



Non-statutory Consultation Report

High Grove Solar Farm
April 2025

Contents

1	Executive summary	3
1.2	Consultation overview	3
2	Introduction.....	5
2.1	Consultation overview	5
2.2	Approach to non-statutory consultation.....	5
3	Consultation and engagement activity	7
3.1	Introduction	7
3.2	Non-statutory consultation.....	7
3.3	Engagement prior to and during the non-statutory consultation	16
4	Consultation feedback summary	18
4.2	Codeframe.....	18
4.3	Feedback form analysis.....	20
4.4	Interactive map comments	39
4.5	Email correspondence analysis.....	42
4.6	Phone call analysis	45
4.7	Chatbot interaction	45
4.8	Feedback from statutory consultees.....	47
4.9	Feedback analysis conclusion.....	50
5	Response to key issues and suggestions raised in consultation feedback	51
	General sentiment poll.....	1
5.2	Context for the poll.....	1
5.3	Results summary.....	1
6	Conclusion.....	3
7	Appendices.....	4

1 Executive summary

- 1.1.1.1 This consultation report provides an overview of non-statutory consultation activities undertaken by RWE Renewables UK Solar & Storage Ltd ('the Applicant') to inform proposals for High Grove Solar Farm ('the Proposed Development'). The plans propose a 720MW solar energy scheme, with storage proposals and associated underground cable routes on land located about 1.5km southwest of Dereham, extending to the west of Swaffham. The proposals are located within the Breckland District Authority Area in Norfolk and, due to the nationally significant nature of the proposed project, they require consent via a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008.

1.2 Consultation overview

- 1.2.1.1 The project was publicly launched in September 2024, when the online project hub went live and information was sent to key stakeholders, informing them of the project and offering briefings. A six-week non-statutory public consultation took place between Monday 9 September and Friday 18 October 2024. The community feedback received was instrumental in refining and enhancing the proposals ahead of presenting the proposals at the statutory consultation.

1.2.2 Communication channels:

- Digital: An online project hub, comprised of an information webpage, document hosting, chatbot, social media, and Commonplace (feedback form and interactive map).
- Events: Six in-person events held locally, three webinars as digital alternatives, and stakeholder briefing presentations delivered to two Parish Councils upon request.
- Print: Newsletters to the local community and bespoke letters to near neighbours.
- Local media: Communication via press and media channels.
- Accessibility options: Feedback via freepost, dedicated phonenumber, email, chatbot for Q&A, and translation options upon request.

- 1.2.2.1 The project webpage served as a directory for the wider online hub linking to where consultation materials could be downloaded, and a link was provided to Commonplace which hosted a feedback form and interactive map. Hardcopies of the feedback form and consultation brochure were made available at public events and on request. Individuals also had the option to provide feedback through freepost, adding comments to the interactive maps, using a dedicated phonenumber, email, and use of a website chatbot to answer questions, all of which ensured accessibility and flexibility in the consultation process. Figure 1 gives an overview of all the feedback received.

Figure 1 Overview of feedback received



1.2.2.2 All feedback was reviewed and considered as outlined in this report and used to support the development of the proposals for statutory consultation.

2 Introduction

2.1 Consultation overview

- 2.1.1.1 The Applicant is conducting a two-phase consultation process. The initial non-statutory consultation served to introduce the local community to the Proposed Development and to provide an early opportunity to shape the evolving design. The current phase of consultation is the statutory consultation for the Proposed Development, in line with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008, and provides both the public and statutory consultees with the opportunity to review and comment on the more developed project design and supporting information. Alongside the two rounds of formal consultation, the Applicant is engaging with relevant stakeholders and near neighbours and will continue to do so up to submission of the DCO Application and beyond.
- 2.1.1.2 This document summarises the non-statutory consultation for the Proposed Development project, aimed at engaging local residents, the wider community, and stakeholders to gather feedback and inform the project design. It details the consultation approach, including communication methods, events, engagement levels, and feedback analysis, highlighting key themes, and design change requests. The report also explains how feedback influenced the project's design development. In addition, the report summarises the key engagement activities the Applicant carried out in advance of and alongside the non-statutory consultation.

2.2 Approach to non-statutory consultation

- 2.2.1.1 The first phase of engagement and consultation focused on introducing the project to key political stakeholders including MPs, councillors, and Parish Councils as well as non-political stakeholders such as the local planning authority and statutory environmental bodies with bespoke briefings. An online project hub was launched and a press release to introduce the project to the general public was issued. The six-week non-statutory consultation ran from Monday 9 September to Friday 18 October 2024.

2.2.2 Inclusivity and accessibility

- 2.2.2.1 Inclusivity and accessibility were core objectives of the consultation. As such, a hybrid consultation approach was adopted; combining in-person events with digital engagement through the dedicated online project hub, social media, and webinars. Individuals could opt to provide their feedback either through a digital platform or in written form. A telephone number was also provided for local people to ask questions or request materials in alternative formats, such as large-font or braille. This approach ensured that individuals who were unable to or might prefer not to attend in-person events, could still access the consultation materials and actively participate in the process.

2.2.3 Legislative context

- 2.2.3.1 The Proposed Development would generate over 50MW of electricity, and is therefore classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and subject to a DCO Application under the Planning Act 2008; a specialised framework for managing large and complex infrastructure projects. The Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero will make the final decision regarding the application's outcome, based on the recommendations of the Examining Authority, appointed by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 2.2.3.2 Effective consultation is a critical element of a DCO Application, offering an opportunity for community and stakeholder input into the evolving proposals. The feedback received, in conjunction with technical studies and environmental assessments, will be used to inform and shape the DCO Application before it is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 2.2.3.3 The Planning Act 2008 includes the requirement for a statutory consultation prior to submission of an application, and outlines requirements around publicity, duration of consultation, and statutory parties to be consulted. The Applicant has taken a multi-phased approach to consultation, opting to undertake a non-statutory consultation to help inform the design development, prior to a statutory consultation phase. Figure 2 shows the process of the DCO Application and highlights the stage the Proposed Development is currently at – the pre-application stage.

Figure 2 Graphic showing the process of a DCO Application



3 Consultation and engagement activity

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1.1 This section of the report covers a summary of the non-statutory consultation, including community outreach activities, online engagement, the in person events and the geographical representation of attendance at these. Following this summary of the non-statutory consultation activities, a summary is provided of the other engagement that has taken place prior to, and alongside, the non-statutory consultation period.

3.2 Non-statutory consultation

- 3.2.1.1 Before the official launch of the non-statutory consultation and as part of the facilitation and encouragement of feedback, several preparatory activities were undertaken to raise awareness of the consultation and ensure effective stakeholder engagement. During the consultation period, several additional activities were conducted to facilitate public participation and feedback.

3.2.2 Community outreach

- **Stakeholder emails:** Over 300 emails were sent to local authorities, community groups, and other key stakeholders, identified through a mapping process, to inform them of the consultation. An additional email was sent to the same identified stakeholders on the launch day, providing consultation details and invitations to participate.
- **Flyer distribution:** Flyers were sent to a 2km buffer of the five development areas identified for solar panels and a 1km buffer of the potential cable corridors. The flyer provided an overview of the proposals, consultation details, participation options, and further information (Appendix A).
- **Near neighbour letters:** 177 properties within 100m of the proposed solar array and mitigation sites within each of the five development areas, recognising that these stakeholders are likely to have a heightened interest in the scheme, received bespoke letters offering personalised invitations to events, webinars, and one-to-one appointments with the Applicant team (Appendix B). Near Neighbours also received the standard flyer.
- **Press release:** a press release (Appendix C) was issued to the Eastern Daily Press, which announced the launch of the consultation and secured wider public awareness of the Proposed Development and the opportunities to participate.

3.2.3 Online activities

3.2.3.1 Webinars: Several online webinars were conducted to reach a broader audience and ensure accessibility. These webinars provided an opportunity for stakeholders and the public to engage with the project team virtually. Table 1 below details the webinars:

Table 1 Webinar topic, date, and attendance

Webinar Topic	Date	Attendance
Parish Council & council webinar	10 September 2024	16
Community webinar #1	19 September 2024	6
Environmental groups	24 September 2024	2
Inclusive communities	26 September 2024	1
Community webinar #2	1 October 2024	3
Community webinar #3	1 October 2024	3
Young persons	8 October 2024	1

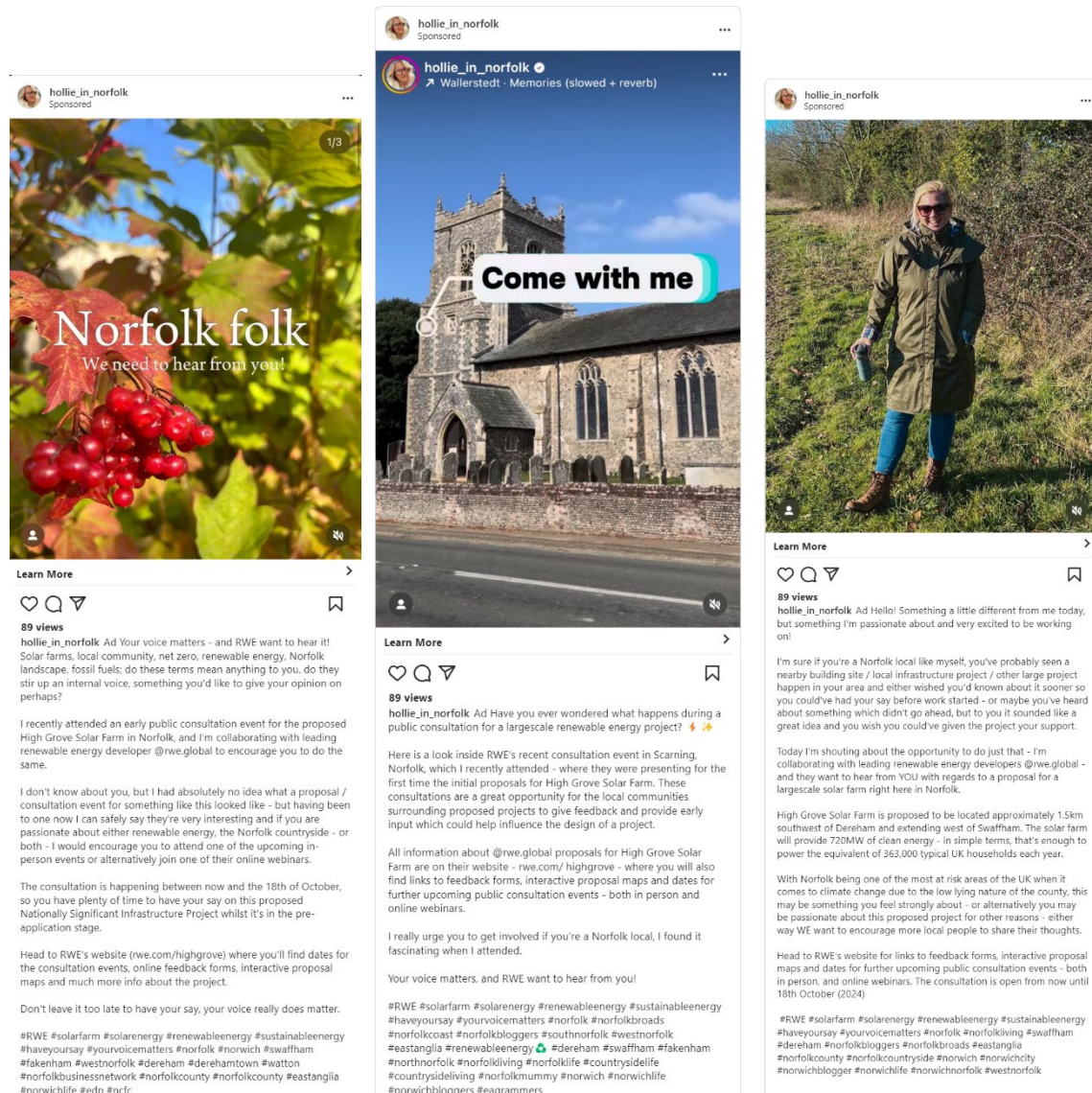
3.2.3.2 Social media influencer: A local influencer, @hollie_in_norfolk, was contracted to promote the consultation events via Instagram, aiming to increase local involvement and reach diverse voices, including hard-to-reach groups like young working parents. The influencer, Hollie, created a targeted social media campaign featuring three key posts: a video reel titled "Come with me to a public consultation", showcasing live event footage, along with a carousel and a static grid post. These posts aimed to encourage community participation and raise awareness of the consultation period. Details of the reach (as of 18 October 2024) can be found in Table 2 and screenshots of the posts can be found in Figure 3.

Table 2 Summary of engagement from social media influencer

Post	Views	Accounts reached (number of unique accounts viewed)	Accounts engaged (likes, comments, shares)	Impressions (total number of times content has been displayed)
Post 1	N/A	408	34	573
Post 2	599	224	32	N/A
Post 3	N/A	450	36	565

3.2.3.3 *Note: Post 1 and 3 do not have views figures as they were still images and view count is only available for video content. Similarly, post 2 does not have an impression figure as this is only counted on still images.*

Figure 3 Social media posts as part of consultation period



3.2.3.4 Paid social media advertisements: Three paid social media posts (across Instagram and Facebook) were published to advertise the programme of in-person consultation events, and drive traffic to the project webpage (as part of the online project hub). The target audience for these advertisements was set to a 35 mile radius from the geographical centre-point of the Proposed Development, and set to reach adults aged 18 and above, who live in or have recently been to this location. A summary of the reach, click through rates (CTR), and overall engagement through these advertisements is as follows:

3.2.3.5 Performance:

- Link Clicks: 1,999 clicks.
- CTR: High at 1.41%, indicating strong relevance of the topic to the audience.

3.2.3.6 These campaigns focused on raising awareness for specific events in the Norfolk region, Table 3 shows the impressions and reach of each event ad - reach refers to the number of unique accounts that saw the ad and impressions is the number of times the ad was seen in total.

Table 3 Social media event ads reach

Event	Dates	Impressions	Reach (average number of views per account)
Ad 1	12–19 September 2024	236,012	77,552 accounts (3)
Ad 2	24 September–1 October 2024	214,961	71,944 accounts (3)
Ad 3	2–5 October 2024	112,417	52,592 accounts (2)

3.2.3.7 The campaign achieved strong engagement metrics, demonstrating public interest and effectiveness in reaching the intended audience. Furthermore, a high CTR and reach suggest the campaign messages resonated well with the audience (outlined above).

