



**EPL 001 Limited**  
**STONESTREET GREEN SOLAR**

**Consultation Booklet**  
**12 June to 17 July 2023**



# Introduction

## Purpose

Consultation on the proposed Stonestreet Green Solar project (the "Project") was undertaken over five weeks in spring 2022 and a further five weeks in autumn 2022. Having carefully considered the responses to those consultations and made changes to the Project in light of those responses, further studies and surveys, ongoing environmental assessments and technical design work, EPL 001 Limited<sup>1</sup> (the "Applicant") has chosen to undertake a further five weeks of statutory consultation on the updated Project. The Applicant is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited.

This consultation booklet has been prepared to provide details of the changes made to the Project following the autumn 2022 consultation and also provides further details that are now known about the Project and its anticipated effects.

This statutory consultation is being carried out in accordance with the Planning Act 2008 between 12th June and 17th July 2023.

Once the responses to this consultation have been considered, the Applicant will finalise the Project and then submit an application (the "Application") for a development consent order ("DCO") to the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008.

## Overview of the project

The Project comprises the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of solar photovoltaic ("PV") arrays and energy storage, together with associated infrastructure and an underground

cable connection to the existing National Grid Sellindge Substation. The agreed grid connection for the Project will allow the export and import of up to 99.9 megawatts ("MW") of electricity to the electricity grid. The Project will provide a domestic source of renewable energy for 40 years, making a meaningful addition to UK domestic energy security, contributing to the UK's climate change objectives and providing a significant improvement in local biodiversity.



The Project is located approximately 6.5km to the south-east of Ashford Town Centre and approximately 13.7km to the west of Folkestone Town Centre, in the county of Kent. The Project is situated on approximately 200 hectares (approximately 475 acres) of land to the north and west of the village of Aldington.

Key technical components of the Project include:

- Solar panel areas – including PV panels, mounting structures, converters, connecting cabling and safety and security measures;
- Inverter Stations – to convert direct current produced by the PV panels into alternating current that can be exported to the electricity network;
- Energy storage units – to provide grid balancing services and able to be charged directly by the PV panels;
- Project substation – to house switchgear, Project transformer, control equipment and site facilities; and
- Cable connection route - to connect into the existing substation at Sellindge.

**We are consulting between 12th June and 17th July 2023.**

**Please read this booklet and then share your views by responding to the questions on page 20.**

## Contents

Introduction - p. 2

Our Proposals - p. 4

Illustrative Proposed Development Layout - p. 6

Environmental Impact Assessment - p. 9

Illustrative Landscape Masterplan - p.10

Construction, operation and decommissioning - p.15

Planning and Consultation - p.18

Consultation Questions - p.20

PRoW Layout - p.22

<sup>1</sup>Company name: EPL 001 Limited; company number: 12444050; registered office address: 2nd Floor, Regis House, 45 King William Street, London, United Kingdom, EC4R 9AN; registered in England and Wales.

Key landscape, ecological and amenity components of the Project include:

- Planting of new hedgerows and woodland, with additional planting in already established areas;
- Retention and management of existing grassland;
- Creation of new grassland, native wildflower meadow, wetland meadow and pond habitats; and
- Alterations to existing and the creation of new Public Rights of Way ("PRoW") to retain and improve connectivity.

At the time of writing, there are two potential points at which the Project could connect via underground cables to the electricity grid. The Applicant's preferred route, which would connect directly into the existing Sellindge Substation, lies entirely within the administrative area of Ashford Borough Council. The alternative route, which would connect into the Sellindge Substation via an existing nearby tower, would require additional land some of which would be located within the administrative boundary of Folkestone and Hythe District Council. The whole site including both grid connection options is within the administrative area of Kent County Council.

## Consultation undertaken in 2022

Non-statutory consultation took place between 25 March and 29 April 2022. As part of this consultation, four local information events were held, which provided interested members of the local community with the opportunity to view the initial proposals and submit feedback.

Statutory consultation under the Planning Act 2008 was then carried out between 25 October and 29 November 2022. This provided detailed information about the Project, including a Preliminary Environmental Information Report ("PEIR"). Four local information events and a public presentation were held at which members of the Project team were available to answer questions on the Project and consultees could submit their feedback.

## Since the last consultation

We are grateful to everyone who took part in the consultations in 2022. We received 168 responses overall to the statutory consultation.

Common themes raised included:

- Support for the principle of new solar energy generation
- Concern about the overall scale of development and potential loss of agricultural land
- Questions over the need for the development
- Questions regarding site suitability and the consideration of alternative sites
- Concern about impacts to PRoW
- Concern about HGV access
- A desire for all cables associated with the scheme to be buried underground
- Requests for more information about landscape and visual impact, ecology and local job creation

Since the 2022 statutory consultation, we have refined the Project, having regard to all consultation responses received, as well as the results of further studies and surveys and ongoing environmental assessments. These have included further ecological surveys and mitigation, viewpoint analysis, landscape improvements, archaeological redesign and PRoW refinement.

### *We have therefore:*

- Developed a Book of Plans to support this consultation that shows our proposals.
- Provided further information on the need for the Project, site suitability and alternative sites;
- Developed our package of landscaping and biodiversity enhancements, to include additional hedgerow and woodland planting and habitat creation to further reduce any impact and also increase biodiversity improvements - the Project now includes over 30,000 new hedgerow plants and over 16,000 new woodland shrubs/trees;
- Reconfigured proposed PRoW diversion layouts, lengths and routes to respond to local user and Kent County Council feedback;
- Increased and enhanced setbacks from residential dwellings to reduce visual amenity impacts;
- Updated the proposals to provide additional habitat for wildlife, in particular skylark and yellowhammer, to mitigate impacts identified in the previous design;

- Relocated electrical infrastructure and provided mitigation to reduce noise, visual amenity and archaeological impacts;
- Updated the scheme boundary (Order Limits) to remove small areas not considered necessary for development and to add land at Sellindge Substation to allow installation of ducting, if required; and
- Undertaken further assessment of the potential for any cumulative effects of the Project together with other schemes in the vicinity of the Project.

The Project is an Environmental Impact Assessment development (EIA development), as defined by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, and an Environmental Statement will be submitted as part of the Application. A PEIR was published to support the 2022 statutory consultation in order to provide preliminary information on the likely significant environmental effects of the Project. As part of the 2023 statutory consultation, a PEIR Addendum has been prepared which updates and supplements the PEIR.

---

## Our Proposals

The Project will be a high quality and innovative solar farm. It will deliver a significant amount of renewable energy, whilst being sensitive to its surroundings. It has been carefully sited and designed, taking account of nearby receptors, and will result in significant biodiversity improvements in the area.

The Applicant has set out the vision for the Project in a number of key objectives which have informed the design. These objectives have been informed to an important degree by the previous consultation stages.

## Objectives

**Objective 1:** Design the scheme to optimise the amount of renewable energy that can be generated in the site area to help decarbonise electricity generation and achieving net zero carbon emissions, in line with the Government's commitments.

**Objective 2:** Sensitively locate the Project within the landscape.

**Objective 3:** Minimise impacts on views from people's homes and other viewpoints. A bespoke approach has been taken to the arrangement of the proposed panels close to residential properties.

