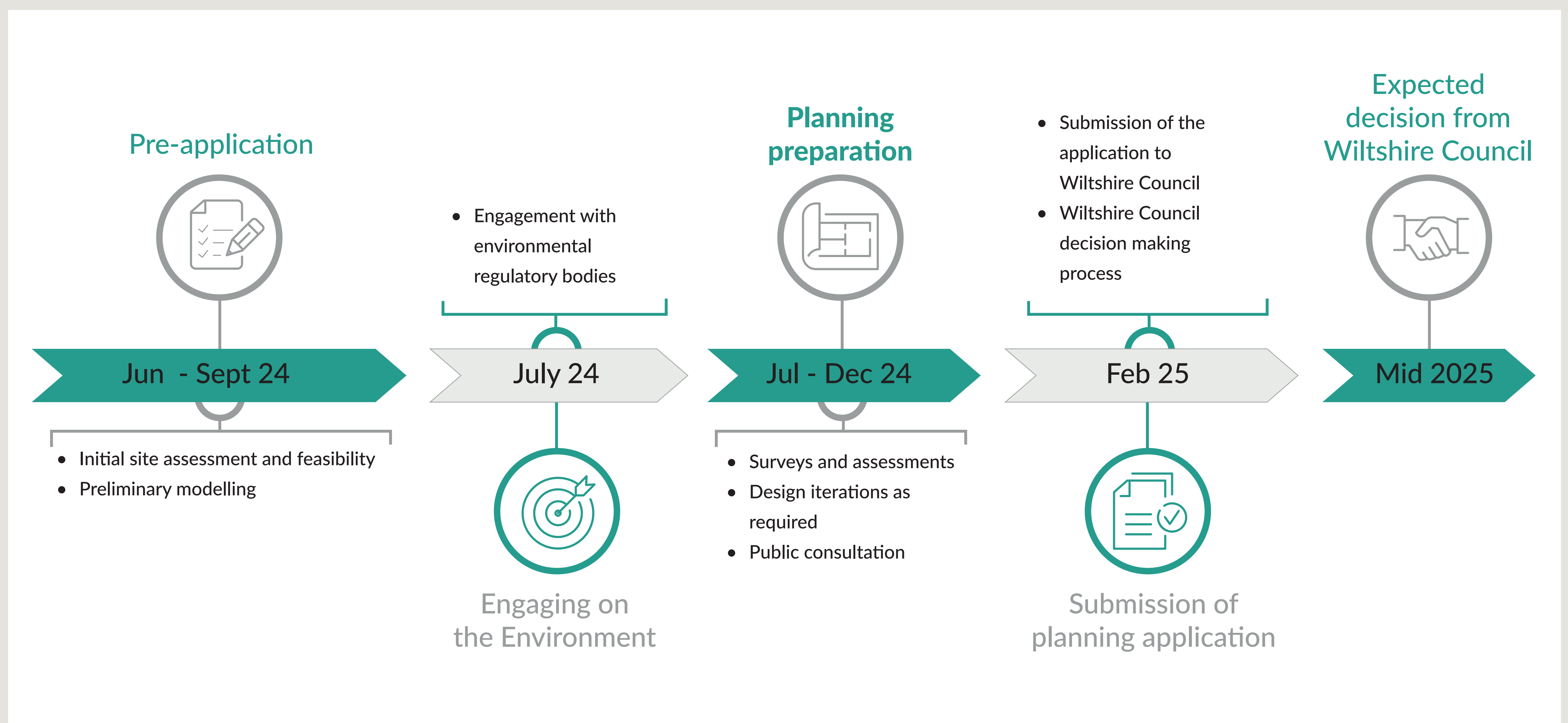
- A Community Benefit Fund to support local projects, initiatives, or community cooperative electricity
- Creating opportunities for local businesses in the supply chain

Timeframes and next steps

We are currently undertaking surveys and assessments, which will inform our proposal alongside the outputs from this consultation. We will then submit a planning application to Wiltshire Council early next year.

Once the planning application is submitted, Wiltshire Council will host a statutory consultation, where you will be able to comment further, directly to the council. At this point, we will also share an update with the local community on how feedback has influenced our proposal.

Should planning permission be granted, we anticipate construction will take 24 weeks to complete.



This consultation is your opportunity to fully understand our proposal, ask us questions, and share your feedback on our proposal for Flaxlands Solar Farm. We will consider all feedback received and use it to inform our proposal. We would also like to hear suggestions on how we can deliver community benefits through the scheme.