3.2.3.8 In sum, the paid advertisement campaign successfully drove both traffic to the project website and awareness of the upcoming events, confirming the topic's resonance with the audience.

3.2.3.9 **Online project hub:** A project-specific online portal was launched, which included several components:

- **Project webpage:** Hosted on the Applicant's official website (rwe.com/highgrove), detailed the project, including components, benefits, and the purpose of large-scale solar.
- **Document hosting site:** Consultation materials were available for download and linked from the main project webpage.
- **Interactive tools:** Commonplace featured an interactive map and feedback form for users to highlight concerns or areas of interest, also linked from the main project webpage.
- **Chatbot "Ray":** A 24/7 digital assistant available during the consultation (9 September–18 October), providing instant, accurate responses to FAQs and ensuring consistent public engagement.

3.2.4 Public events

3.2.4.1 Six in-person public consultation events were organised in the local area, with venues selected ensuring accessibility and at a range of locations across the project area. Each event was staffed by eight to ten members of the project team which included representatives from the Applicant, the planning team, environmental specialists, stakeholder and engagement professionals, and the land team. The consultation venues were equipped with iPads, a TV displaying an informational video, large information banners, and consultation boards. Table 4 below provides a summary of the events and public attendance:

Table 4 Public consultation event locations and attendance

Event location	Date and time	Attendance
Regency Room, Swaffham Assembly Rooms, Swaffham PE37 7AB	Tuesday 17 September, 2.00pm - 7.00pm	111
Scarning Village Hall, Scarning, NR19 2PF	Wednesday 18 September, 10.30am - 2.30pm	55
Letton Hall, Shipdham, Thetford IP25 7SA	Friday 27 September, 2.00pm - 7.00pm	33
Ashill Community Centre, IP25 7AX	Saturday 28 September, 10.30am - 2.30pm	128
Necton Community Centre, PE37 8EH	Friday 4 October, 1.00pm - 6.00pm	99
Sporle Village Hall, PE32 2DR	Saturday 5 October, 10.30am - 2.30pm	65

3.2.5 Representation

3.2.5.1 Analysing attendee distribution across geographic areas helps assess whether feedback reflects the wider community and identifies gaps in representation, ensuring diverse views are captured. Tables 5 and 6 detail the geographic spread of attendees per event and cumulatively, offering insight into the effectiveness of outreach efforts. This information was captured through voluntary sign in at the welcome desk at events.

Table 5 Geographical spread of attendees at events broken down by event

Event	Postcode	Percentage
Event 1 (17/9)	PE37	61.54%
	IP25	19.23%
	PE32	12.82%
	PE38	1.28%
	NR20	1.28%
	NR19	1.28%
	CB23	1.28%
	LR19	1.28%
Event 2 (18/9)	NR19	81.58%
	IP25	7.89%
	PE32	7.89%
	NR20	2.63%

Event 3 (27/9)	IP25	85.00%
	NR19	10.00%
	NR18	5.00%
Event 4 (28/9)	IP25	95.06%
	PE37	3.70%
	PE32	1.23%
Event 5 (4/10)	IP25	42.19%
	PE37	39.06%
	NR19	9.38%
	PE32	6.25%
	NR4	3.13%
Event 6 (5/10)	PE32	77.50%
	PE37	10.00%
	IP25	10.00%
	NR19	2.50%

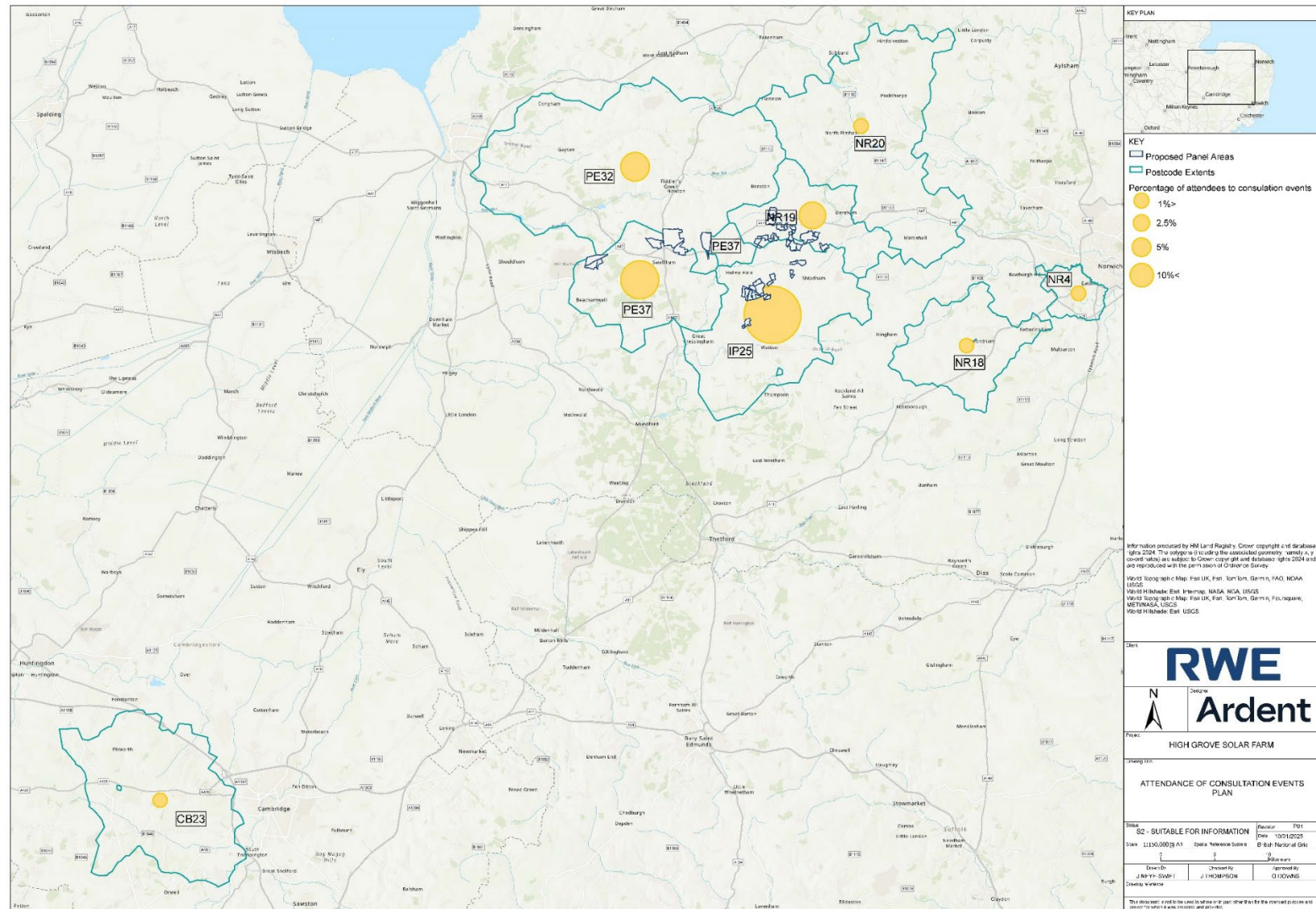
Table 6 Geographical spread of attendees at all events

Postcode	Percentage
IP25	44.55%
PE37	24.92%
PE32	15.26%
NR19	12.77%
NR20	0.62%
NR4	0.62%
NR18	0.31%
CB23	0.31%

3.2.6 Geographical representation

- 3.2.6.1 Across six events, 489 attendees were recorded. The majority came from postcodes IP25 (44.55%), followed by PE37 (24.92%), PE32 (15.26%) and NR19 (12.46%). Smaller contributions came from NR20 (0.62%) NR4 (0.62%), and other postcodes, each representing 0.31%.
- 3.2.6.2 IP25 showed high attendance at Event 4 (95.06%) and Event 3 (85.00%), while PE37 had a strong turnout at Event 1 (61.54%). Figure 4 highlights that most attendees were from communities near the proposals (IP25, PE37, NR19), ensuring input from those most affected. This high level of local attendance highlights the importance of engaging nearby communities, and demonstrates that the non-statutory consultation period successfully engaged local people.

Figure 4 Geographical representation displayed on a map



3.2.7 Additional community consultation events

3.2.7.1 In response to feedback gathered during the six consultation events, two additional village hall meetings were organised with the Parish Councils to further engage with the community. These meetings provided an opportunity for members of the project team to present detailed information about the proposals and conduct Q&A sessions.

- **Wendling village hall meeting (17 October 2024):** This event was attended by approximately 30 people and included a presentation of the project's details followed by Q&A and an open discussion.
- **Bradenham village hall meeting (29 October 2024):** This meeting drew significant interest, with attendance exceeding 100 people. It served as an important forum for community members to raise questions and express their views directly to the project team. The decision to hold this meeting following the close of the non-statutory consultation was agreed with a representative from Bradenham Parish Council due to availability of the village hall. The project team ensured feedback associated with this session was accepted via the project inbox for the week following, to ensure there would be no disadvantage to members of the community who were waiting to attend the Bradenham meeting in advance of submitting comments.

3.2.8 Near neighbours

3.2.8.1 As outlined previously in 'Community outreach', 177 near neighbours were identified as properties within 100m of the proposed solar array and mitigation sites within each of the five development areas. These residents received bespoke communications inviting them to arrange one to one meetings with members of the project team. A total of ten near neighbour meetings were held in person at these properties, one of whom had arranged a brief virtual meeting prior to attendance on site.

3.2.8.2 Key discussion points:

- Impacts on views from these properties
- Effects on mental health
- Potential impacts on property values
- Potential impacts on business viability
- Potential impacts on food production as a result of the temporary use of agricultural land
- Potential fire risk associated with batteries and community safety
- Potential noise impacts relating to proximity
- Potential routes construction traffic would use to access the site and associated impacts on communities
- Potential impacts on animal wellbeing from construction and operational noise
- Potential impacts on physical health due to proximity to the Proposed Development

3.2.8.3 These sessions enabled positive relationship building, and the outcomes involved:

- Further information dissemination regarding the DCO process and next steps following the non-statutory consultation
- Further information dissemination regarding the Applicant's approach to designing solar and battery storage developments, including clarification of key design parameters such as the height and location of specific components (e.g. panels, batteries)
- Agreements to maintain open lines of communication with regard to residential visual impact assessments (where appropriate)
- Reassurance around the potential to make arrangements regarding animals if appropriate during the construction period
- Further information dissemination around environmental impacts and potential mitigation to be considered as the assessments progress, including further design changes around landscaping in particular

3.3 Engagement prior to and during the non-statutory consultation

3.3.1.1 Although this document relates primarily to the non-statutory consultation phase of the project, alongside this the Applicant also carried out engagement with relevant technical stakeholders and near neighbours to introduce and inform the early development of the proposals.

3.3.2 Stakeholder communication

- **Meetings with Planning Inspectorate:** An introductory meeting held on 30 May 2024, with further engagement since the non-statutory consultation. Advice provided under Section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 was made publicly available by the Planning Inspectorate. This can be found on the project page on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110010>
- **Statutory consultee engagement:** the Applicant has held technical and environmental design discussions with stakeholders including Norfolk County Council and Breckland Council as the host authorities, elected representatives, and statutory environmental bodies such as: the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Historic England and Anglian Water. Engagement with statutory consultees and relevant technical stakeholders is ongoing through the pre-application stage and beyond.

3.3.3 Solar power sentiment poll

3.3.4 In addition to the feedback gathered through the non-statutory consultation, the Applicant commissioned a public opinion poll to provide supplementary insights into attitudes towards solar energy across the East of England. The poll surveyed over 1,000 individuals, ensuring a representative cross-section of views from a broader regional audience.

3.3.5 The purpose of the poll was to complement the local consultation by offering additional context and a wider perspective on public sentiment. Findings from the poll can be found in chapter 7 of this report.

4 Consultation feedback summary

4.1.1.1 This section provides the analysis of all the feedback received during the consultation period, and emails received in the week following the Bradenham village hall meeting held on 29 October. Individuals had the opportunity to provide their feedback in a number of ways. A breakdown of the ways in which responses to the consultation were received is provided below:

- There were **431 feedback forms** received via the project website or completed at the consultation events. The online form was an exact copy of the hard-copy form available at the events.
- The **interactive map** received **98** comments (including **ten** from the accessible version).
- Over **200 emails** received and **66 calls** to the project phone line.
- AI chatbot engaged with **160 unique users**, responding to **230 questions**.

4.1.1.2 This section also includes results from the Applicant's initial solar sentiment poll. While not specific to the Proposed Development and carried out separately to the non-statutory consultation, the findings were analysed to inform project development and shape the consultation approach and materials for the statutory consultation period.

4.2 Codeframe

4.2.1.1 A codeframe is a method of thematic analysis used to convert qualitative data into quantitative numerical data by assigning similar responses to a 'code', which represents an overarching theme or topic. This codeframe was developed to help group common themes from all of the feedback collected during the consultation period. The codeframe and a brief description of each code is found in Table 7 (in no particular order).