**Objective 4:** Enhance the local green infrastructure network.

**Objective 5:** Enhance local biodiversity.

**Objective 6:** Avoid harm to heritage assets and their setting.

**Objective 7:** Safeguard the water environment, be safe from flooding and ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere, taking account of the impacts of climate change.

**Objective 8:** Retain existing PRoW and connectivity where possible, and seek opportunities to enhance the local network.

**Objective 9:** Provide safe access to the site and avoid adverse impacts to the local highway network and its users (including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders).

## Why here?

The site has been selected for a number of reasons, including:

- The south east of England was identified as a suitable area due to the high levels of solar irradiation and the high level of regional energy demand. The project will contribute to meeting local demand including from High Speed 1 and Otterpool Park;
- The securing of available capacity at the Sellindge Substation provides a point of connection for the scale of energy generation proposed;
- The site is not subject to any international, national, landscape, ecological or geological designations, or to any housing allocations or

heritage designations;

- The site benefits from existing natural screening through vegetation and topography; and
- The site is approximately 80% lower-quality agricultural land or non-agricultural land.

More information on the site selection process is set out in Chapter 4 of the PEIR Addendum which forms part of this consultation.

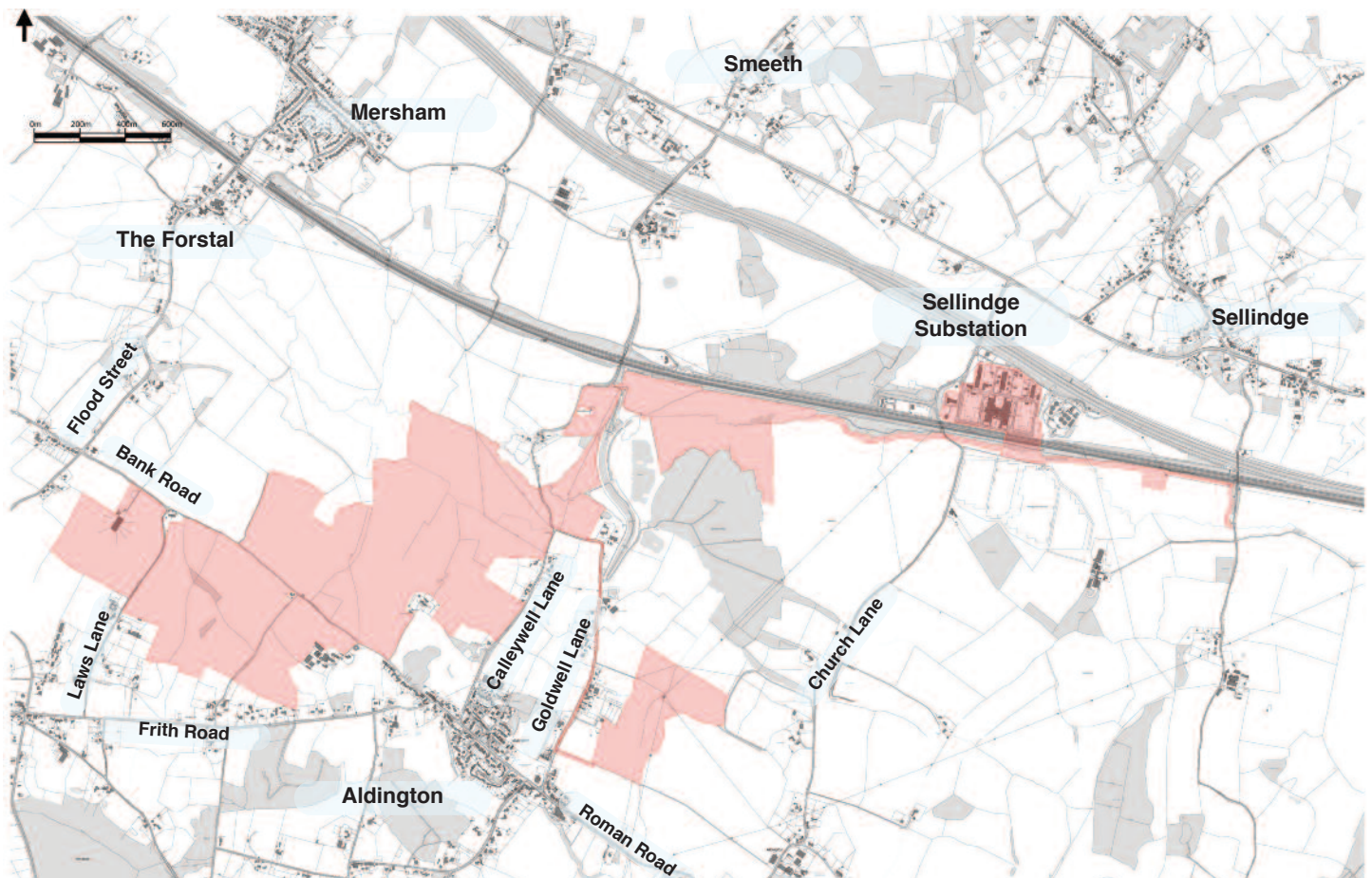
## Scale and Need

The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the Secretary of State to ensure that the net carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline in the UK (known as net zero). This is the overarching carbon reduction target for the Government.