This consultation is running until **23:59 on 3 December 2024**. You can share your views on the project using any of the following methods.

- **Online:** using the online form at www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk
- **Email:** using the scheme email address, flaxlands-solar@aeocom.com
- **Post:** using the scheme Freepost address, **Freepost ASE**
- **At this event:** by filling in a hard copy form and submitting it to a member of the project team

We will stay in touch through the development of the scheme, including through our website: www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk

Decommissioning

The development will be temporary, with an initial operational period of 40 years. At the end of the development's lifespan, the site will be decommissioned with the land returned to the landowner in a state ready for arable use.

B.7 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Flaxlands Solar Farm Frequently Asked Questions

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Overview

Who are AMPYR Solar Europe?

Ampyr Solar Europe is the developer of this project and was created in 2021. Ampyr Solar Europe have operational solar farms across the UK, Netherlands and Germany, with multiple projects in different stages of development throughout the UK.

How big is Flaxlands?

The application area covers 87.5 hectares (216 acres) and the solar farm has an expected generating capacity of up to 49.9 megawatts (MW), with a 49.9MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), as well as an area dedicated to biodiversity improvement.

The layout of the site has been designed, where possible, to consider the continued use of public footpaths, protect local views and minimise impacts on the local community.

What will Flaxlands Solar Consist of?

- Fixed-tilt solar photovoltaic panels. This means that they are fixed in position facing south and do not move during the day. Solar Panels will cover approximately 54 hectares (134 acres).
- Around 102,028 panels with a power generation capacity of up to 49.9 megawatts (MW) peak.
- Solar panels set on lightweight frames in rows spaced 3m apart with a minimum ground clearance of 0.6m and a maximum panel height of up to 3m.
- Power will be converted from Direct Current to Alternating Current and the voltage stepped up suitable for the UK grid via onsite inverters and transformers.
- An on-site substation and site facility covering just less than 1 hectares (2.2 acres).
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).
- A security fence up to 1.8m high, and CCTV cameras and a thermal imaging detection system located on 3m high poles.
- Internal access tracks through the field to enable operation and maintenance.
- Ecology mitigation and enhancement areas to protect the ecology and habitats of the site. The project will set aside approximately 4 hectares (10 acres) of land for BNG purposes.

The substation, batteries, and transformers have all been located away from potential noise receptors, including the Public Right of Way.

Why have you chosen this location?

We have carefully considered the best location for the solar farm, both operationally and in terms of minimising impacts on the community and environment. The steps we have followed are set out below.

- 1. Securing connection agreement.** A 49.9MW connection agreement was secured with National Grid at the Minety Substation via a connection point on the existing 132kV overhead power line approximately 1.8km (1.12miles) north of the Site. This will be the point of connection with the grid and a separate application will be made at a later date by Ampyr Solar Europe or the District Network Operator for a buried cable route between the connection point and the Solar Farm site.
- 2. Conduct a desktop assessment.** Desktop assessments have been carried out to find suitable areas for the solar farms. These considered a number of factors including national and local designations, heritage, ecology, flood risk, agricultural land grading, neighbouring land uses, visual impacts, and proximity to homes and other committed developments.
- 3. Identify land options in the search area.** Based on the search area identified during the desktop assessment, we then engaged with landowners to find suitable sites.
- 4. Carry out a detailed assessment on suitability of the land.** Once we had identified a site in the right area, we conducted a detailed assessment of its suitability, including a number of environmental surveys.

Why is Flaxlands Solar Farm needed?

The UK is transitioning to zero and low carbon sources of power. All coal-fired power stations have to close by 2025, meaning the amount of energy generated from renewable sources needs to increase. The UK's climate change ambitions are amongst the highest in Europe and the aim to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 is set in law.

By 2050 the UK is expected by National Grid to be using double the amount of electricity than we do today. For example, the growth in electric vehicle ownership has grown thirty-fold year-on-year since 2022 and is set to rise with the abolition of new diesel and petrol cars by 2035.

Currently the UK's electricity price is among the highest in Europe, meaning that we need to find ways of generating more affordable, renewable and clean electricity. Energy security for the country is also of paramount importance.

What are the timescales for Flaxlands Solar Farm?

Indicative timeline



Will there be a lot of construction traffic?

All construction materials will be delivered by Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) lorries with no abnormal indivisible loads (AILs).