Table 7 Codeframe used for feedback

Code	Description
Enthusiastic support for solar farms in general	General optimism towards solar farms and renewable energy developments
Location choice	Concerns raised around site selection
Size and scale	Concerns raised around the size and scale of the Proposed Development
Food security and agricultural land	Concerns about reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food and the loss or development on land that is currently used for agricultural activities
Preference for solar on brownfield	Stated preference for solar to be built on urban sites or sites which have been previously developed
Concerns about solar technology	Concerns around solar technology in general
Criticism of UK government	Criticism of UK government, politics, policy, or law

Code	Description
Preference for other energy sources	A stated preference for other energy sources such as wind, nuclear, coal etc
Energy imports	Comments that show a preference for energy creation in the UK, or general concerns around energy imports
Biodiversity concerns	Concerns around impact on plant or animal life
Landscape/visual impact	Comments around the visible or character impacts of the Proposed Development
Pollution	Comments that raise concern or mention potential pollution from the construction, operation, or decommissioning of the Proposed Development
Noise when operational	Responses that refer to noise produced from the operation of the Proposed Development
Impact on farm animals	Comments referring to the impact on farm animals during the construction, operation, or decommissioning of the Proposed Development
Glint and glare	Comments referring to light reflection from the solar panels causing glint and glare
Local community benefits	Comments that refer to the proposals bringing local community benefits
Property values	Concerns that the proposals may have an adverse effect on property values
Disbenefits to local economy and tourism	Comments that refer to the proposals having a disbenefit on the local economy or tourism
Call for financial incentives	Respondents that request financial incentives as part of the proposals
Negative impact on local businesses	Comments that refer to the proposals having a negative impact on local businesses or employment
Proximity to settlements	Responses that disagree with the distance between residential properties and the Proposed Development
Traffic concerns	Concerns around an increase of traffic during the construction, operation, or decommissioning of the Proposed Development, including concerns around vehicular access to residences or amenities
Construction disruption	Concerns raised around general disruption caused due to the construction
Energy supply and grid infrastructure	Comments that reference energy supply or grid infrastructure
Impact on aviation	Comments that reference an impact on the flying or operating of aircraft
Access concerns	Concerns around access, specifically in relation to accessing public rights of way (PRoWs) etc
Corporate cynicism	Comments that show a lack of trust or confidence in large companies, groups, or investors
Critique of consultation imagery	Negative comments towards imagery used in the consultation
Design change requests	Specific requests for changes to the design of the Proposed Development
Donate to local charity	Comments that ask for donations to be made to local charities as part of the proposals
Disinterest in Community Benefit Fund	Cynicism or general disinterest in receiving the Community Benefit Fund

Code	Description
Support for local energy schemes	Comments calling for the Applicant to provide support for local energy schemes
Support for community assets	Comments calling for the Applicant to provide support for community assets
Direct fund to the arts	Comments calling for the Applicant to provide direct funding to the arts
Preference for underground cables	Comments that show a preference for cables to be placed underground
Concerns about private land use	Concerns around impacts on private land use, for residents, landowners, or businesses
Environmental disruption	General concerns about environmental disruption
Impact on human health	Concerns for negative impacts on human health, including mental health
Safety concerns	Concerns that the infrastructure may result in safety incidents such as fire
Water and flood risk	Concerns that the infrastructure may result in increased risk of water contamination or flooding
Landscape and heritage preservation	Concerns around impacts on the preservation of landscape or heritage assets
Environmental enhancements	Comments calling for the Applicant to include enhancements to the environment as part the Proposed Development

4.3 Feedback form analysis

4.3.1.1 A feedback form, available at consultation events, online, and via freepost, included multiple-choice and open-ended questions. A total of 431 forms were received, with a copy of a blank feedback form provided in Appendix E.

4.3.2 Question 1: How would you describe your interest in High Grove Solar Farm?

4.3.2.1 Respondents were asked to indicate their interest in the Proposed Development by selecting from multiple predefined categories. This question allowed for multiple selections, and the responses have been grouped for analysis.

4.3.2.2 Of the 431 feedback forms received:

- 90% (388) identified as local residents.
- 4% (19) were regular visitors to the area.
- 3% (15) were local representatives.
- 3% (14) were local business owners.
- 3% (14) were landowners.
- 1% (six) represented statutory organisations.
- 1% (three) were Parish Councils.
- 0.5% (two) represented charities.
- 0.5% (two) selected "Other".
- 11 respondents did not answer this question.

4.3.2.3 This breakdown highlights that the majority of feedback came from local residents, reflecting strong community involvement in the consultation process.

4.3.3 Question 2: How do you feel about the use of solar farms as part of the mix of renewable electricity generation required to meet the UK Government's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050?

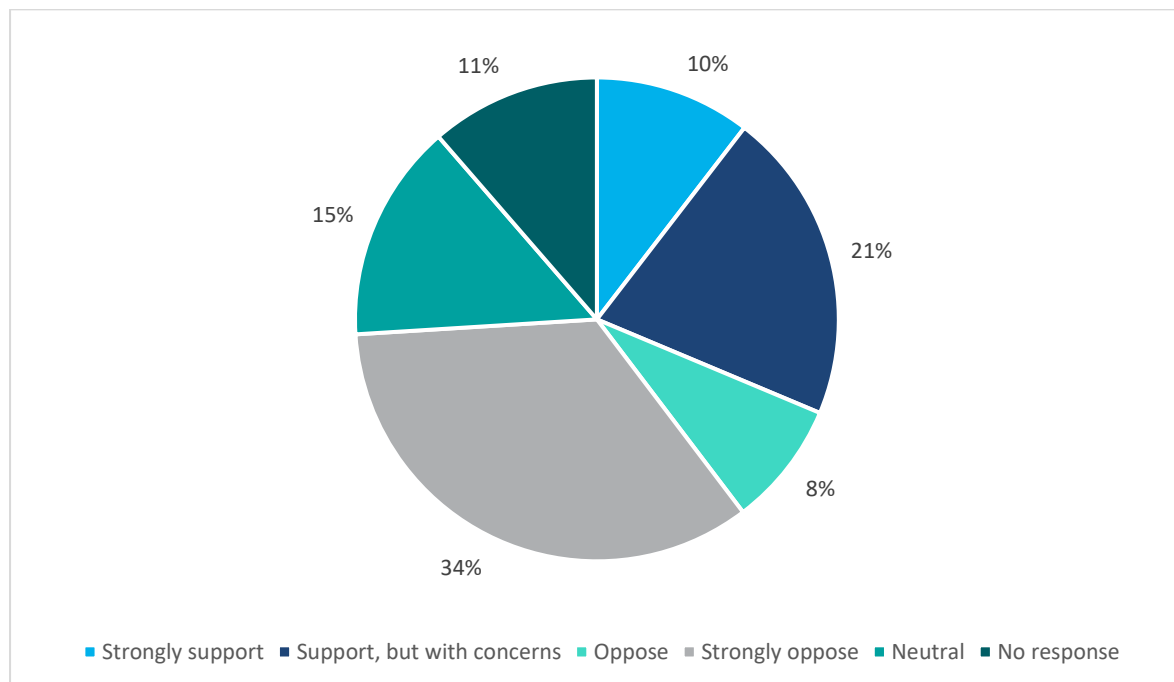
4.3.3.1 Question 2a: General sentiment toward solar farms

Respondents were asked how they felt about the use of solar farms as part of the UK Government's renewable energy mix to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Responses were categorised as follows:

- 31% (134 respondents) were supportive.
- 15% (64 respondents) were neutral.
- 43% (184 respondents) are opposed.
- 11% (49 respondents) did not provide an answer.

4.3.3.2 A detailed breakdown of these responses is illustrated in Figure 5. The results indicate a balance between opposition and support/neutrality towards solar farms as part of the renewable energy strategy.

Figure 5 Question 2a, How do you feel about the use of solar farms as part of the mix of renewable electricity generation required to meet the UK Government's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050?

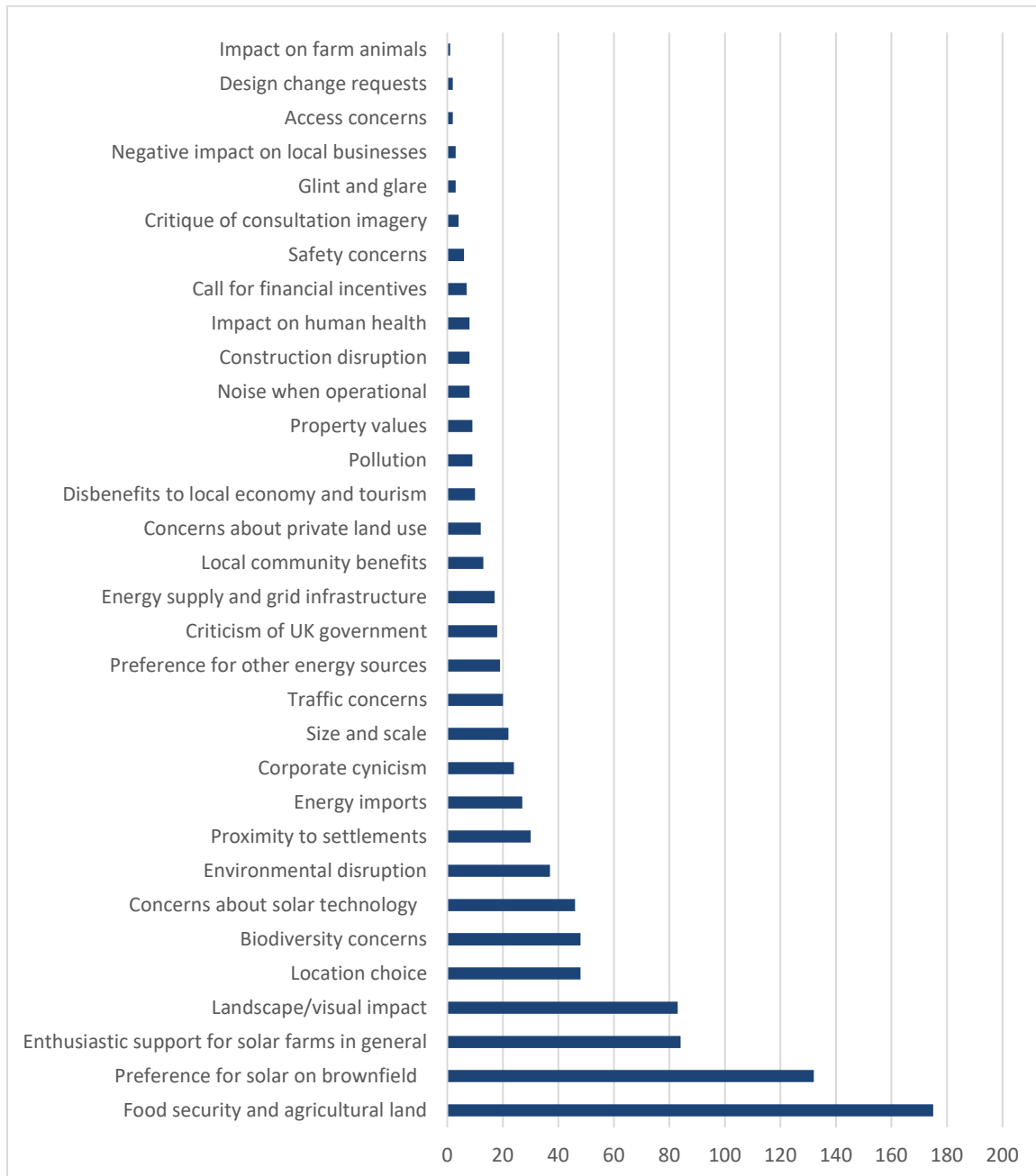


4.3.3.3 Question 2b: Expanded comments on solar farms and net zero goals

Respondents were also invited to provide open-ended comments to elaborate on their responses to Question 2a. These comments have been analysed and grouped into recurring themes:

- **Food security and agricultural land (41%):** Many respondents opposed using arable land for solar energy projects:
“I strongly oppose the placement of solar farms on agricultural land. Preserving fertile land for food production is vital to feed our growing population.”
 - **Preference for solar on brownfield (31%):** Several participants suggested prioritising brownfield sites over agricultural land for solar installations:
“Solar belongs on buildings and brownfield”
 - **Enthusiastic support for solar farms in general (19%):** Some respondents highlighted the benefits of solar farms as in combating climate change:
“Solar farms are a step towards energy independence through clean energy.”
“Solar energy is a requirement to combat climate change.”
 - **Landscape/visual impact (19%):** Respondents also raised concerns about the visual impact of solar farms on the countryside:
“They will ruin the beautiful countryside and benefit only the companies installing them.”
 - **Other themes (11% each)**
Additional concerns included:
 - **Location choice**
“Solar energy is fine BUT only in the right locations”
 - **Concerns about solar technology**
“Grossly inefficient. Cannot guarantee power output and has to be backed by another form of generation”
- 4.3.3.4 Other themes included environmental disruption, proximity to settlements, and corporate cynicism. Figure 6 provides a detailed breakdown of the frequency of references to these themes. Note that respondents often referenced multiple themes in their comments.

Figure 6 Numbers of references to each key theme when asked for more information as to their opinion in Question 2a



4.3.3.5 Feedback to Question 2 highlighted significant concerns about food security and agricultural land and landscape/visual impact, with several suggesting alternative sites such as a preference for solar on brownfield. While some respondents expressed enthusiastic support for solar farms in general, others raised biodiversity, location choice, and technological concerns.

4.3.4 Question 3: Based on the information we have presented as part of our early stage consultation, how do you feel about our emerging proposals?

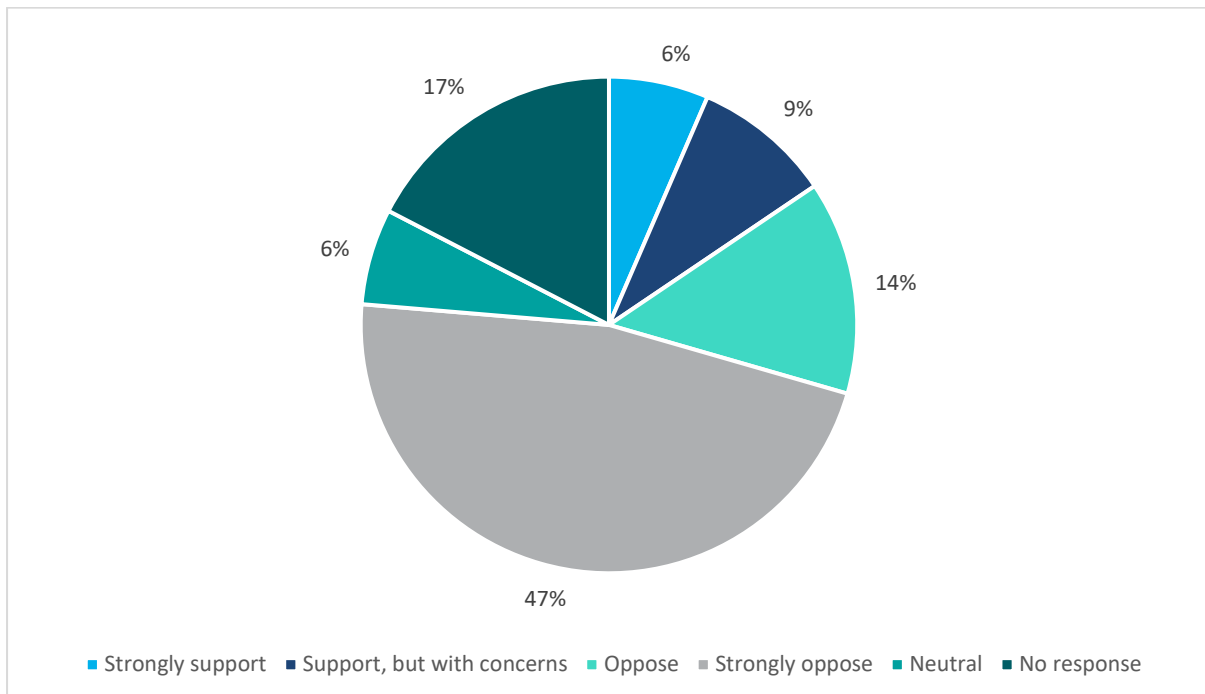
4.3.4.1 Question 3a: Overall sentiment

Participants were asked to share their views on the the Proposed Development based on information provided during the early-stage consultation. The responses were as follows:

- 15% (65 respondents) were supportive.
- 6% (26 respondents) were neutral.
- 61% (265 respondents) opposed the proposals.
- 17% (75 respondents) did not provide an answer.