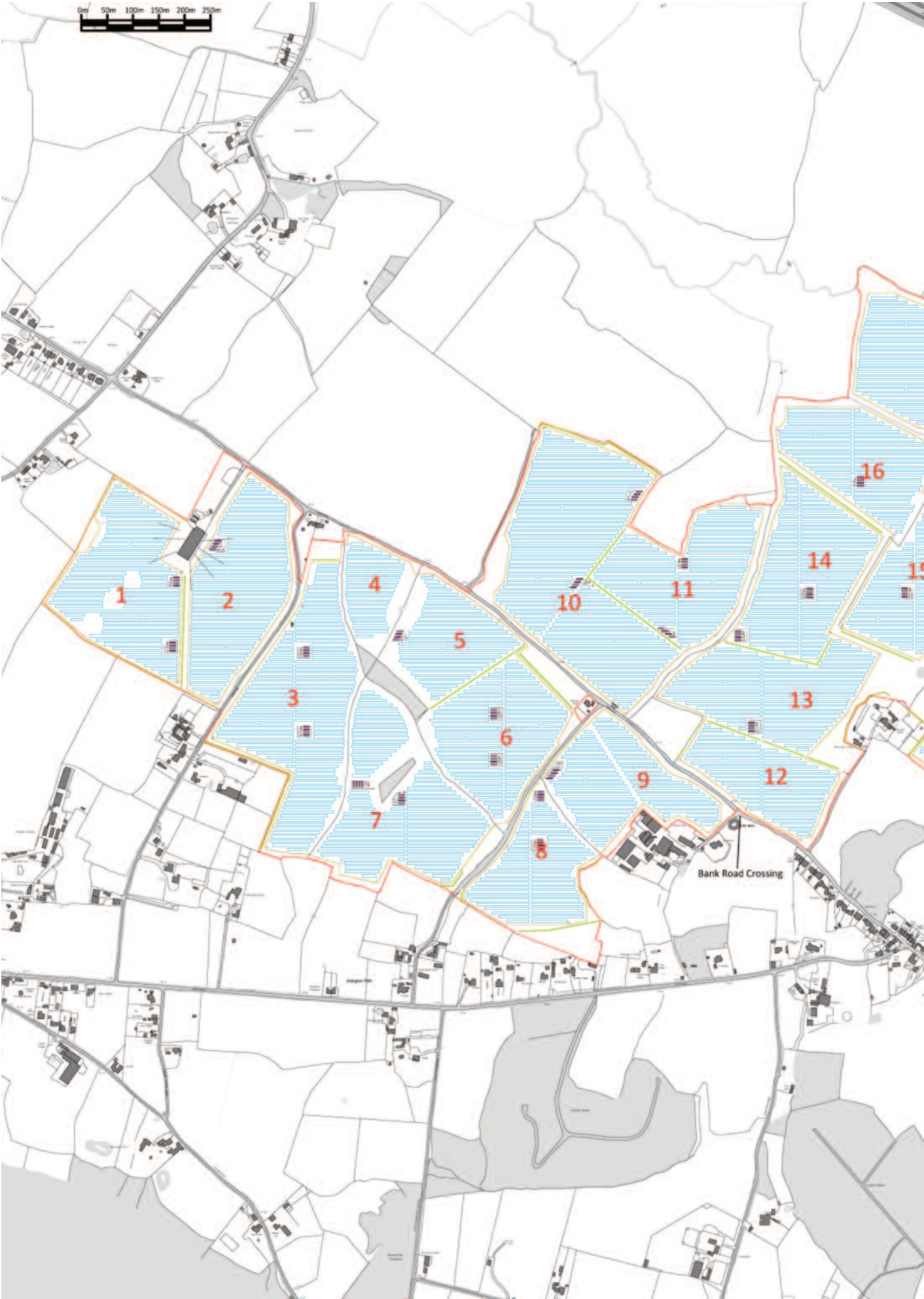
In October 2021, the Government published a report entitled 'Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener'. One of the key policies in this report is for the UK to be powered entirely by clean electricity by 2035, which would also help ensure UK security of electricity supply and result in a reduction in energy costs.

In March 2023, the Government published for consultation the updated draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) ("Draft NPS EN-3"). This explains that there is an urgent need for new renewable electricity generating capacity to meet our energy objectives. It goes on to explain that the Government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions and states that solar is a key part of the Government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector. Draft NPS EN-3 states that solar farms are one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK and the cheapest form of electricity generation.

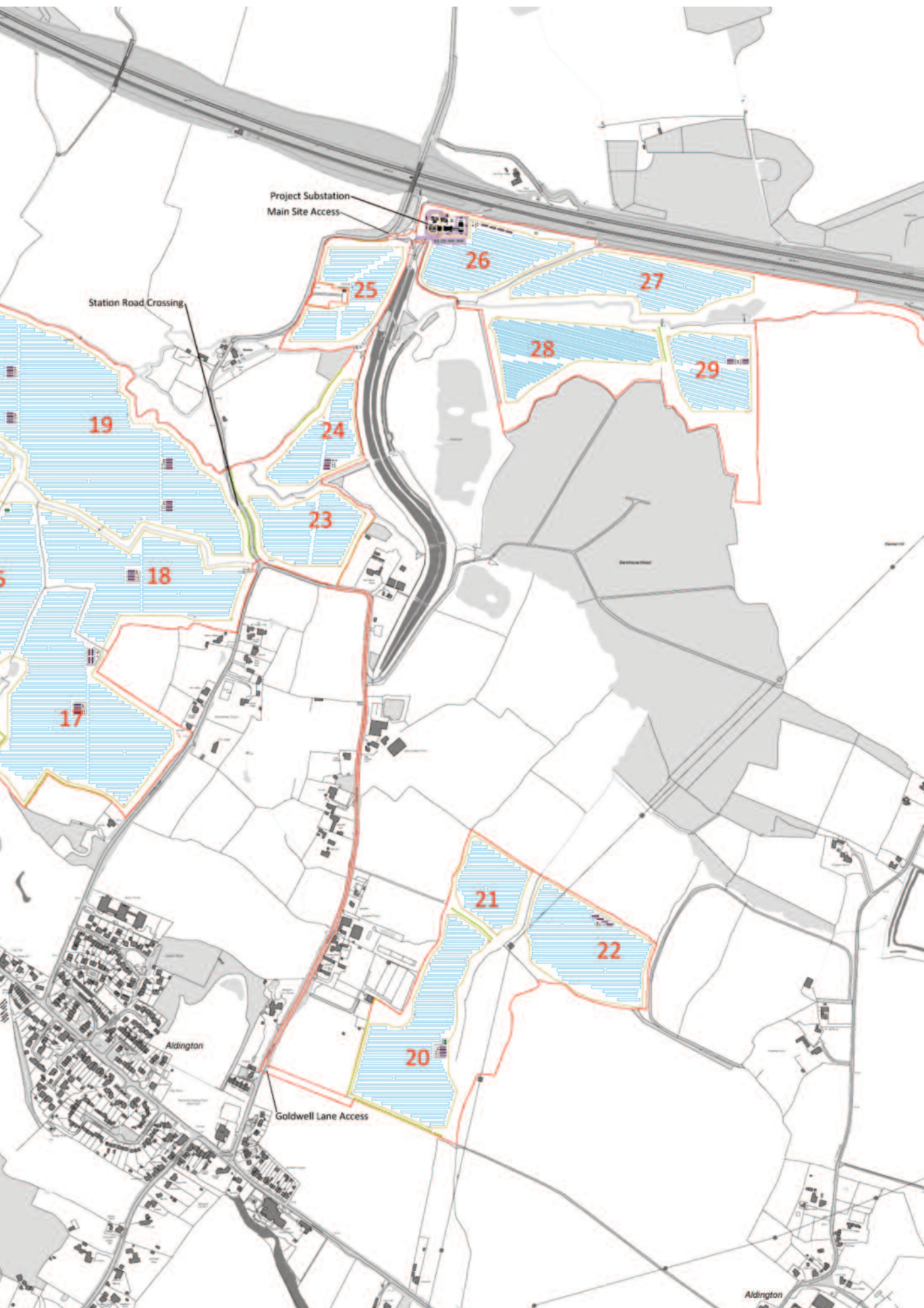
The Applicant has accepted a grid connection agreement to connect to Sellindge Substation which allows a maximum export and import of 99.9MW to the national grid. To ensure the grid connection is feasible, the Project is located close to the Sellindge Substation. There are no brownfield sites of sufficient scale within the Ashford Borough that could accommodate the Project.



# Illustrative Proposed Development Layout



Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2023. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432



## Benefits

The Project is expected to deliver a number of important benefits. These are summarised as follows:

- It will make a meaningful contribution to the UK's legally binding net zero commitment;
- It will provide an additional source of domestic energy security that is not impacted by gas prices;
- It will displace the generation of electricity from other conventional power sources, including fossil-fuel reliant sources, resulting in a saving of approximately 34,500 tonnes of carbon per year;
- It will result in a biodiversity net gain of more than 100%, significantly above the 10% national biodiversity net gain target or the 20% Kent County target;
- It will provide for significant additional tree planting;
- It will result in a reduction in nitrate emissions to the East Stour river; and
- It will provide a community benefit fund to be used locally for social and environmental projects.