During construction, there is likely to be more traffic due to materials being delivered to the site. We estimate an average of five HGV arrivals and departures per day. This is considered very low volumes of traffic; however, we will ensure appropriate and proportionate management measures are implemented via a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) (or similar) which we will include as part of our planning application. Given the very low additional traffic flows during the construction period, the additional traffic on the local road network is considered to be minimal and therefore not likely to result in significant effects.

When the solar farm is operational, additional traffic would be limited to maintenance vehicles visiting around once a month.

During the construction phase, access will be from the M4 motorway (J16), providing access to the site via the A3102 directly to Flaxlands Lane which runs through the middle of the site (joining the northern and southern sections of the site).

How long will construction take?

The construction period is expected to last up to 24 weeks, and it is proposed that construction working hours would be as follows:

- 08:00 – 18:00 Monday to Friday; and
- 08:00 – 13:00 Saturday.

No construction work will be undertaken on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Should work be required to be undertaken outside of these times, this would be agreed in advance and in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Will solar really work in this location?

Solar panels need daylight and sunshine, not high temperatures, so solar panels can and do work well in England.

What will happen when the solar farm is no longer needed?

The Flaxlands Solar Farm development will be reversible, with an operational period of approximately 40 years. At the end of the development's lifespan, the site will be decommissioned with the land returned to the landowner ready for agricultural use, with improved soil quality.

On decommissioning of the solar farm, the majority of materials removed from the site will be either re-used or recycled. It is anticipated that few waste materials would be generated during the operational period – transformers and inverters will be the most frequently replaced components of the solar farm, and these would also be either re-used (e.g. reconditioned) or recycled.

Traffic during decommissioning is expected to be similar to the levels during construction.

How will Flaxlands Solar Farm be constructed?

During the construction period, initial site setup works would take place followed by construction of the internal access route(s), ground works, and the installation of the solar panels and other associated infrastructure including the battery storage.

Facilities would be provided on-site for construction workers, including provision of a site office and welfare facilities. Fencing would be installed around the perimeter of the site, and temporary parking would be provided for the construction workers.

The components for the construction phase are largely pre-fabricated and therefore any construction waste generated would be reduced to a minimum. Site waste management will be in accordance with appropriate licenses.

How will Flaxlands Solar Farm be operated?

During operation the site will be remotely operated and would only be visited for maintenance and inspection purposes.

When the solar farm is operational, we expect traffic would be limited to maintenance vehicles around once a month.

Environment

How have you considered the impact of Flaxlands Solar Farm on the environment, ecology and biodiversity?

We are working hard to be mindful of the environment at the site. Surveys are being carried out to assess Flaxlands Solar Farm's likely effects on the environment, landscape, heritage and local community. We are also looking at ways to enhance local ecology and biodiversity through the project.

Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity around Flaxlands Solar Farm is important to us. We are undertaking surveys to understand if there are any protected wildlife and habitats at the site, as well as to identify any mitigation required to minimise impacts on them. These surveys have concluded that the solar farm will not have a significant impact on the local ecology, wildlife or habitats of the area.

The site will have a combination of solar panels and areas of ecological mitigation to protect the ecology of the site.

We are committed to delivering at least 10% biodiversity net gain through habitat enhancement onsite, and it is currently expected that this can be substantially bettered through hedge and tree planting, bird mitigation and enhancement areas, and the planting of species rich grassland under the solar PV areas. See our site plan for areas we've set aside to support enhancement.

How will local wildlife benefit?

We will be working to enhance the natural environment through our work at Flaxlands Solar Farm. In our site plan for Flaxlands Solar Farm we've set aside areas to support enhancement. Some options we are considering include:

- Habitat creation
- Biodiversity net gain
- Maintenance and planting of hedgerows

Will Flaxlands Solar Farm create a glint/glare issue?

Glint and glare are visual effects that can sometimes affect nearby motorists or homes. Solar panels are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun's rays, and this means that glint and glare levels will be lower compared to surfaces such as window glass, water, or snow.

We are also undertaking a Glint and Glare assessment, which will consider the visual effects of those near the site. In general, the panels are designed to absorb the sunlight and are proven to reflect less light than waterbodies or glass, and therefore do not normally create issues.

Will any noise be generated?