4.3.4.2 An overview is provided in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Sentiment towards emerging proposals as a percentage



4.3.4.3 Question 3b: Expanded comments on emerging proposals

To better understand their sentiment, respondents were invited to provide open-ended feedback on the proposals. The comments have been analysed and grouped into recurring themes. The frequency of references to these themes is shown in Figure 8. Many respondents referenced multiple themes in their comments, reflecting the multifaceted nature of their concerns.

- **Food security and agricultural land (21%):** Many respondents emphasised the importance of preserving farmland for food production:
“Farmland should be used for producing food. As well as net zero, another of the government's aims is food security, and covering farmland in solar panels does not support this.”
- **Landscape/visual impact (17%):** Concerns about the project's visual impact on the countryside were frequently mentioned:

“They will ruin the beautiful countryside, the only people to benefit will be the companies installing them and a box ticked for Government.”

- **Biodiversity concerns (12%):** Respondents highlighted potential risks to local wildlife and ecosystems:

“There is an existing protected residential environment for the Great Crested Newt which would be adjacent to the site S.E. of Ashill ”

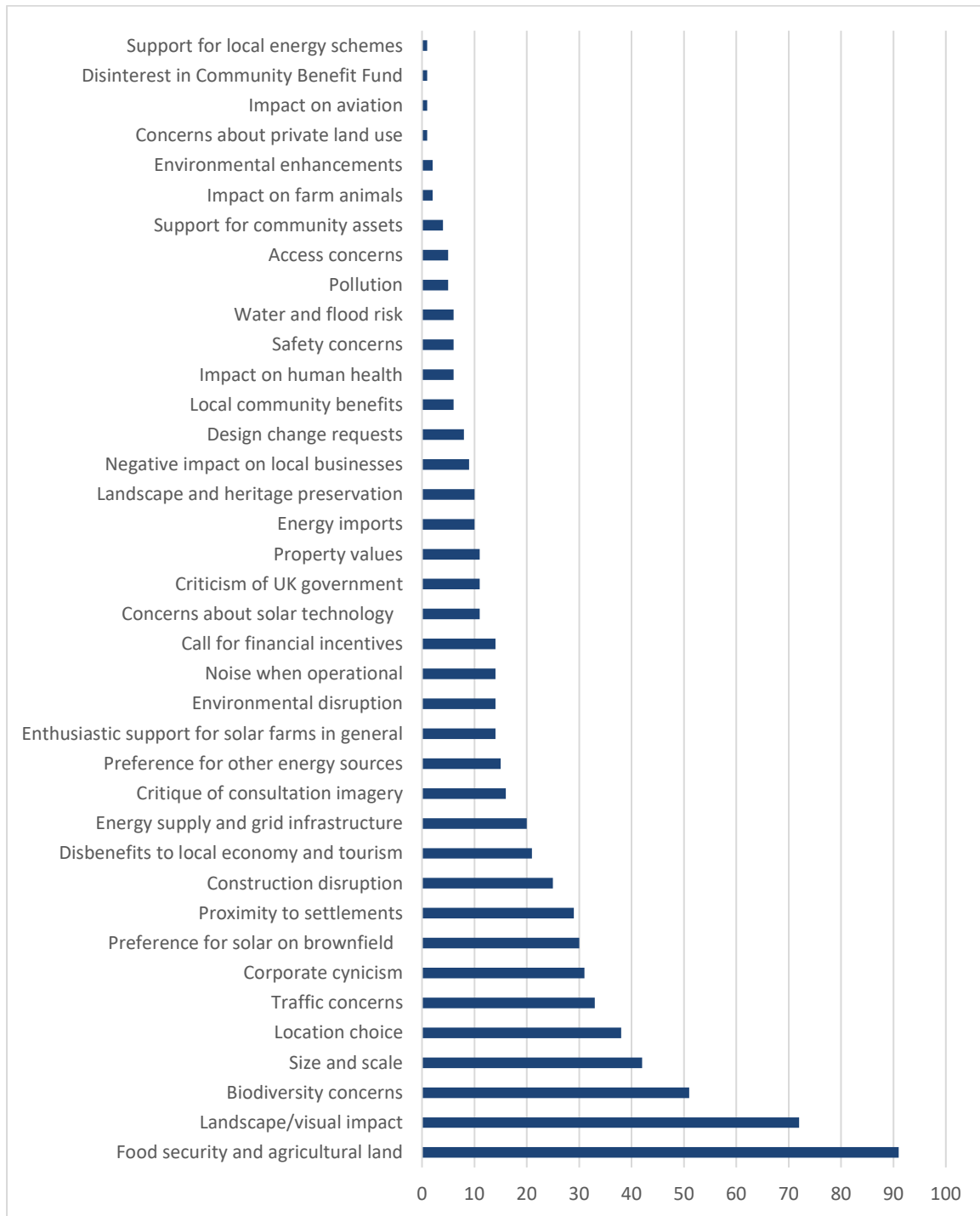
- **Size and scale (10%):** The perceived scale of the solar farm was a recurring issue:

“The scale of this solar farm proposal is unprecedented in the U.K.”

- **Location choice (9%):** Respondents suggested alternative locations, such as brownfield sites or urban areas:

“While I appreciate they have to go somewhere, they would be better placed over things such as car parks.”

Figure 8 Numbers of references to each key theme when asked for more information as to their opinion in Question 3a



4.3.5 Question 4: Which environmental elements of the project are most important to you?

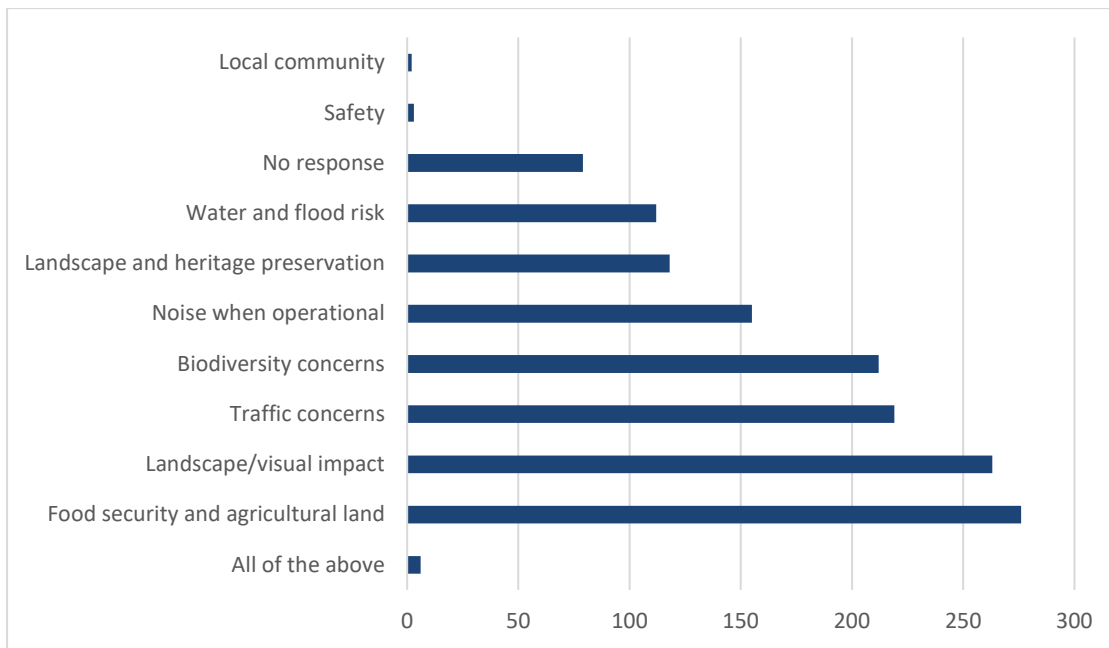
4.3.5.1 Question 4a: Environmental priorities

Respondents were asked to identify the environmental aspects of the project that were most important to them. This was a multiple-choice question with the option to select more than one answer or provide additional comments. The most frequently selected responses were:

- “Food security and agricultural land”: 276 mentions.
- “Landscape/visual impact”: 263 mentions.
- “Traffic concerns”: 219 mentions.
- “Noise when operational”: 155 mentions.
- “Landscape and heritage preservation”: 118 mentions
- “Water and flood risk”: 112 mentions

4.3.5.2 Figure 9 provides a complete breakdown of responses. These results highlight the most pressing concerns for respondents.

Figure 9 Environmental aspects most important to respondents as part of Question 4a



4.3.5.3 Question 4b: Comments on environmental priorities

Respondents were invited to explain their selections in Question 4a. These open-ended comments have been categorised into recurring themes for analysis:

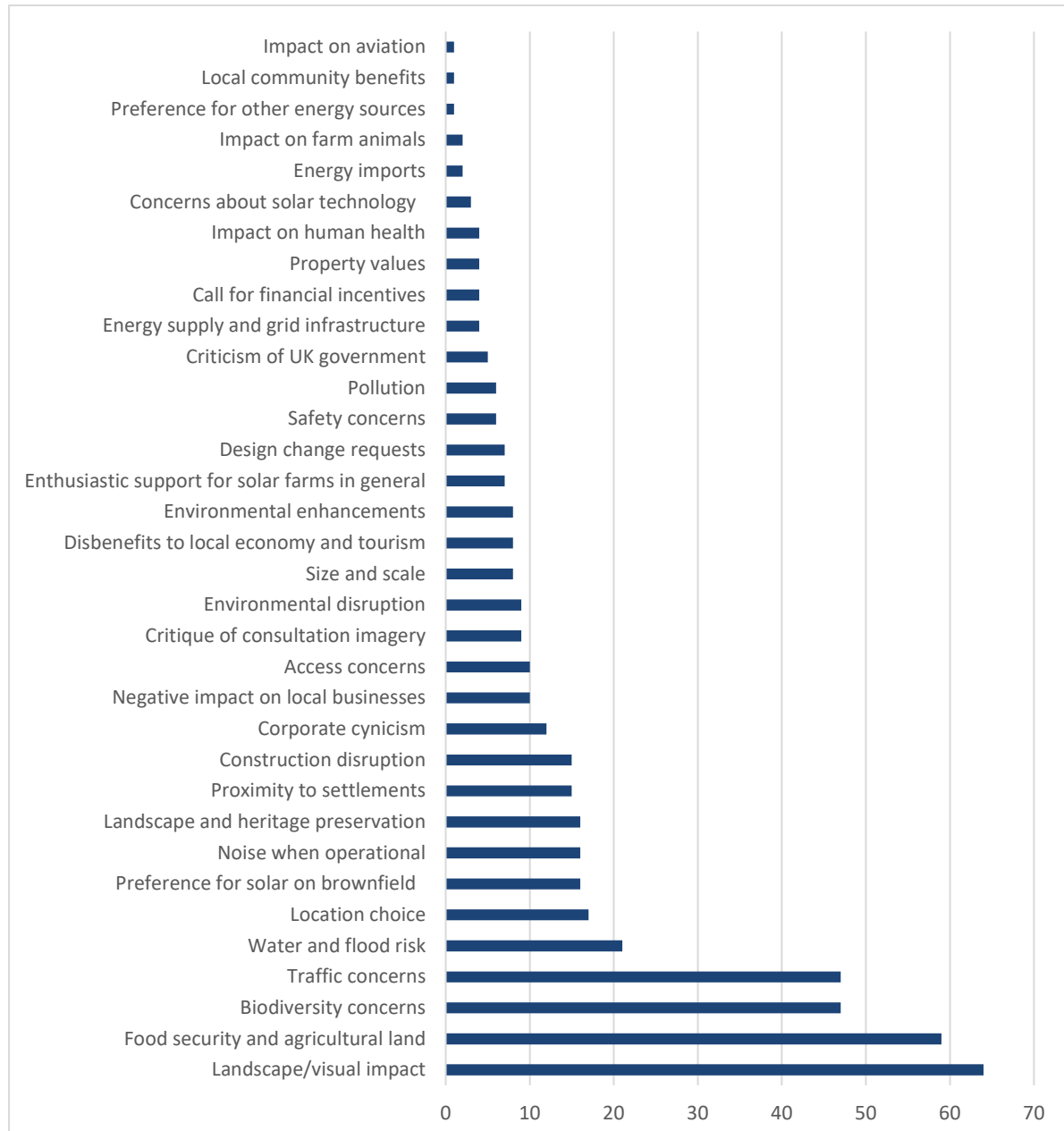
- **Landscape/visual impact (15%):** Many respondents expressed concerns about the visual effect of the project on the local landscape:
“It’s a blot on our beautiful countryside.”
“There is no denying that it will cause a huge decline in the beauty of the local landscape and inconvenience to local people.”
- **Food security and agricultural land (14%):** Several respondents emphasised the importance of preserving farmland for food production:
“The land for food production is most important to me.”
- **Biodiversity concerns (11%):** Respondents raised concerns about potential impacts on local wildlife and ecosystems:

“We are very concerned that the only animals will be sheep in the solar area. What is to happen to transitory animals such as deer who will have their routes blocked?”