## Community Benefit Fund

The Applicant has committed to provide a Community Benefit Fund, which is intended to help fund local social or environmental initiatives. These initiatives are separate to any mitigation or compensation that will form part of the Application – they are solely for the benefit of the local community.

It is important that the Community Benefit Fund is secured for the direct benefit of, and easily and fairly accessible to, the local groups and residents likely to experience the most change related to the Project. As such, the following principles are proposed to govern the Fund and the activities and projects supported by it:

- Community funding applications should be considered by an independent and

experienced not-for-profit body that would have a representative panel to award grants;

- The award committee would include elected local residents and representatives of bodies such as local authorities and interest groups, as well as the Applicant/contractor. The committee could be chaired by a locally-elected body; and

- Local community groups and not-for-profit organisations would be invited to bid for funding on a bi-annual basis, with awards informed by feedback from local residents.

Once the Project is operational the Applicant will provide a payment of up to £40,000 per annum (index-linked) to be awarded in the form of grants. Grants could be up to £10,000 per project (by exception) – our experience suggests that larger grants are less likely to be taken up, but there could be a separate pot for multi-year, larger funds where there is a strong business case.

The following principles for criteria of applications for funding represents industry-standard approaches to ensure independence and ties to the affected communities:

- Applicants should be a registered charity, voluntary organisation, social enterprise or public body;

- Proposals should not obviate or duplicate mitigation or compensation measures secured by the DCO or within any other legal agreement related to the Project;

- The Community Benefit Fund should not be used to fund services or projects that are the statutory duty of an organisation to provide as part of their usual operation;

- Proposals should not be inconsistent with Local Plans including Neighbourhood Plans;

- Proposals may complement or enhance physical works undertaken as part of Project;

- Proposals must be deliverable and a timescale for their delivery agreed; and

- Proposals must accord with the Equality Act 2010.

# Environmental Impact Assessment

We are committed to making the local environment better than before the Project was built and operated.

We believe this scheme represents an opportunity to significantly improve the local habitat, and the Project will be supported by a long-term landscape and ecological management plan to ensure this is achieved.

We are required to carry out an environmental impact assessment ("EIA") of our proposals as part of the planning process. The preliminary outcomes from the EIA have informed the site design and content of this consultation.

On 30 May 2022, we received the formal EIA Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate ("PINS"). This confirmed the scope of work that should be included in our EIA and that should be reported in the comprehensive Environmental Statement that will accompany our Application.

In addition to this, we have considered the feedback we received through the non-statutory and statutory consultation undertaken in 2022 and have continued to engage with local authorities and other regulatory bodies, such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, on our approach to the EIA.

The topics in our EIA include:

- Cultural heritage
- Landscape and views
- Biodiversity
- Water environment
- Land contamination
- Socio-economics
- Traffic and access
- Noise
- Climate change
- Cumulative effects

## Summary of effects

We have identified some potential effects as part of our EIA. A summary of the effects for each EIA topic is set out below. For further information and conclusions on residual effects please refer to the



Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR Addendum that has been published to support this statutory consultation. More detailed information can be found in the topic-specific chapters of the PEIR, as updated by the PEIR Addendum.

As a general rule for the purposes of the EIA assessment, major and moderate effects are considered to be significant, whilst minor and negligible effects are considered to be not significant. Effects are considered on a pre and post mitigation basis, with the post mitigation effect being the residual effect of the Project.

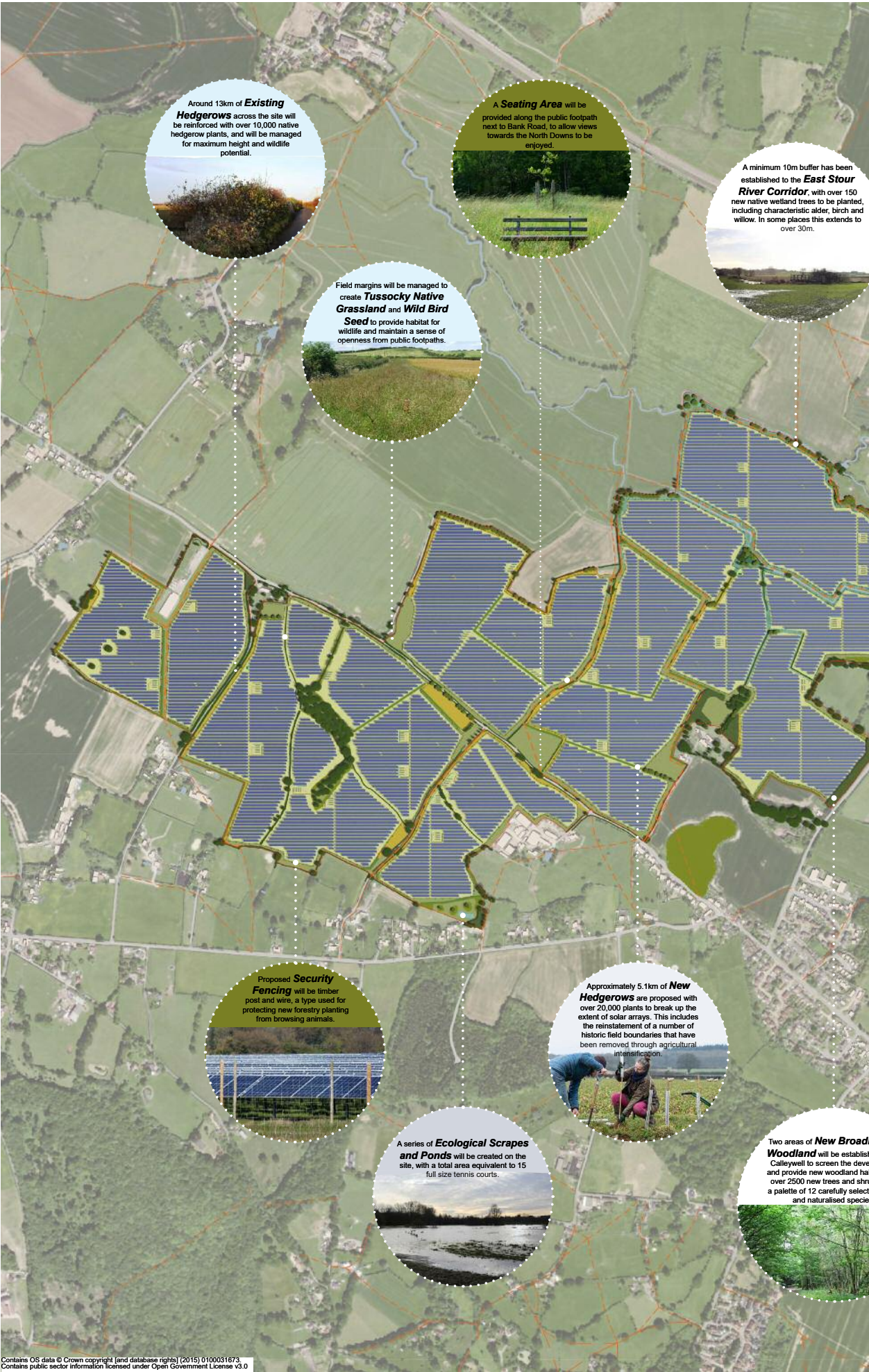
## Cultural heritage

During the construction phase, prior to the consideration of mitigation, there are likely to be potential slight adverse effects on archaeological remains within the Project boundary and slight adverse effects on the historic landscape character of the area. During the operational phase, prior to the consideration of mitigation, there are likely to be slight adverse to moderate adverse effects on the setting of designated heritage assets nearby. During the decommissioning phase, there are likely to be neutral effects on the setting of designated heritage assets nearby. We have also identified a likely slight beneficial effect on historic field boundaries through the reinstatement of hedgerows during the construction phase and a likely slight beneficial effect from reinstatement of the historic landscape character during the decommissioning phase.