Solar panels themselves do not make any noise and there are no known health issues associated with being near solar developments. When the solar farm is operational, low levels of noise can be generated by the electrical system, such as from the inverters, which can sound like a quiet buzz or fan noise. This is audible only within proximity to the inverters, transformers and substation, with the sound dropping away to background levels quickly with distance from these noise sources.

The Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) will be located around 250m away from the Public Right of Way (PRoW), to minimise noise impacts from its cooling fans on those using it. We are also undertaking detailed noise modelling to understand any likely noise impacts on surrounding communities.

The construction of the solar farm will take place quickly as minimal activities are required. The potential effects of noise and vibration during construction will be limited to specific locations within the site and only for short periods. We will make the community aware when works are likely to take place and details of our limited working hours will be set out in our planning application.

Is there a risk of flooding at the site?

Rivers and water courses near the development will not be impacted by the solar farm. Maintaining the grass below the site itself wherever possible will ensure that the land will remain permeable, meaning surface water can pass through easily.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding) and has been identified to be at a very low risk to surface water flooding.

As part of our planning application, we will submit a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, which will demonstrate that the site will not be affected by flood risk, nor affect flood risk elsewhere. It will also demonstrate how any residual risk of flooding will be managed.

Will there be any impacts on local heritage?

Heritage assets are divided into two categories: designated assets (these have national protection due to their significance) or non-designated assets (these are identified by the local planning authority as having local interest).

While there are no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas within 1km of the site. We have identified:

- Eight Grade II Listed Buildings within 1km; and,
- One Registered Park and Garden, Lydiard Park, 960m east of the site.

We have also identified a few heritage assets located within 2km of the site, including:

- Two Scheduled Monuments within 2km of the site: Ringsbury Camp hillfort (located over 1.2km northeast) and Rabbit warren east of Woodlane Farm (1.6km west from the site); and,
- Lydiard Green and Wootton Bassett Conservation Areas are within 2km.

Alongside these, we have identified five non-designated assets:

- Infilled Post-Medieval Quarry in the northernmost part of the site,
- Ridge and Furrow Ploughing in the southeast of the eastern part of the site,
- Former Post-Medieval Field Boundary to the southeast; and,
- Two WWII Anti-Tank Ditch continuations – one south of Flaxlands Lane and one west of Morris Copse.

We have considered impacts on local heritage and used it to inform our design and location of the solar farm and BESS. In our planning application we will include a Heritage Assessment that assesses any potential impacts on the setting and character of heritage sites. We will be undertaking geophysical surveys on the land in the coming months to help identify the potential for undiscovered archaeological remains. We will then conduct any further archaeological evaluation and/or a mitigation strategy as required by Wiltshire Council's archaeologist.

How high will the infrastructure be?

The solar development will range from 0.6m in height at the lowest point, rising to no more than 3m at the highest point. This means that the visual effects of the solar farm will be limited for the communities surrounding the site.

The BESS containers will be a maximum 3m height, and the inverters and transformers are expected to be a similar height. The onsite substation will have some components up to 7m height but most components will be around 3m high.

How will the solar panels be screened?

Existing hedgerows and trees around the site would be maintained to help screen the development from external views, and also provide biodiversity benefits. Where there are existing gaps in the hedgerow, additional infill planting with native hedgerow species would be considered to improve screening and enhanced biodiversity benefit.

We will also look at other ways to introduce planting, such as wildflower meadows, or hedgerows and trees to further minimise any visual effects and support wildlife. This will all be considered as part of our Landscape and Visual Assessment, which will be submitted with our planning application.

Will there be any impacts on food security and agricultural land?

AMPYR welcomes sheep grazing on its solar farms to manage the grassland under the solar panels; new companies have established in the UK that match sheep farmers with solar farms. Should the grass need to be cut mechanically, AMPYR will investigate whether the cuttings can be shared with farmers to ensure an end use for the grass/hay.

Following decommissioning, the land will be restored back to a state ready for its return to arable farming.



Community

Will local communities be able to have their say on your proposal?

Yes – this consultation is your opportunity to fully understand the scheme, ask us questions, and share your feedback. We will consider all feedback received and use it to inform our proposal. We would also like to hear suggestions on how we can deliver community benefits through the scheme.

The consultation on our proposals will take place between Tuesday 5 November until 23:59 on Tuesday 3 December 2024 and will include a drop-in event at the Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall on Tuesday 19 November from 2pm to 7pm.