“The 50% increase in biodiversity appears to be a very vague term.”

4.3.5.4 Additional recurring themes are summarised in Figure 10. These responses demonstrate respondents’ preference to minimise environmental disruption while protecting local landscapes and agricultural land.

Figure 10 Number of references to each theme for Question 4b



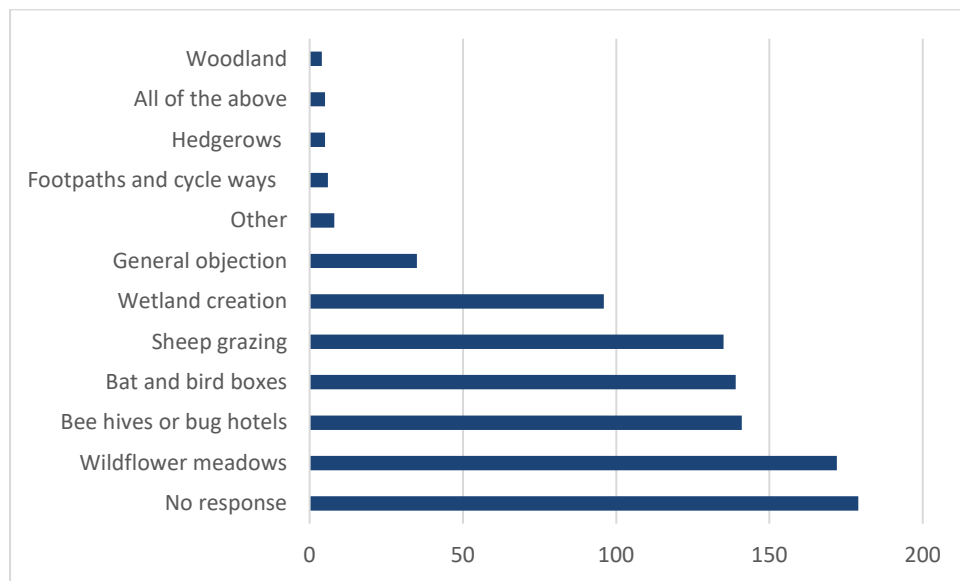
4.3.5.5 Question 4c: Suggestions for environmental measures

Question 4c asked “We have had some early thoughts on potential environmental measures to include in the project. Are there any measures you would particularly like to see included?”. This question offered a multiple choice with the option to select multiple answers. The most popular measures were:

- Wildflower meadows: 172 mentions.
- Bee hives/bug hotels: 141 mentions.
- Bat/bird boxes: 139 mentions.
- Wetland creation: 96 mentions.

4.3.5.6 A total of 179 respondents did not answer this question. Figure 11 provides a complete breakdown of the suggestions. These responses reflect a preference for measures that enhance biodiversity and support local ecosystems.

Figure 11 Suggestions of environmental measures to be included as part of the project as Question 4c



4.3.5.7 Question 4d: Additional environmental information

Question 4d asked “Do you have any other information about the area and local environment which you think we should take into account?”. Respondents were invited to provide any additional environmental information they felt the project team should consider. Comments have been grouped into key themes:

- **Biodiversity concerns (55 mentions)**

“I think the impact to wildlife and the environment over such a huge area really should be of paramount importance when considering if this project goes ahead.”

- **Landscape/visual impact (39 mentions)**

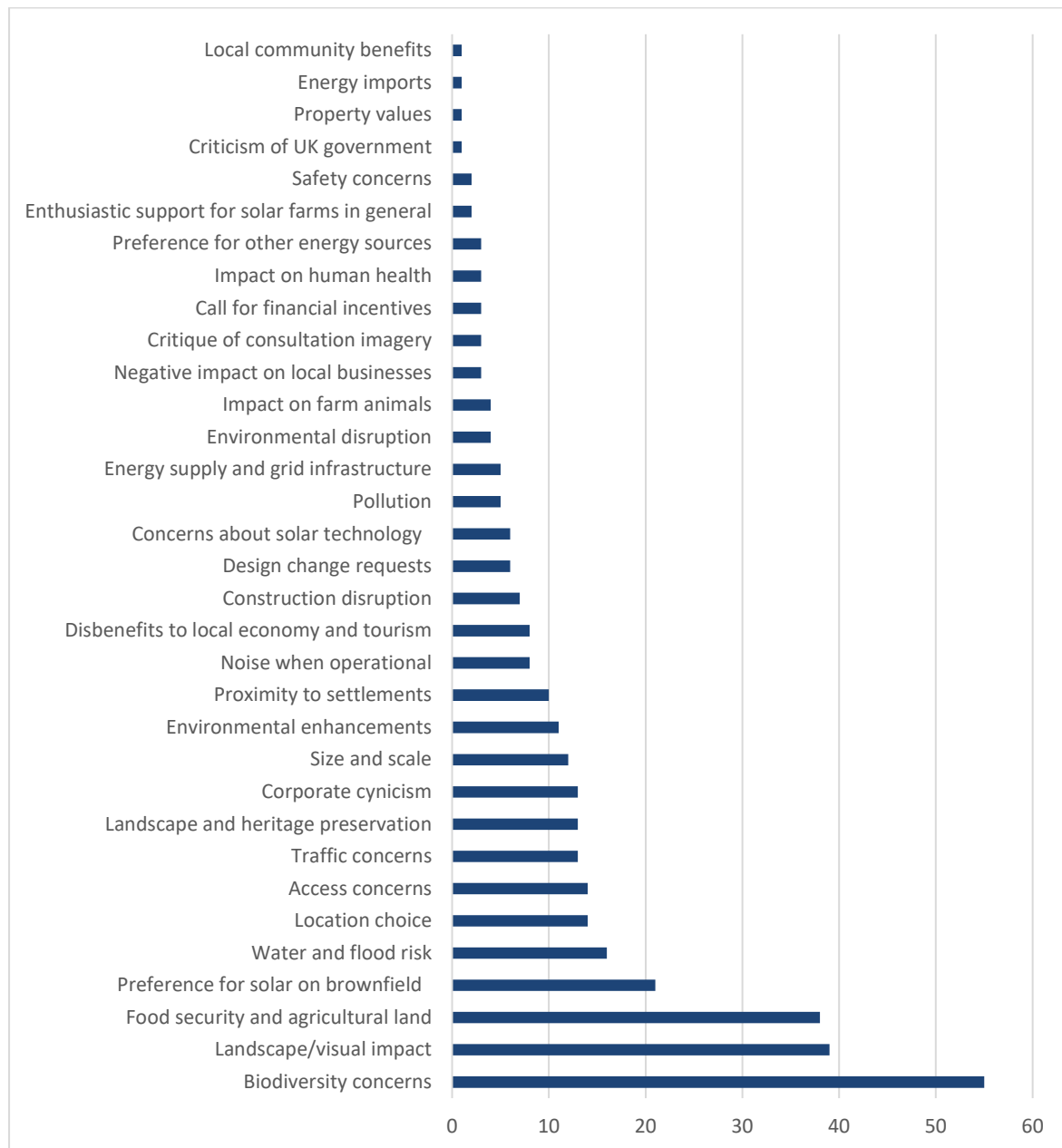
“From a visual environmental point of view, physical bunds of earth should be created to reduce the visual impact of the solar panels.”

- **Food security and agricultural land (38 mentions)**

“A lot of wildlife will be displaced, and a few bird or bat boxes will not make up for it.”

4.3.5.8 Figure 12 summarises the frequency of these themes. Feedback in this section reiterated a strong preference for minimising the environmental footprint of the project and mitigating its visual and ecological impacts.

Figure 12 Number of responses for Question 4d that reference a theme



4.3.5.9 Responses to Question 4 revealed that land use, biodiversity, and visual impact are critical environmental concerns for respondents. Many called for thoughtful measures to reduce disruption, protect wildlife, and enhance biodiversity, while advocating for preferred site selection, such as prioritising brownfield land over agricultural areas. These insights provide valuable direction for refining the project's environmental strategy.

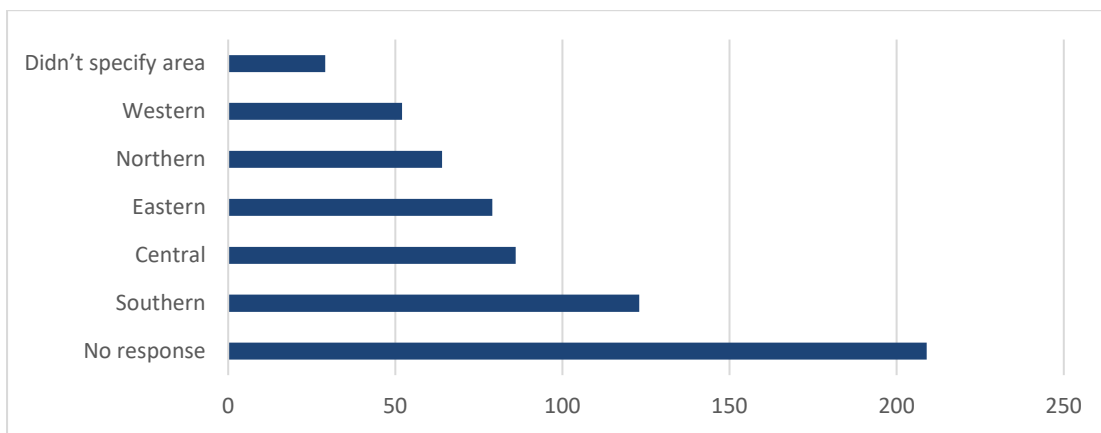
4.3.6 Question 5: High Grove is proposed to be distributed over several land areas. Do you have any comments on any of the specific areas?

4.3.6.1 Respondents were invited to provide comments on the proposed distribution of the the Proposed Development across several land areas: Western, Northern, Central, Eastern, and Southern. They could comment on multiple areas, or opt not to specify a particular area. The distribution of comments was as follows:

- No specific area mentioned: 29 comments.
- Western: 52 comments.
- Northern: 64 comments.
- Eastern: 79 comments.
- Central: 86 comments.
- Southern: 123 comments.
- No response: 209 respondents.

4.3.6.2 Figure 13 provides a visual breakdown of the number of comments received for each area.

Figure 13 Number of comments for each area of project, as part of Question 5a



4.3.7 Analysis of feedback by area

4.3.7.1 Across all areas, respondents consistently raised concerns about the following themes:

- **Food security and agricultural land (68 mentions)**
 - "Arable land should not be taken out of production, food security!!"*
 - "...this land should be used for producing food for our ever-growing population..."*
- **Landscape/visual impact (46 mentions)**
 - "The Central and Northern areas will be highly visible from the A47, meaning the visual impact of these solar farms will be seen every day by residents and commuters alike, further degrading the landscape."*
 - "They all need to be smaller and consideration given to not spoiling countryside vistas for the local population and businesses."*
- **Size and scale (48 mentions)**
 - "None of these areas should be developed as an industrial solar farm. The sheer size of the development is hugely concerning."*
 - "It's all far too large for one county and should be scaled right down and shared around the country."*
- **Biodiversity concerns (21 mentions)**

“Your development will impact the already threatened wildlife in this diverse area.”

4.3.7.2 Notwithstanding the themes identified above, the following development areas featured additional themes, which are outlined below. The Western and Northern development areas did not feature any themes additional to those common across all areas.

4.3.7.3 Central area

Key concerns for the Central area aligned with the overarching themes, with 16 mentions of size and scale, 15 mentions of landscape/visual impact, 13 mentions of food security and agricultural land, and 12 mentions of biodiversity concerns. Additional themes raised included:

- **Proximity to settlements (12 mentions):**

“Far too vast an area next to small villages.”

4.3.7.4 Eastern area

Key concerns for the Eastern area aligned with the overarching themes, with 15 mentions of food security and agricultural land, 13 mentions of size and scale, and 13 mentions of landscape/visual impact. Additional themes raised included:

- **Location choice (14 mentions):**

“The diverse spread of locations seems highly impractical.”

- **Proximity to settlements (13 mentions):**

“I’m concerned because part of this development is 21 meters from my front door, not my boundary.”

4.3.7.5 Southern area

The Southern area received the highest number of comments, with concerns aligning with the overarching themes, including 19 mentions of food security and agricultural land and 17 mentions of location choice. Additional themes raised included:

- **Traffic concerns (22 mentions):**

“Bradenham does not seem to be at all suitable for the traffic that would be on the lanes and roads.”

- **Construction disruption (21 mentions):**

“Concerns about construction traffic and noise as it looks like most of the access to the sites in the Southern area will come through Ashill.”

4.3.7.6 Comments without specific areas

Key concerns in comments not specific to an area aligned with overarching themes, including location choice (seven mentions) and size and scale (six mentions). Additional themes raised in response to this question, without denoting a specific development area, included:

- **Negative impact on local businesses (six mentions):**

“Greenbanks hotel, a valuable employer in the area, overlooks one of the proposed sites. This would destroy the business they have built up over many years regardless of any landscaping you may introduce.”

4.3.7.7 Feedback across all areas emphasised significant concerns about the loss of agricultural land, visual and landscape impacts, biodiversity, and the scale of the project. The Southern area, in particular, elicited the most comments, with traffic and construction disruption as additional points of concern. Suggestions for improvements included scaling down the project, engaging local businesses, and considering alternative locations, such as brownfield land.

4.3.8 Question 6: Do you have any comments on the Indicative Cable Route Corridors, including any areas you think we should avoid as we select our preferred alignments?

4.3.8.1 Respondents were invited to comment on the indicative cable route corridors, including any specific areas they believed should be avoided. Of the 431 feedback forms received, **152 respondents** provided comments, highlighting a range of concerns and suggestions.