Mitigation during construction will include a programme of archaeological works and the use of native species for the reinstatement of hedgerows. Mitigation for the operational phase includes planting hedgerows to screen views and to minimise the potential for glint from the solar panels. No additional mitigation is required during decommissioning.

Following the implementation of mitigation, the residual effects range from slight adverse to slight beneficial, which is considered to be not significant in EIA terms.

# Illustrative Landscape Masterplan



Please refer to the Book of Plans to view a larger-scale version of the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan



© This drawing and its content are the copyright of SLR Consulting Ltd and may not be reproduced or amended except by prior written permission. SLR Consulting Ltd accepts no

## *Landscape and views*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, we have identified the potential for significant landscape and visual effects in EIA terms. However, mitigation to minimise adverse effects has been considered as part of the design of the Project and includes measures such as appropriate planting. Beneficial effects have also been identified, in the form of establishing new native hedgerows to reinstate historic landscape character and to encourage new habitat connectivity. The landscape buffers to the East Stour will also enhance biodiversity, and new planting across the Project will encourage new habitat establishment and resilience.

Best practice measures will be undertaken during the construction and decommissioning of the Project, and will be secured through the DCO. These will include the protection of existing vegetation on-site, limiting hours of working, ensuring that all unloading/loading of materials takes place within the Project boundary, and cleaning of construction vehicles regularly.

During operation, mitigation comprises the maintenance and management of the comprehensive landscape strategy, also to be secured through the DCO. This landscape strategy includes larger buffers to residential properties and additional planting, which we have developed following previous consultation feedback.

Taking that mitigation into account, the effects during construction and decommissioning will only relate to visual receptors and are considered to be of moderate adverse significance; operational effects on features of the landscape will be of moderate beneficial significance, effects on landscape character will be of moderate to minor adverse significance and effects on visual receptors will be of moderate to minor adverse significance. However establishment of new landscape features will result in a considerable improvement through the operational lifetime of the Project through enhanced management and reinforcement of existing hedgerows, new habitat planting for the East Stour River and new shrub planting for woodland margins.

## *Biodiversity*

To minimise construction phase impacts, mitigation includes the tankering of foul water to a location beyond the Stour River catchment, and the implementation of protection and pollution prevention measures outlined in a Construction Environmental Management Plan ("CEMP") to avoid any impact on the Stodmarsh site. Suitable protection zones will be set up around veteran trees that are to be retained, the adjacent Backhouse Wood ancient woodland, and the East Stour River within which no construction activities will be undertaken.

During construction residual effects include a local (significant) adverse effect from the loss of habitat for yellowhammer, skylark and brown hare during construction. All other construction stage effects are not considered significant or are yet to be confirmed (at the ES stage).

Operational phase mitigation also includes tankering of foul water to a location beyond the Stour River Catchment (if required to avoid impacts on the Stodmarsh site), as well as the creation of new habitats adjacent to Backhouse Wood and the East Stour River, the enhancement of existing habitats on-Site and the design, implementation and monitoring of appropriate habitat management.

Operational residual effects include local (significant) beneficial effects on the Backhouse Wood LWS and ancient woodland, notable river habitats, ponds and hedgerows, invertebrate species, the habitat expansion and enhancement for great crested newt, common toad, reptiles, breeding birds (including yellowhammer), wintering birds (including yellowhammer), hazel dormouse, badger, otter, bats, hedgehog, harvest mouse and brown hare. There would be a local (significant) adverse effect arising from the sustained depletion of yellowhammer food and habitat, and a local adverse effect on the elevated predation risk on skylarks. All other effects would be not significant.

The operational effects on skylark and brown hare were reported in the PEIR as local adverse



(significant). The Project now includes additional foraging habitat and other habitat enhancement measures.

Decommissioning phase mitigation, such as measures to prevent and control the spread of invasive species during works, and following good practice lighting guidelines, will be included in the Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (“DEMP”).

Residual effects during decommissioning are either negligible adverse and not significant, or to be confirmed in the ES, following surveys and assessments.

### *Water environment*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, we identified potential negligible adverse effects (not significant) arising from change to the hydrological and hydrogeological regime and potential moderate adverse effects (significant) on degradation to water quality affecting surface water and groundwater receptors.

Mitigation incorporated into the design of the Project includes standoff distances between the Project and the East Stour River, ponds, lakes and drains. Additional mitigation during construction includes compliance with the CEMP, which will put in place good working practices such as minimising disruption to watercourses, sediment capture, secure storing of all fuels, oils and polluting substances, and pollution incident response plans.

Operational mitigation includes a surface water drainage system that accounts for climate change, and that will maintain existing greenfield rates of surface water runoff. Where there is a risk of pollution from maintenance activities, vehicles and plant will be required to carry a spill kit. Measures for the decommissioning stage will be controlled through the DEMP.

Following the implementation of mitigation, the residual effects are expected to be minor adverse / negligible neutral (not significant) during all phases.

### *Land contamination*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, we identified potential adverse effects during

construction, operation and decommissioning on workers (minor adverse effect), and potential impacts on the East Stour River due to contaminants from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project (minor adverse effect – not significant).

Mitigation measures include the CEMP for best practice working measures, minimisation of dust generation by damping down working areas and machinery, and the storage of fuel, oil and chemicals within a secure bunded area or secondary containment. These measures will be carried through to the operational phase where beneficial. Mitigation during the decommissioning phases will be controlled through the outline DEMP.

Following the implementation of mitigation, the residual effects are expected to be minor adverse (not significant).

### *Socio-economics*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, we identified potential moderate to negligible adverse (significant to not significant) noise and visual effects on local amenity as well as moderate adverse (significant) effects on the PRoW network during construction, operation and decommissioning. The construction and decommissioning phases of the Project will also have a minor beneficial (not significant) effect of direct construction job creation (an average of 130 jobs, with a peak of 199 jobs), further indirect supply chain job creation (52-80 jobs), an economic contribution of between £8.4m and £12.9m, and a moderate beneficial (significant) effect on workforce expenditure in the local area. During the operational phase, the effects of the Project’s contribution towards renewable energy generation will have a minor to major beneficial effect (not significant to significant).

For construction, mitigation will be provided by the CEMP and by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (“CTMP”) and for decommissioning, mitigation will be provided by the DEMP and by a Decommissioning Traffic Management Plan (“DTMP”). For the operational phase, a Landscape Ecological Management Plan (“LEMP”) will be implemented to manage the growth and maintenance of planting. We are

working with Kent County Council to identify areas where improvements can be made as part of the Project to offset any impacts on existing PRowWs.