- Online: by completing the online feedback form at www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk
- Email: by sending your feedback to the scheme email address – flaxlands-solar@aecom.com
- Post: by posting your feedback to the scheme Freepost address (no stamp required) – Freepost ASE
- At one of our consultation events: by filling in a hard copy feedback form and submitting it to a member of the project team.

How are we involving the community?

We are now consulting the local community on our proposal, in advance of submitting a planning application to Wiltshire Council next year. This consultation is your opportunity to fully understand the scheme, ask us questions, and share your feedback. We will consider all feedback received and use it to inform our proposal.

Once the planning application is submitted, Wiltshire Council will host its own consultation, where you will be able to comment further, directly to the council. At this point, we will also share an update with the local community on how your feedback has influenced our proposal.

We will stay in touch through the development of the scheme, including through our scheme website: www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk

What benefits will Flaxlands Solar Farm bring?

- Supply energy needs of approximately 21,000 homes per year
- Help to decarbonise the local area saving: c. 17,900 tonnes of carbon per year and over 716,000 tonnes of CO₂ over 40 years
- Biodiversity net gain / habitat creation
- Local farm diversification
- Supports UK transition to zero and low carbon power sources

We are also looking at ways to help ensure the local community directly benefits from the development of the solar farm. This could include:

- A Community Benefit Fund to support local projects, initiatives, or community cooperative electricity
- Creating opportunities for local business in the supply chain

We would also like to hear your ideas on what benefits you would like to see delivered. Any ideas or suggestions can be shared with us using our consultation feedback form.

Will Flaxlands Solar Farm impact any public rights of way (PRoW)?

It is proposed to divert Public Right of Way (PRoW) LTRE 28 and sections of PRoW LTRE 26 that currently run through an open field within the site. These diverted PRoWs would instead follow the existing field boundaries and run alongside a new 30m wide new species-rich grassland would be planted between it and the solar farm. The PRoWs would be actively managed to ensure the routes are accessible and usable all year round and there is an opportunity to replace old styles with new gates that would be more accessible to all users of the PRoW network.

As part of the proposal, the public right of way network within the red line boundary will be more easily identifiable and usable within the landscape through landscape and ecological mitigation measures.

All public right of ways will have a minimum 30m buffer zone and will likely be planting with native wildflowers to ensure increase amenity of the routes.



Other

Are there any risks associated with the battery energy storage system (BESS)?

AMPYR will liaise with the local Fire and Rescue Service and Council on battery safety and will produce a Battery Safety Management Plan and Emergency Response Plan following consent. An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan will be included as part of the planning application and will demonstrate adherence with the National Fire Chief's safety guidelines.

Does the UK risk being covered with solar farms?

The Government's 'Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener' commits the UK to be powered entirely by clean electricity by 2035, subject to security of supply. To deliver the strategy, overall electricity demand is expected to increase 40-60% by 2035, all met from low carbon sources. This means that the number of solar farms in the UK will increase. However, solar farms in the UK currently account for around only 0.1% of total land use.



B.8 Feedback form

Flaxlands Solar Farm Feedback Form

We want to understand your views on our proposal for a new solar farm and battery energy storage system at Flaxlands, west of the village of Hook, Wiltshire. Please read our consultation materials to help inform your responses to the questions in this form. These are available online at www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk.

The consultation on our proposals will take place from **Tuesday 5 November until 23:59 on Tuesday 3 December 2024** and will include a drop-in event at:
Hook, Greatfield and Greenhill Village Hall on **Tuesday 19 November** from **2pm to 7pm**.

You can feedback to the consultation via:

- Completing and submitting a feedback form online at www.flaxlandssolar.co.uk
- Emailing your completed form to flaxlands-solar@aeom.com
- Posting a printed copy of the form to Freepost ASE
- Filling in a hard copy form at our consultation event and giving it to a member of the project team.

If you would like this response form or any of the consultation materials in an alternative format, including large print, braille, audio or in another language, please contact us using the details above.

ABOUT THIS FORM.

The feedback form will ask for your views on the proposal. You can respond to all the questions, or just those you feel are relevant to you.

If you need additional space to complete your answers to any of the questions,

please

enclose additional sheets and include references to make it clear which questions the additional sheets relate to.