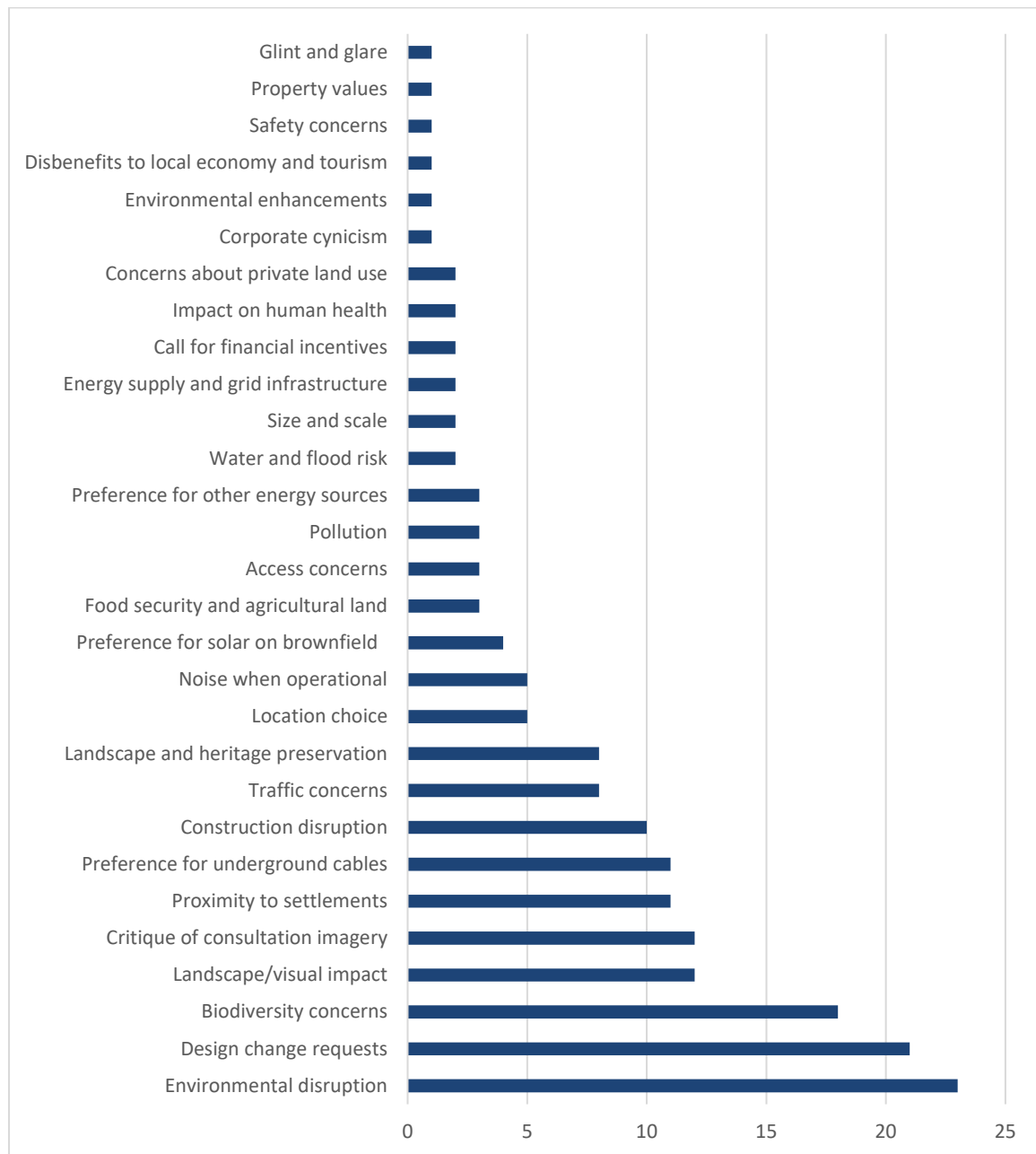
4.3.8.2 Key themes identified

The responses have been analysed and categorised into recurring themes. The most frequently mentioned issues included:

- **Environmental disruption (23 mentions):** Suggestions around reducing potential ecological impact of the cable route corridors.
“Try (if possible) to avoid ancient woodlands and SSSIs.”
- **Biodiversity concerns (18 mentions):** Risk that the underground cables may pose to wildlife and ecosystems, particularly in areas of ecological significance.
“I am sure the wildlife of the area - hedgehogs, deer, pheasants, toads, frogs and newts will be happy for you to dig up their homes.”
- **Landscape/visual impact (12 mentions):** Comments suggesting cables should be underground to avoid visual impacts.
“Cable corridors OK as long as they are underground.”
- **Proximity to settlements (11 mentions):** Concerns about the routes being too close to residential areas.
“We would not be happy for the cable route to circle our business and home!”
- **Construction disruption (ten mentions):** Concerns around whether the cable laying may cause inconvenience, noise, road blockages, or other.
“Will locals be inconvenienced with their construction and will you be using the same unsuitable access on Common Road?”
- **Critique of consultation imagery (11 mentions):** Respondents questioned the legibility of maps and the use of certain imagery during the consultation.
“I found it hard to comment properly as the maps provided to date are difficult to read and to relate to existing landscape features, as there's too much use of shades of olive green and roads/rights of way/residential areas are hard to make out. Mapping based more closely on OS maps would make interpretation easier.”

4.3.8.3 Figure 14 provides a visual representation of the frequency of these themes.

Figure 14 Number of responses for Question 6 that reference a theme



4.3.8.4 Several specific areas were identified by respondents as being particularly sensitive or unsuitable for the proposed cable route corridors. These included ancient woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and archaeological sites, as well as local areas, such as Ashill, Holme Hale, Bradenham, Necton, Pooleys Lane, the River Wissey, the Roman villa in Ashill, Rowsy Rows, Sporle, and the Meadows. Respondents recommended avoiding these areas to minimise environmental disruption and protect local biodiversity and cultural heritage.

- 4.3.8.5 The comments on the indicative cable route corridors revealed significant concerns about environmental and ecological impacts, proximity to settlements, and construction-related disruptions. Respondents emphasised the importance of preserving sensitive areas, such as ancient woodlands, SSSIs, and archaeological sites, while also addressing practical issues like traffic and noise during construction. Feedback also highlighted the need for clear and more detailed mapping to support community understanding and response. These insights will be carefully considered for the statutory consultation.

4.3.9 **Question 7a: Do you have any ideas you would like to share about how High Grove Solar could support the local community, such as educational initiatives, wellbeing facilities, and community assets?**

- 4.3.9.1 Respondents were invited to share their ideas on how the Proposed Development could support the local community, such as through educational initiatives, wellbeing facilities, and community assets. This question aimed to gather suggestions for the allocation of the Community Benefit Fund.

4.3.9.2 **Responses overview**

Out of the 431 feedback forms received:

- **19 respondents** called for financial incentives to directly benefit affected community members.
- **13 respondents** expressed concerns about whether proposed initiatives would be delivered.
- **76 respondents** provided general objections to the project.
- **247 respondents** did not provide a response.

4.3.9.3 **Key suggestions**

Respondents offered a variety of ideas to enhance community support and maximise the local benefits of the project. Recurring suggestions included:

- **Employment and education:**
 - Apprenticeships and employment opportunities related to renewable energy.
 - Adult education initiatives focused on energy and sustainability.
- **Financial compensation to communities and residents:**
 - Community-wide energy bill reductions.
 - Compensation for property owners facing decreased property value.
- **Community enhancements:**
 - Improvements to local walkways, cycle paths, and parks.
 - Investments in sports and leisure facilities.
 - Solar panel installations on community assets, such as village halls.
 - Donations to local charities, food banks, and faith groups.
- **Health and wellbeing:**
 - Improvements to health services, including GP surgeries and dentists.
- **Youth and environmental initiatives:**

- Funding for schools, guides, scouts, and youth programmes.
- Support for environmental projects such as community gardens, orchards, and woodlands.

4.3.9.4 **Question 7b: Partnerships for the Community Benefit Fund**

Respondents were also asked to identify any existing community funds or organizations that might be interested in partnering with the Proposed Development. Of the 431 responses:

- 120 respondents provided suggestions.
- 63 respondents did not identify any specific organizations.
- 26 respondents expressed general objections to the project.
- Three respondents simply answered “yes” without providing further details.

4.3.9.5 Suggestions provided included Local Authorities/Parish Councils, Community Centres/Groups, Charities and Welfare groups, Religious Organisations, Educational Groups, Sports and Recreation Organisations, and other community projects. Table 8 provides a more detailed list of suggestions.

Table 8 Suggestions for the Community Benefit Fund

Local Authorities/Parish Councils

Breckland Council
Fransham Parish Council
Parish Councils
Sporle Parish Council
Swaffham Town Council
Town Councils
Wendling Parish Council

Community centres/groups

Ashill Community Centre
Bradenham Community Group
Bradenham Village Hall
Fransham Village Hall Committee
Holme Hale Village Hall
Little Dunham Village Hall
Scarning Playing Field Trust
Scarning Village Hall Trust
Sporle Community Centre

Charities and welfare groups

Ashill Welfare Charity Trust
Friends of Swaffham Orchard
Local Charities
Swaffham Community Orchard
West Norfolk Befrienders

Religious organisations

Ashill Church

St Nicholas Church Ashill
St Peter & St Paul Churches

Educational groups

Local Schools
Guides and Scouts
Norfolk Young Farmers

Sports and recreational organisations

Sporle Athletic FC
Local Cricket Clubs

Other community projects

Ashlink
Swaffham Museum
NHS Dentists

4.3.9.6 The responses indicate that while there is some scepticism about the delivery of community benefits, many respondents provided thoughtful suggestions for initiatives that could support the local area. These ideas range from direct financial compensation to broader community enhancements, highlighting a strong preference for projects that create tangible, lasting benefits. Partnerships with local organisations, including Parish Councils, community centres, and charities, were also widely recommended as a way to ensure funds are effectively utilised. These insights provide valuable guidance for the development of the Community Benefit Fund.

4.3.10 Question 8: How did you find out about this consultation?

4.3.10.1 Respondents were asked how they became aware of the the consultation, with the option to select multiple answers. This question aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of communication channels used to reach the community.

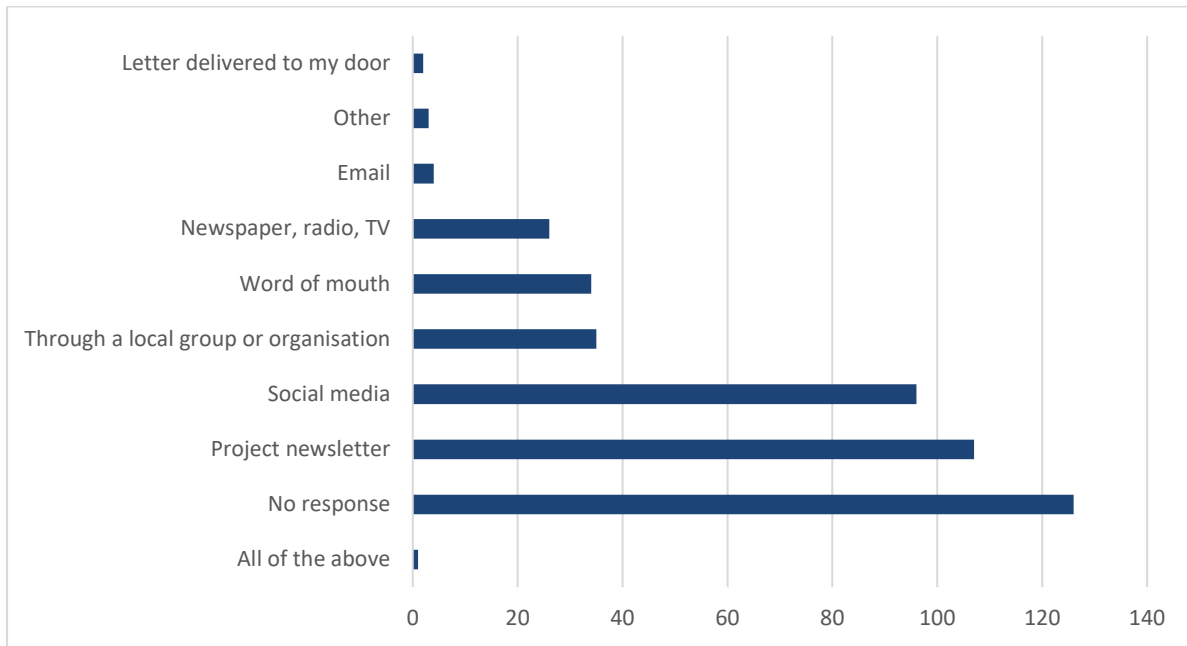
4.3.10.2 Response overview

Out of the 431 feedback forms received, respondents identified the following as their primary sources of information:

- Project newsletter: 107 mentions.
- Social media: 96 mentions.
- Local groups or organisations: 35 mentions.
- Word of mouth: 34 mentions.
- Newspapers, radio, or TV: 26 mentions.
- No response: 126 respondents.

4.3.10.3 The data shows that the project newsletter was the most effective communication tool, followed by social media platforms. Local groups and word of mouth also played a role in disseminating information, although to a lesser extent. Traditional media channels, such as newspapers, radio, and TV, were cited less frequently, suggesting they were less influential in raising awareness. Figure 15 provides a visual breakdown of the response to Question 8.