Following mitigation, residual effects remain for visual amenity and on the PRow network but these will be minor adverse to negligible (not significant). Residual effects also remain for workforce expenditure but this is a beneficial effect which does not require mitigation. There are also residual beneficial residual effects for job creation, economic contribution and noise amenity.

### *Traffic and access*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, we identified potential negligible to minor adverse (not significant) effects on severance, driver delay, pedestrian delay and amenity, fear and intimidation, accidents and safety, and hazardous/dangerous and abnormal-sized loads at the construction stage.

Mitigation measures include the CTMP, which will ensure construction phase effects are avoided where possible and minimised thereafter. Measures in the outline CTMP to reduce the impact of construction traffic on the local highway network include controlling hours of site operation/access, provision of wheel washing facilities, minibus collection and drop-off arrangements and parking strategies for construction workers. Construction traffic is planned for outside of peak hours to minimise impacts in terms of traffic flow volume and highway network capacity.

A DTMP will be secured by the DCO to ensure measures are implemented at the decommissioning phase.

Following the implementation of mitigation, the residual effects that remain from construction traffic impacts will have a negligible adverse effect. The identified effects are only temporary in nature and will not last longer than 12 months.

### *Noise*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, we identified potential for up to moderate adverse

(significant) noise effects from construction and decommissioning traffic noise on the road network, up to minor adverse (not significant) effects from on-site construction and decommissioning, negligible (not significant) effects on PRow users from the construction and decommissioning phases and up to minor adverse (not significant) effects from plant noise during operation.

Mitigation measures during the construction phase will be controlled by the CEMP, including regular maintenance of machinery to control noise and vibration and siting of activities to avoid noise-sensitive locations. Localised noise barriers will be installed at the outset of development to shield noise-sensitive receptors as far as reasonably possible. These measures will be carried through to the operation phase where beneficial. Mitigation for the decommissioning phase will be controlled by the DEMP.

Following mitigation the residual effects from the construction, operation and decommissioning phases will be minor adverse to negligible (not significant).

### *Climate change*

Prior to the consideration of mitigation, carbon emissions arising from construction and decommissioning vehicles are anticipated to have a minor to moderate adverse (not significant to significant) effect locally. We anticipate effects from climate change adaptation, including minor beneficial (not significant) effects from flood risk mitigation and drainage, negligible to minor beneficial (not significant) effects from cloud cover, and



negligible (not significant) effects on biodiversity and noise. Negligible effects are anticipated from climate change on the Project itself.

The generation of electricity from the Project will displace the generation of fossil fuel electricity generation. A carbon saving of 1,380,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent is predicted over the Project's lifespan, in keeping with the trajectory to net zero by 2050, resulting in a minor to major beneficial (not significant to significant) effect at a national level.

The outline CEMP and CTMP submitted alongside the Application will provide for measures to minimise vehicle movements and emissions. The CTMP will include measures for on-site delivery consolidation and promotion of the most sustainable transport methods for construction workers to access the site. Mitigation at the operational stage will include a LEMP to detail habitat creation, enhancement and mitigation measures. Ecological monitoring will also be undertaken as part of the Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy submitted with the DCO. The DTMP will control traffic movements for the decommissioning phase.

Following mitigation, no significant residual effects are expected during the construction and decommissioning phases for construction vehicle emissions. Residual effects as a result of biodiversity enhancements will offer resilience, with no significant adverse effects expected. The Project will result in a major beneficial effect in offsetting carbon emissions through the generation of renewable electricity.

### *Cumulative effects*

Significant residual cumulative effects in EIA terms have been identified for landscape and views (effects on receptors during construction and decommissioning, effects on landscape character and visual receptors during operation); biodiversity (construction effects on the loss of habitat for yellowhammer and skylark, operational effects on the sustained depletion of local food and habitat resource for yellowhammer and elevated predation risk for skylark); socioeconomics (construction effects on workforce expenditure, operational effects on

the contribution towards renewable energy generation, decommissioning effects on workforce expenditure); and climate change (operational effects resulting from the provision of renewable energy).

## **Construction, operation and decommissioning**

### **Construction**

A full description of the anticipated construction works is set out in Chapter 5 of the PEIR Addendum which forms part of this statutory consultation.

If the scheme were to receive consent, we anticipate that the total construction period would last approximately 12 months, including 3 months of site preparation.

We will work to a series of well-established principles in building the Project. Where possible, we will look to use existing infrastructure to access the site, minimise use of new materials on-site, and phase construction to reduce impacts on the wider road network.

Early in the construction period, we will establish the main site entrance, internal roads for moving around the site, construction compounds and security fencing. This will help us reduce the impact of our work on the wider area.

We expect to use the following techniques while building the scheme:

- Enabling site works: we will provide landscape planting to allow screening to establish during construction. We will also do some minor site levelling and vegetation clearance where required. We will establish perimeter fencing, lay out construction compounds and install internal access roads. At this point construction materials and equipment will start to be delivered.
- PV arrays: the mounting structures for the PV panels will be piled into the ground in some locations, but if not possible an alternative mounting solution will be used.
- Inverter stations, on-site substations and energy storage: inverter stations, on-site substations and energy storage infrastructure

will be mounted on small foundations within the Project site area.

- Cabling: we will bury cables underground. We will install the cables by digging a trench, laying the cables in sections and then covering them. We may in some instances use a horizontal directional drilling technique, where there are constraints at ground level.
- Project substation: the main Project substation will require foundations and works to install the required cabling and equipment.

### **Construction management**

We expect to build the Project in phases which should mean that we will not be working across the whole site for the entire construction period.

There will be vehicles travelling to and from the site while we are building the scheme, which will vary day to day. These will access the site using an entrance from Station Road, where the main site construction compound will be located. We will build the majority of the Project using an internal access track, meaning we will not need to rely on public roads. The only exception to this will be the access to the southern section which will be via Goldwell Lane. We will need to provide construction areas within the site for welfare and storage but these will be temporary.

Construction activities will be carried out during the core hours of 08:00 – 18:00 on weekdays and 08:00 – 13:00 on Saturdays. There will be no construction activities on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Start-up and shut-down works will be undertaken one hour before and after normal working hours including: arrival and departure of workforce on-site; deliveries and unloading; site inspections, plant maintenance and safety checks; and site clean-up.

These hours will be secured through the CEMP/CTMP and will be strictly adhered to with the exception of emergency works, works that are necessary to comply with safety requirements or works that are unavoidable and in line with best practicable means. Approval from Ashford Borough Council will be obtained for construction works that need to be undertaken outside of the core hours defined

above. Typically, works that may need to be undertaken out of hours will be for the delivery and removal of an abnormal load.

The number of workers on site at any one point will vary during construction. Further details are provided in Chapter 5 of the PEIR Addendum.

### **Key measures**

We recognise the potential impact of construction on our neighbours and will put in place plans designed to ensure potential impacts are managed and properly communicated.

To aid this, we will include an outline CEMP and CTMP with our Application. These will set out the principles, controls, and measures we will use to manage and mitigate potential environmental impacts during construction.