Our Proposal

1. To what extent do you support renewable energy in the UK?

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Slightly support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know

2. To what extent do you support our proposal for a new solar farm and battery energy storage system at Flaxlands?

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Slightly support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know

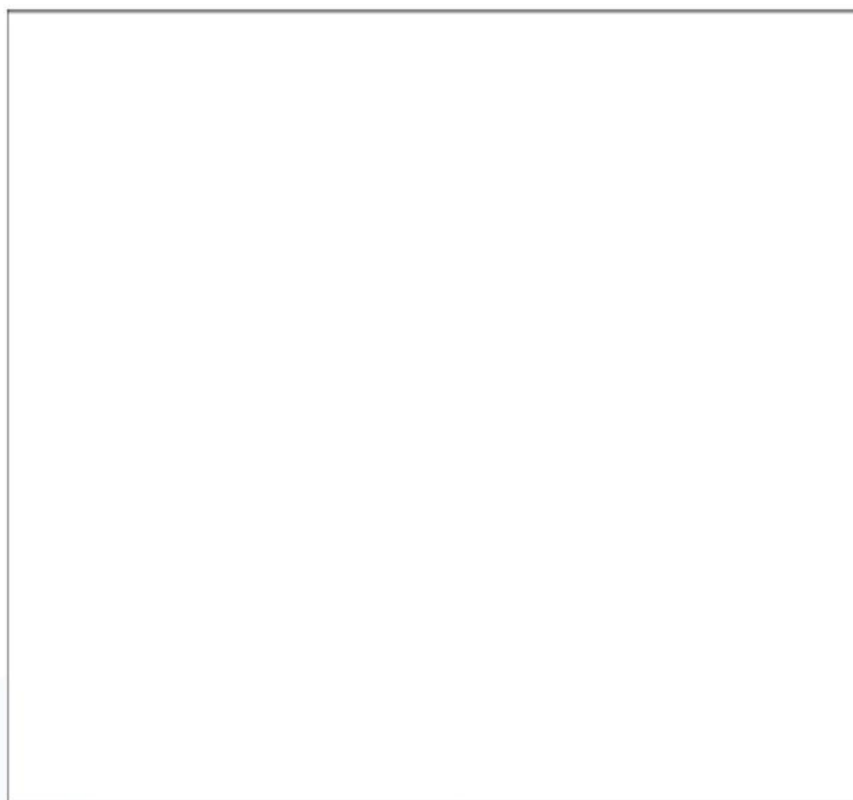
3. As part of our proposal, we are proposing to divert Public Right of Way (PRoW) LTRE 28 and sections of PRoW LTRE 26. Details about the diversion can be found in our consultation materials. The diversion will not make the PRoWs significantly longer and will enable us to actively manage the PRoW to ensure it remains accessible and clearly sign posted all year round. To what extent do you support this proposal?

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Slightly support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know

4. During construction, there is likely to be more traffic due to materials being delivered to the site. Access to the site will be via the M4 J16, then following the A3102, before heading north on Greatfield Lane past the village of Hook, before turning left on Flaxlands Lane. We want to understand how this route is used locally. How often do you use Flaxlands Lane?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ Fairly often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Not very often
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Don't know

5. Please use the space below to provide any comments to explain your answers to questions 2, 3 and 4.



6. We are exploring ways in which our proposal can generate benefits for the local community, and some details about our ideas are given in our consultation materials. Please use the space below to provide any other suggestions on how we can support the community as part of the proposal.

7. Please include anything further you think we should consider when developing our proposal in the box below.

About the Consultation

To help us improve how we consult in future, we would be grateful if you could answer the questions below.

1. How did you hear about the consultation? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Postcard received in the post
- ☐ Local newspaper
- ☐ Local radio
- ☐ Local ward or parish councillor
- ☐ Other (*please specify*) _____

2. How useful did you find our consultation materials in helping you understand the scheme?

- ☐ Very useful
- ☐ Somewhat useful
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not very useful
- ☐ Not useful at all
- ☐ Undecided / don't know

3. Do you have any comments on how we can improve our consultation materials?
For example, is there anything else you think we should be including?

About you

The questions in this section will help us to understand the audience reached by the consultation. Your answers will only be used for the purpose of informing the analysis of this survey and will be treated confidentially.

1. What is your connection to the scheme? *(please select as many as apply)*

- ☐ I live in the area
- ☐ I work in the area
- ☐ Local ward or parish councillor
- ☐ Other *(please specify)* _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or business?

- ☐ Yes *(please specify)* _____
- ☐ No

3. Please provide your home or organisation/business postcode: *(Full UK postcodes only)*

Thank you for completing this response form.