Figure 15 How feedback from respondents found out about the consultation



4.3.11 Question 9: How informative have you found our early stage consultation?

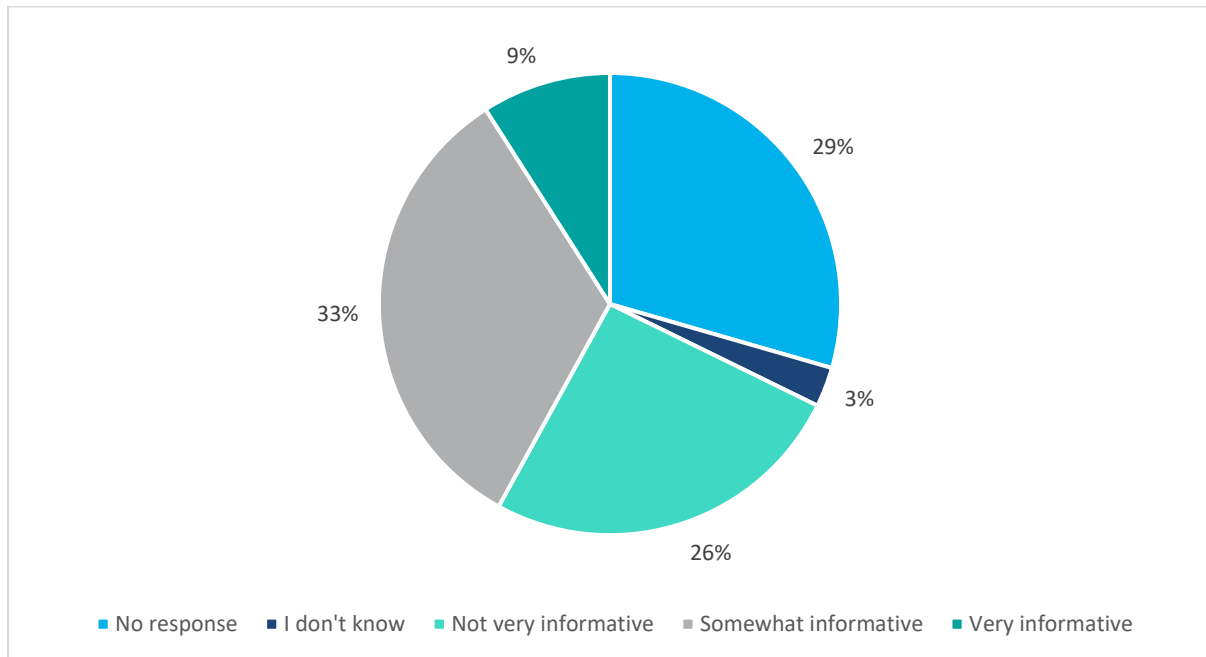
4.3.11.1 Respondents were asked to evaluate how informative they found the materials and events provided during the early-stage consultation. This question aimed to gauge the effectiveness of the consultation in conveying key project details and engaging the community.

4.3.11.2 Out of the 431 feedback forms received, the responses were distributed as follows:

- 33% (142 respondents) found the consultation somewhat informative.
- 26% (112 respondents) rated it as not very informative.
- 9% (39 respondents) considered it very informative.
- 3% (13 respondents) were unsure.
- 29% (125 respondents) did not provide a response.

4.3.11.3 Figure 16 illustrates the full breakdown of responses.

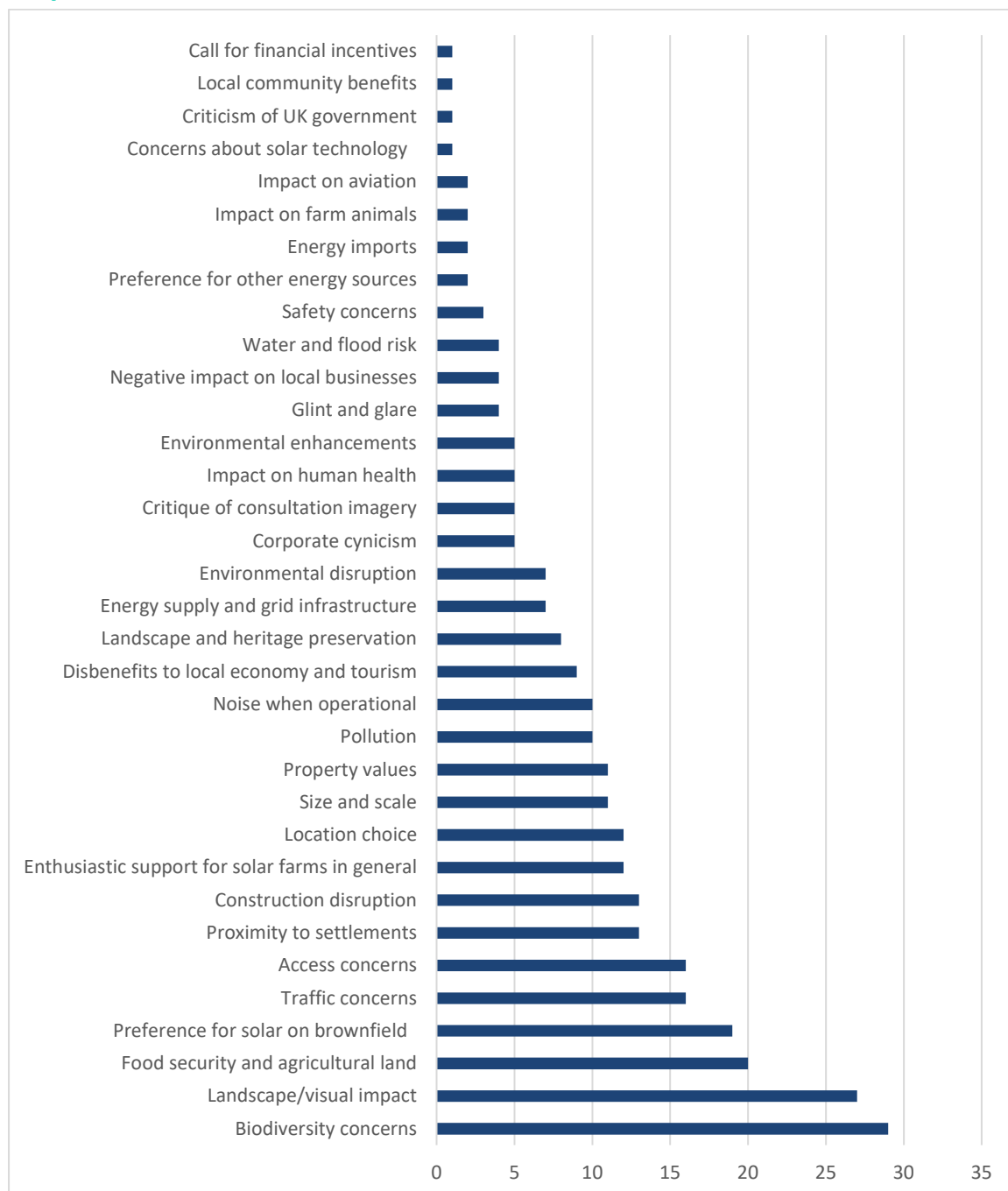
Figure 16 How informative the early stage consultation is to respondents



4.4 Interactive map comments

- 4.4.1.1 The online platform Commonplace featured an interactive map for location-based comments, including an accessible version for visually impaired users. A total of 98 comments were submitted (88 on the main map and ten on the accessible version). The analysis was conducted by project area: Western, Northern, Central, Eastern, and Southern. Figure 17 shows the overall theme count.

Figure 17 Themes identified from comments left on the online interactive maps



4.4.1.2 In summary varied feedback was collected on the proposed project areas, highlighting a mix of support and opposition, with concerns spanning environmental, economic, and logistical issues.

4.4.1.3 In the **Western area**, five respondents commented. Two expressed support, with one suggesting wildflower planting under solar panels and the other praising the use of land near an airfield. However, three opposed the plans, citing concerns about RAF Marham aviation impacts, biodiversity, and proximity to settlements due to visual and landscape concerns.

- 4.4.1.4 The **Central area** received 12 comments. Three respondents were neutral but raised access concerns, including impacts on PRow and requests for permissive paths. Two were dissatisfied, suggesting minimal visual impact and preferring solar on brownfield land. Seven respondents disliked the plans, with concerns including location, scale, agricultural land loss, biodiversity, visual and landscape impact, economic effects on tourism and local businesses, increased traffic, construction disruption, and human health risks.
- 4.4.1.5 In the **Northern area**, eight respondents commented. One was neutral, advocating wildflower planting instead of trees. One was dissatisfied, preferring solar on brownfield land. The remaining six disliked the plans, citing agricultural land loss, project scale, environmental concerns (biodiversity, pollution, landscape preservation), economic impacts (property values, tourism, and local businesses), and safety concerns such as fire risks.
- 4.4.1.6 The **Eastern area** also had eight comments. One respondent supported the plans, emphasising minimal construction disruption, while another was neutral, expressing concerns about traffic. One respondent was dissatisfied, preferring brownfield sites. Five disliked the plans, raising issues about agricultural land loss, biodiversity, landscape and visual impacts (including in relation to the properties on Hulver Street), and operational noise.
- 4.4.1.7 Eight comments referenced the **Northern and Eastern areas** collectively. One respondent was dissatisfied, opposing proximity to settlements and construction traffic. Seven others disliked the plans, highlighting concerns about environmental issues (biodiversity, pollution, operational noise, landscape preservation), economic impacts (property values and tourism), and project scale and location.
- 4.4.1.8 The **Southern area** received the most feedback, with 42 comments. Six respondents supported the plans, citing enthusiasm for solar projects but highlighting the need for improved road networks. Two were neutral, raising traffic and safety concerns. Two expressed dissatisfaction, noting construction disruption, vehicular access, PRow access, and visual impacts. Thirty-two disliked the plans, focusing on biodiversity, landscape and visual impacts, vehicular access (including in relation to the indicative access point at Dunnetts Close), agricultural land loss, pollution, construction disruption, operational noise, location choice, property values, proximity to settlements, and environmental disruption.
- 4.4.1.9 Four respondents addressed **all areas**, disliking the plans due to biodiversity concerns, glint and glare risks, business and aviation impacts, corporate cynicism, fire safety, and inadequate environmental enhancements.
- 4.4.1.10 11 respondents did not specify an area. Among these, two supported the plans, noting concerns about house prices and requesting financial compensation. Others raised concerns about ancient woodlands, agricultural land loss, biodiversity, landscape impacts, pollution, and construction disruption.
- 4.4.1.11 Overall, feedback revealed broad concerns about the project's environmental and economic impacts, location suitability, and scale, with varying levels of support and opposition.
- 4.4.1.12 Table 9 shows an overview of the number of comments received for each area in total and how many for each sentiment, Appendix F is a screenshot from Commonplace of the map. Appendix G provides a more granular analysis of the interactive map data.

Table 9 Comments received by sentiment for each development area

	Love it	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Dislike it	Total
Western	1	1			3	5
Central			3	2	7	12
Northern			1	1	6	8
Eastern	1		1	1	5	8
Northern and Eastern				2	6	8
Southern	6		2	2	32	42
All areas					4	4
Did not specify	2	1	1	1	6	11

4.5 Email correspondence analysis

4.5.1.1 The following section summarises the key themes, comments, and questions raised in these submissions, highlighting the main areas of interest and concern that emerged from the consultation process.

4.5.2 Concerns about the scale and impact on the landscape

4.5.2.1 Emails highlighted concerns about the scale of the Proposed Development, noting it would industrialise the rural landscape with 3.5m solar panels, battery storage units, and security fencing. Residents emphasised the loss of agricultural scenery, open views, and biodiversity, valuing the area's rural character. Some likened the project to historical land enclosures, viewing it as a privatisation of communal rural space.

4.5.3 Issues with mapping and visual consultation resources

4.5.3.1 Feedback highlighted dissatisfaction with the mapping resources, with the online interactive map deemed insufficient for accurately assessing the project's location and boundaries. Respondents requested detailed, high-resolution Ordnance Survey-quality maps to identify specific fields in Bradenham, Ashill, and nearby areas. Those experiencing difficulties with the maps were offered A3 copies by post.

4.5.4 General requests for clarification and detailed information

4.5.4.1 Many respondents sought further clarification on various aspects of the project, such as:

- Exact locations and extents of the proposed areas identified for solar development.
- Impact on local residents, the environment, farming activities, and overall community wellbeing.
- Financial implications for the local community and whether compensation would be provided for potential decreases in property values.

- Details on alternative sites considered and the rationale for selecting the current location.

4.5.4.2 All queries were responded to within ten working days of receipt. If the information was not yet available due to current design stage, individuals were informed when the requested information would be available, for example, at statutory consultation.

4.5.5 Environmental and safety concerns

4.5.5.1 Environmental and safety concerns were prevalent throughout the feedback. Specific requests included:

- Health and safety assessments, particularly fire risk evaluations, due to a recent (non-solar related) significant fire incident in Ashill.
- Research into noise impacts from solar panels and inverters, with concerns over noise pollution for residents with sensitive hearing.
- Details on battery storage safety and potential fire hazards.
- Concerns about the environmental impact, such as loss of agricultural land, effects on wildlife, and habitat disruption.

4.5.6 Construction traffic and access issues

4.5.6.1 A significant portion of the feedback regarding access and traffic, received via the project inbox, centred around assumptions made by respondents regarding construction access points, particularly concerning Southend. While Southend was not explicitly highlighted as a proposed access point in the consultation plans, many respondents inferred its potential use and made assumptions due to the placement of the proposed panel areas. This assumption led to widespread feedback highlighting the unsuitability of Southend as a single-carriageway residential road for supporting construction and operational traffic. Southend is known in the local community for frequent flooding incidents and there was concern regarding traffic safety should this route be utilised.

4.5.6.2 As an alternative, many respondents suggested using the existing Green Lane access route from Hale Road, approximately 840 metres west of Southend and opposite the Gibbet entrance to the Grazing Grounds. This route was proposed to manage all development-related traffic, including construction, commissioning, ongoing maintenance of the solar farm, grazing operations, and eventual decommissioning. The suggestion was strongly motivated by a desire to prevent any vehicular access through Southend and mitigate potential impacts on the residential area. The project inbox also received 48 signatures from local residents agreeing to the following statement:

"I, the undersigned, support the proposal that there be NO access for any construction-related, commissioning, management, on-going maintenance and de-commissioning traffic on Southend. I support the proposal that RWE build a new access route for all time to Green Lane to the west of Southend, Bradenham for the High Grove Solar Farm."

4.5.6.3 The owner of the land where the suggested alternative access would be located also expressed support for the above proposal.

4.5.7 Requests for detailed construction and design information

- 4.5.7.1 Respondents called for more comprehensive information on construction and design, including:
- The construction timeline and traffic management plans.
 - The number of inverters and expected noise levels.
 - Panel orientation, specifically whether they would face south, and potential reflective impacts on roads such as Bradenham Road.
- 4.5.7.2 All queries were responded to within ten working days of receipt. If the information around design and construction was not yet available due to current design stage, respondents were informed when the requested information would be available, for example, at statutory consultation.
- 4.5.7.3 Over 200 emails were received during the non-statutory consultation period, reflecting a range of perspectives and concerns from various stakeholders. These emails included:
- Responses from statutory consultees, which are detailed in the “Feedback from Statutory Consultees” section further on in this report.
 - Submissions containing questions and requests for further information.
 - Direct feedback expressing comments, concerns, and suggestions related to the proposed project.
 - Arrangements for meetings with near neighbours to discuss specific issues and impacts.