Measures we will put in place during construction include:

- Restricting HGV movements to defined routes, avoiding HGV movements during certain times of the day and implementing a delivery management system for HGV deliveries;
- Implementing temporary traffic management at the Station Road and Roman Road crossings, and along Goldwell Lane to ensure impacts on local users/residents are minimised;
- Providing clear signage for construction traffic. We will also encourage local construction staff to make use of a staff minibus, to reduce single occupancy car trips, and provide on-site car parking;
- Where PRoW may need to be diverted, or where we need to make sure the local network remains safe and convenient for public use, we will provide temporary signage for users and implement a 5mph speed limit for construction and delivery vehicles at the site access, along the shared section with AE474 and at the haul road crossing points;
- Implementing best practice construction measures to minimise noise, vibration, dust and construction lighting impacts;
- Limiting removal of existing vegetation – the Project requires very limited vegetation

removal, and we are not proposing to remove or affect any veteran trees or ancient woodland. We will put protection zones in place around the trees and hedgerows that are to be retained; and

- A community liaison manager will be appointed as a direct point of contact for any concerns or complaints.

## Operations and Maintenance

The Applicant is committed to operating the Project in a responsible way. Once the Project is operational, activity across the site will be minimal and largely restricted to monitoring, maintenance and the management of the visual and ecological mitigation features.

## Decommissioning

Solar farms typically have a design lifespan of 40 years. The Project has been designed so that once it has reached the end of its lifespan it can be dismantled. A decommissioning plan will be prepared in advance of decommissioning activities beginning. It will set out how the Project components could be processed to maximise material recovery but as recycling technology is expected to advance over the lifetime of the Project it is anticipated that we will be able to provide more detail at a later stage of the Project's lifespan.

## Jobs and skills

The Project will create jobs and skills, as well as creating wider economic benefits. We are committed to ensuring that these advantages are felt in the local community. Overall, we expect to create an average of 130 new jobs in the construction and decommissioning phases and between 182 and 279 direct and indirect roles once the Project is operational.

The majority of the manufacturing process of the panels, batteries and related components is located overseas, but we will look to source other materials from the UK and encourage the use of domestic suppliers and of domestic skills where possible.

## Health and safety

We recognise that there is interest in how health and safety will be managed. We have already engaged with the Health and Safety Executive and the Kent Fire and Rescue Service on the design of the Project, and on the safe construction and operation of the energy storage units. This is to ensure that the management of health and safety is built in from the start.

We will put in place appropriate training and codes of conduct for all staff working at the site. This will include an induction covering health and safety and how to behave on site, which all staff must complete before beginning work.



# Planning and Consultation

## Planning process

The Project is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP") pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 because its generating capacity will be more than 50MW.

Unlike applications for planning permission, which are considered by the relevant local planning authority, a DCO application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate ("PINS"). PINS manages the application process on behalf of the Secretary of State. In this case, the relevant Government Department is the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero ("ESNZ"). The final decision on the Application will be made by the Secretary of State for ESNZ.

The Planning Act 2008 requires consultation with the local community before we submit our Application.

We are carrying out this consultation in accordance with this requirement – it is therefore referred to as a 'statutory consultation'.

You can find out more about the DCO process at PINS' website:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

PINS has also published guidance on the process for members of the public. This can be viewed online at:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/advice-notes/advice-note-eight-overview-of-the-nationally-significant-infrastructure-planning-process-for-members-of-the-public-and-others/>

## 2023 statutory consultation

We have developed our approach to this consultation through engagement with Ashford Borough Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council and Kent County Council.

Consultation on the Project will take place from **9:00am on 12 June 2023 until 11:59pm on 17 July 2023**.

The following documents have been prepared to support the consultation:

- this Consultation Booklet;
- a Book of Plans, including (amongst other things) a Site Location Plan and Landscape Masterplan;

- the PEIR (originally published as part of the statutory consultation that took place in October and November 2022);
- the PEIR Addendum (which updates the PEIR and includes an updated non-technical summary);
- a 'You said, we did' document outlining responses to feedback received to date;
- a consultation leaflet; and
- the exhibition boards that will be used at the local information events listed below.

These documents, together with our Statement of Community Consultation, consultation leaflets/newsletters and notices may be inspected free of charge from 12 June 2023 until 17 July 2023 (excluding bank holidays) at the deposit locations listed below.

- Ashford Library, Ashford Gateway Plus, Church Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1AS
- Ashford Borough Council Offices, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23 1PL (Monday to Friday: 9am to 4pm; Saturday and Sunday: closed)
- Folkestone and Hythe Council Offices, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone CT20 2QY (Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm; Saturday and Sunday: closed)
- Kent County Council, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ (Monday to Friday: 8am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday: closed) - by appointment only
- New Romney Library, 82 High Street, New Romney, TN28 8AU
- Lyminge Library, Station Road, Lyminge, CT18 8HS
- Hythe Library, 1 Stade Street, Hythe, CT21 6BQ

You can check the opening hours for each library on the Kent County Council website at

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/libraries/visiting-a-library>

Electronic copies of the consultation documents will also be available to inspect free of charge from 9:00am on 12 June 2023 until at least 11:59pm on 17 July 2023 on the Applicant's website at [www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](http://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk) under the tab labelled 'Consultation' then 'Statutory Consultation (Summer 2023)'.

## Local information events

The Applicant will host a series of local information events as part of the statutory consultation process. The local information events will provide the opportunity to view the consultation documents for the Project and provide feedback on the proposals.

The details of the events are as follows:

**Sellindge Village Hall**  
**Friday 23 June 2023, 2pm to 6pm**  
**Mersham Village Hall**  
**Saturday 24 June 2023, 11am to 3pm**  
**Aldington Village Hall**  
**Monday 26 June 2023, 3pm to 7pm**  
**Bilsington Village Hall**  
**Tuesday 27 June 2023, 1pm to 5pm**

A full set of consultation documents can also be provided on a USB memory stick upon request, free of charge. Hard copies of the consultation documents can be obtained upon request at a cost of £500 per copy. Requests for large print, audio or braille versions of the consultation documents will be considered on a case-by-case basis and appropriate charges may apply.

Requests for documents should be made to the Applicant by telephone on 08081 698335 (free of charge) or by email at [info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](mailto:info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk). Reasonable postage charges may apply.

## How to respond

Any person may respond to the consultation. Comments must be received by the Applicant by **no later than 11:59pm on Monday 17 July 2023**. When providing your comments please include your name and address, or if you would prefer your comments to be anonymous your postcode only, and confirm the nature of your interest in the Project.

Please submit any comments by:

- Completing an online feedback form on the Applicant's website at [www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/consultation](http://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/consultation)
- Completing a hard copy feedback form (available at the local information events, the aforementioned deposit locations and upon request to the Applicant using the contact

details below) and either handing it to the Project team at the local information event or submitting it by post (free of charge; no stamp required) to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar.

- Submitting comments by email to [info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](mailto:info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk), by post (free of charge; no stamp required) to **FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar** or by telephone (free of charge) at **08081 698335**.

The Applicant will have regard to all responses received by the above deadline when finalising the proposals and submitting the Application. A Consultation Report will be submitted as part of the Application that will provide the details of the pre-application consultation undertaken by the Applicant, summarise any relevant responses received by the Applicant and explain the account taken by the Applicant of those relevant responses.

The Applicant may be required to submit copies of the consultation responses to the Planning Inspectorate and if so the Applicant will comply with all applicable data protection legislation.

Further details in relation to the Project can be found on the Applicant's website at [www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](http://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk)

For further information or queries about the consultation, the consultation documents or the Project, please contact the Project team by calling 08081 698335 (free of charge); writing to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar (free of charge; no stamp required); or emailing [info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](mailto:info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk)



## Consultation Questions

**We are seeking your views on the following questions as part of the consultation:**

- 1) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the solar energy generation element of the scheme?**
- 2) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the energy storage element of the scheme?**
- 3) Do you have any comments on our proposals for connecting to the national electricity system?**
- 4) Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during:**
  - The construction of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?**
  - The operation of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?**
  - The decommissioning of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?**
- 5) Do you have any comments on the contribution that the scheme will make to the local community?**
- 6) Do you have any comments on the landscape strategy and the proposed biodiversity enhancements set out in the Consultation Booklet, the PEIR and PEIR Addendum?**
- 7) Do you have any comments on the changes made to the Project following the previous statutory consultation in 2022?**
- 8) Do you have any comments on the information presented in our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (“PEIR”) as updated by our PEIR Addendum?**
- 9) Do you have any comments on potential projects that the Community Benefit Fund could contribute towards?**
- 10) Do you have any further comments?**

As part of our previous statutory consultation in 2022, we asked questions around the use of solar energy generation in the UK. A data error in our online consultation form meant that answers to the following question were not recorded, and we would be grateful for your response as part of this 2023 statutory consultation:

**Please explain why you support/do not support the use of solar energy as part of the UK energy mix?**

## Data privacy

We are committed to safeguarding the personal information collected from this consultation and we recognise our data protection obligations. By providing your feedback and any contact details, you are consenting to the use of this data in connection with the Stonestreet Green Solar project. Your data will be stored in a safe and secure place and will be deleted when no longer required.

Your data and any information provided to us will be used for the following purposes only:

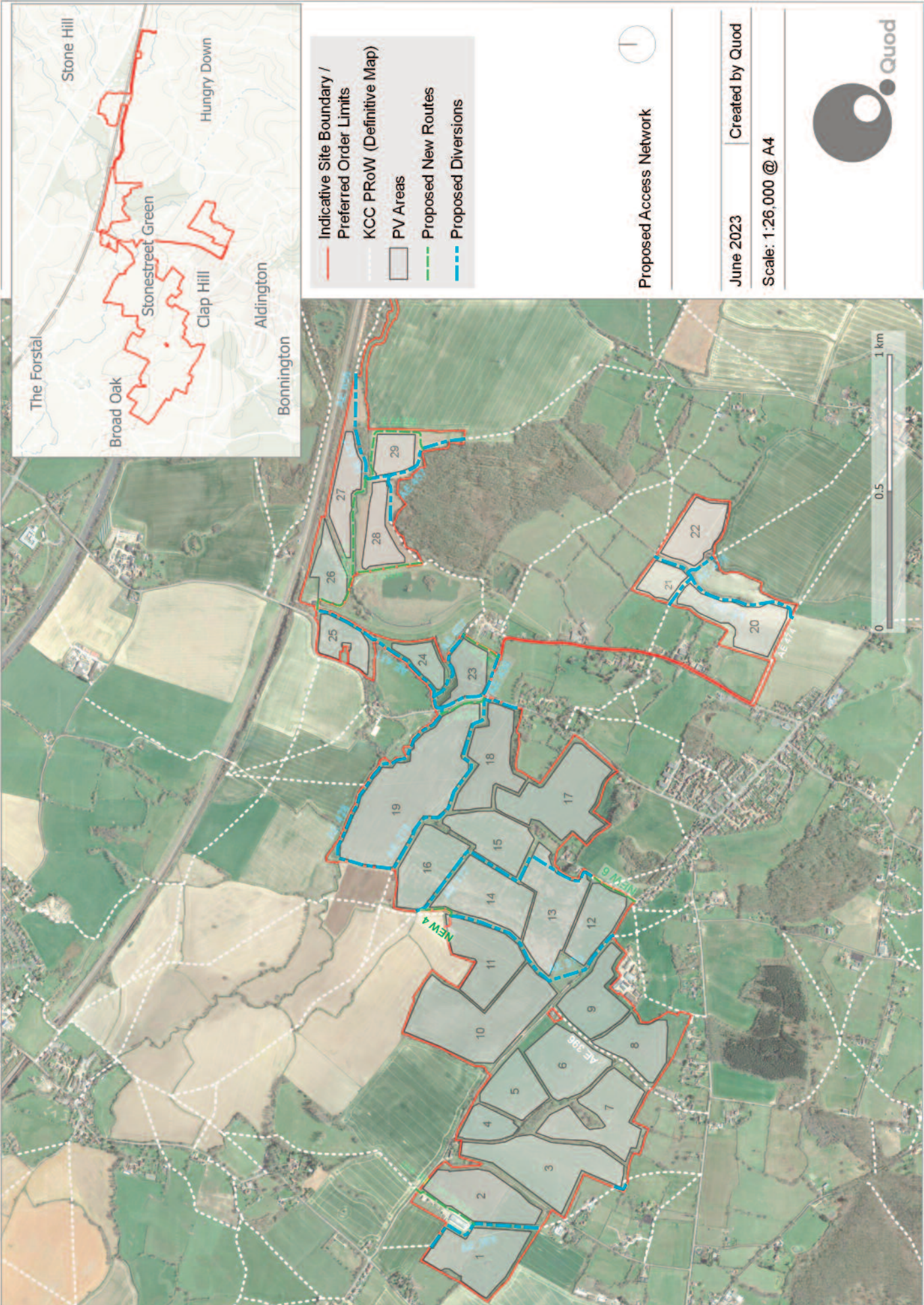
- Analyse your feedback to the consultation
- Respond to specific questions or enquiries submitted during the consultation
- Send you updates about the project (where you provide us with your contact details)
- Keep up to date records of our communications with consultees
- Develop a Consultation Report about this consultation that will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and other relevant planning bodies and will be a publicly available document (individuals will not be named in the report)

Any information you include in this form will be handled and used by (or made available to) the following recipients to record, analyse and report on the feedback we receive:

- Evolution Power Limited and EPL 001 Limited
- The Planning Inspectorate (which will examine our application for Stonestreet Green Solar)
- The Secretary of State (who will make the decision on our application for Stonestreet Green Solar)
- Our legal advisers
- Consultants working on the Stonestreet Green Solar project

Please refer to our privacy policy at <https://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/Privacy+Policy>

Public Rights of Way Layout







## Contact details

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to find out more information about Stonestreet Green Solar or to provide your feedback on the proposals. You can contact our Community Relations Team by using the details below.

**Email:** [info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](mailto:info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk)

**Call our Freephone information line:** 08081 698335

**Visit our website:** [www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk](http://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk)

**Send us a letter:** FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar

**You can also follow us on Twitter:** @SGS\_solar