4.5.8 Perceived lack of transparency in the consultation process

- 4.5.8.1 A recurring theme was the perception of insufficient transparency and a lack of thorough responses to community concerns. Respondents questioned whether the consultation was genuinely open to public influence or simply a formality. This scepticism was reinforced by repeated calls for clearer communication, more accessible information, and assurances that feedback would result in meaningful project considerations.

4.5.9 Confirmation of online submissions

- 4.5.9.1 A number of respondents expressed concern regarding the receipt of their online feedback form submissions, requesting confirmation to ensure their inputs were acknowledged and considered as part of the consultation process. This highlights the need for transparent communication and reassurance that community feedback is valued and included in the consultation.

4.5.10 Interest in land leasing opportunities

- 4.5.10.1 Several respondents indicated their willingness to explore potential opportunities for leasing land for future solar projects. These individuals expressed a desire to be contacted if land leasing opportunities arise, demonstrating a proactive interest in participating in renewable energy initiatives.

4.5.11 Near Neighbours

4.5.11.1 Near Neighbours used the project email address to make contact and arrange times and dates for one to one meetings with the project team, in response to the Near Neighbour communications sent out to those properties within 100m of the proposed solar array sites.

4.6 Phone call analysis

4.6.1.1 Throughout the non-statutory consultation, 66 phone calls were received. The majority of phone calls received related to the following:

- **Near neighbours contacting the project team:** A number of inbound calls were in response to the Near Neighbour communications sent out to those properties within 100m of the development area, taking up the opportunity offered in these communications to arrange meetings with the project team to discuss key concerns.
- **Arranging additional community meetings:** Discussions were held to organise two additional meetings at Bradenham Village Hall and Wendling Village Hall, ensuring further community consultation, and responding to concerns that events were not originally held in these venues.
- **Event details:** Calls included enquiries about event times, locations, and other logistical information.
- **Requests for materials:** Some residents requested that project-related materials be posted to their home addresses for easier access to information.

4.7 Chatbot interaction

4.7.1.1 The chatbot, Ray, was deployed on the website to provide 24/7 accessible and consistent engagement during the consultation (9 September–18 October). It ensured key information about the proposals, including for example project benefits, environmental impacts, and construction methods, was readily available without human intervention. Using AI, Ray delivered accurate and efficient responses aligned with the project team's official messaging, enhancing user experience and reliability. An example of a typical interaction is below:

4.7.1.2 **User question:** "What measures are being taken to protect local wildlife, such as badgers?"

4.7.1.3 **Chatbot response:** *"The High Grove Solar Farm project is committed to protecting local wildlife, including badgers. Measures to ensure their protection include creating new habitats, planting native species, and monitoring wildlife throughout the project's lifecycle. These efforts aim to minimize any potential impact on badgers and other local wildlife, ensuring their habitats are preserved and enhanced."*

4.7.1.4 During the consultation, the chatbot engaged 160 unique users who asked 230 questions about the project. This digital interaction provided valuable insights into public interest and concerns, contributing to the overall data collection.

4.7.1.5 The questions asked of the chatbot could be grouped into several key themes:

- **Event details:** A significant number of questions sought information about consultation events, including dates, locations, and accessibility.
- **Wildlife and environmental impact:** Many users asked about the potential impacts on local wildlife, including specific questions about badgers, birds, and habitat protection.
- **Compensation and land use:** A recurring theme was compensation for landowners and how land use would change due to the solar farm, including questions about grazing rights and agricultural impact.
- **Construction and infrastructure:** Users also expressed interest in the construction process, the infrastructure being put in place (such as substations and inverters), and the potential disruptions this might cause.
- **Renewable energy and project benefits:** There were several enquiries about the overall benefits of the project, the role of renewable energy, and how this project contributes to broader sustainability goals.

4.7.1.6 Chatbot data offered insights into public priorities and topics needing clarification, helping address community concerns during the consultation and shaping future communication and engagement strategies.

4.8 Feedback from statutory consultees

- 4.8.1.1 Dedicated analysis was conducted separately for statutory consultees, distinct from the review of consultation responses from the public. The findings from this analysis are detailed in Table 10. There were 14 responses from statutory consultees to the non-statutory consultation, however it is recognised that the Planning Inspectorate carried out a separate consultation on the Applicant's EIA Scoping Report in parallel which also garnered responses from several statutory bodies. A list of who the Planning Inspectorate consulted, and their responses can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's website. Table 10 below details the responses from statutory consultees to the non-statutory consultation.

Table 10 Responses from statutory consultees to the non-statutory consultation

Statutory consultees:

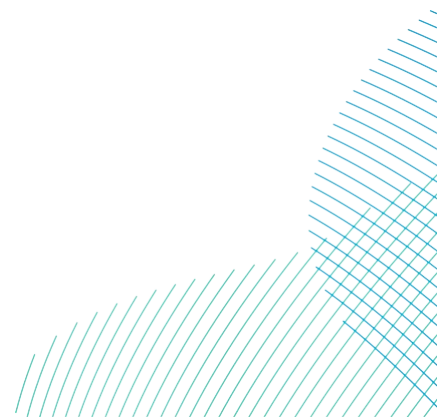
The Coal Authority	The Coal Authority confirmed that the Proposed Development is located outside of any defined coalfield and on that basis they have no comments to make, and confirmed there is no requirement to consult the Coal Authority further on this project.
Ashill Parish Council	Ashill Parish Council objected (via the project inbox during the non-statutory consultation period) to the Proposed Development on several grounds, highlighting concerns about its impact on the landscape and visual amenity, including potential property devaluation. They believe the project will harm biodiversity despite plans for new wildlife areas. Concerns were also raised about the carbon impact of constructing and transporting solar panels, alongside fears about traffic disruptions during construction. The Parish Council requested a comprehensive archaeological survey of the site and expressed concerns about food security due to the change in land use. Additional objections include noise from battery units, flood risks, and potential health impacts on future generations. Finally, they questioned the land designation, fire safety measures, and potential radiation or health risks associated with the development.
Great Dunham Parish Council	Great Dunham Parish Council strongly opposed the development, via the online feedback form. Their primary concern was the use of 'productive agricultural/arable land' for solar which they see as taking away from food production and contributing to additional strain on the UK food supply chain. Additional concerns were raised about traffic/access during construction, impact on the landscape, nature, and local heritage and various factors that may impact local residents such as house prices, hospitality, and fire concerns.

Little Dunham Parish Council	Little Dunham Parish Council provided feedback via the online feedback form, and was neutral in response to the Proposed Development, however raised some concerns around the size of the development, why the location of the new substation has not been identified, and landscape impact.
Scarning Parish Council	Scarning Parish Council completed the online feedback form and voted to withhold commenting on the application until further information was available.
Sporle Parish Council	Sporle Parish Council, via the online feedback form, opposed the Proposed Development. They agreed renewable energy is required however they stated that the site was not suitable and there were better alternatives. The Parish Council wanted the substation to be kept away from the village and for the battery sites to have appropriate management plans for fire risk. Other concerns included traffic/access during construction, ecology/biodiversity, noise/amenity, landscape/visual, and land use/heritage impact.
Bradenham Parish Council	Bradenham Parish Council submitted feedback to the project inbox which opposed the Proposed Development and raised concerns regarding access, proximity to properties, noise, fire safety, local wildlife protection, food security, and flood risk.
Norfolk County Council	NCC's response, provided to the project team via email, recognised the importance of renewable energy and energy security, but highlighted several concerns: 1. NCC suggested that the project offered no direct or immediate benefits to Norfolk, particularly in terms of clean energy provision for local homes and businesses. The response emphasised the need for the Applicant to explore how Norfolk might benefit from the infrastructure. 2. NCC noted that they expect comprehensive consultation with local communities and stakeholders, as well as the establishment of a Community Benefit Fund to mitigate local impacts. 3. NCC raised concerns about the cumulative impacts of this solar farm and others nearby, particularly the Drovers Solar Farm, and stressed the need for a thorough Cumulative Impact Assessment. 4. NCC called for detailed assessments of job creation, compensation for affected homes and businesses, and the use of local supply chains. 5. NCC urged the inclusion of an Energy Statement addressing local energy supply, alignment with climate strategies, and opportunities to support local growth and decarbonisation projects. 6. NCC emphasised the need for detailed assessments of environmental, ecological, public health, highway, and drainage impacts, along with mitigation plans.
Ministry of Defence (MOD)	The MOD acknowledged that this is at the pre-application stage of the proposal and full details of the proposed plans were not available, thereby representation was limited to the principle of the development. The MOD

noted it had concerns about the development of a solar farm at this location and will need to be consulted again in order to complete further height, technical, explosive and bird strike safeguarding assessments, once more detailed information is submitted.

4.9 Feedback analysis conclusion

- 4.9.1.1 The non-statutory consultation for the Proposed Development project was instrumental in gathering valuable feedback from the local community, stakeholders, and statutory consultees. The consultation activities, which included digital engagement through an online project hub, in-person events, webinars, and various communication channels, ensured inclusivity and accessibility for all participants.
- 4.9.1.2 Key themes that emerged from the consultation include the importance of effective stakeholder communication, the need for comprehensive environmental and technical assessments, and the significance of addressing community concerns and preferences. The top five themes raised across all modes of feedback collation were: concerns around the loss of agricultural land, the visual impact of the development, technical and safety considerations, the impact on biodiversity, and the integration of community benefits.
- 4.9.1.3 The feedback received has been carefully reviewed and has informed the development of the proposals for the statutory consultation. The Applicant remains committed to maintaining transparent and open communication with all stakeholders as the project progresses through the planning process. The insights gained from this consultation phase will help shape a more informed and community-focused development proposal.



5 Response to key issues and suggestions raised in consultation feedback

5.1.1.1 This section of the report aims to provide a summary of the key issues and questions raised during the non-statutory consultation period (including the late submissions in response to the Bradenham village hall meeting) and the Applicant’s response to these points. An internal multidisciplinary design workshop was held following the non-statutory consultation to review all the feedback received, which has informed Table 11 below. The workshop included decisions taken by the Applicant with regard to overall design principles, but also specific instances whereby panel areas were removed, screening and buffering enhanced, and permissive paths added to the proposals. Please see Table 12 for specific panel locations removed from designation for solar array, and Table 13 for new permissive paths. All updates to design are presented visually on the Outline Environmental Masterplans presented at statutory consultation.

Table 11 Responses to key issues and suggestions

Key issues, questions and suggestions	The Applicant’s response
Community	
Concerns that the development will have a negative impact on health and wellbeing	Impacts on human health as a result of changes to health determinants was assessed within the EIA Scoping Report submitted on 6 September 2024. Although human health was scoped out as a specific aspect chapter for the Environmental Statement (ES), human health is inherently assessed and mitigated within other aspect chapters and supporting documents to be provided with the ES for the DCO Application. Preliminary assessments have been undertaken and are available for review within the following PEIR chapters and other documents published as part of this statutory consultation: • Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual • Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration • Chapter 12 Socioeconomics • Chapter 13 Traffic and Transport

	• The draft Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP); • The draft Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) • The draft Transport Statement A construction dust assessment will also be developed and appended to the ES following construction traffic modelling. Additionally, one of the core ambitions of the Community Benefit Fund is to support the wellbeing of the local community, through a range of initiatives.
Concern about depreciation in property value	The Applicant is not aware of any empirical evidence to suggest solar farms affect UK property values.
Concern about impact on local tourism	Impacts to local businesses and recreational facilities will be assessed within the Socio-economics chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 12 Socioeconomics of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.
Concern about how the development would negatively impact local businesses	The Applicant is committed to ongoing engagement with key local businesses including the Greenbanks Hotel, and since the non-statutory consultation, has updated the design of the Proposed Development in proximity to the Hotel to include a greater setback, additional hedgerow planting to improve visual screening and a new permissive path to offer a potential walking route for visitors to the Hotel. The Applicant welcomes feedback on the revised proposals.
Concern development will lead to loss of privacy for some properties	The Applicant has considered the potential impacts on the views of people living in the area, including near neighbours within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) included within the PEIR. The principles of good design have been applied from the outset, including embedding appropriate setbacks from residential properties. Several changes have been made to design since the non-statutory consultation in response to feedback collated and a collaborative approach with the local community to minimise adverse effects on the local landscape and visual amenity. These changes have been made in numerous locations, including the following:

- Provision of hedgerow and woodland planting to enhance landscape integration, visual screening and habitat connectivity.
- Increased buffers between roads, residential properties and panel areas in some locations.
- Omission of panels from some fields and provision of additional mitigation and environmental enhancement areas.

A call for further permissive paths in the area to support community recreation, alongside **numerous suggestions** for these pathway routes and/or enhancements.

There was a general request for more permissive paths in the Central development area, with residents commenting that existing footpaths are reasonable but surrounded by agriculturally intensive views. Feedback suggested that the environmental mitigations proposed as part of the Proposed Development represent an opportunity to enhance this area for recreational enjoyment. Other comments requested more permissive paths across the entirety of the Proposed Development.

The Outline Environmental Masterplans presented at statutory consultation reflect the additional permissive paths across the Proposed Development that have been included in the design following feedback from the non-statutory consultation. Table 13 below outlines the additional permissive paths that have been incorporated into the design following the non-statutory consultation.

Site selection

Concern about the size and the scale of the project and how it will surround some homes, farms and villages.

Concerns over the site selection process.

To meet the UK's net zero target by 2050, the Government aims to triple installed solar capacity by 2030, with further capacity to be delivered beyond this. Ground-mounted utility-scale schemes, such as the Proposed Development, are essential to achieving this goal. The size of the Proposed Development has been carefully considered to balance energy generation needs with minimising impacts on surrounding communities and landscapes. Through a detailed site selection process and sensitive design, the Applicant has sought to ensure that the project integrates with its surroundings while fulfilling its important role in the UK's transition to a low-carbon future.

The Applicant carried out an extensive site selection process considering a range of factors, including:

- Brownfield alternatives: No suitable brownfield land was identified within the search area.
- Topography and field patterns: The site comprises generally flat, low-lying land screened by existing hedgerows, helping to reduce visual impacts.
- Environmental designations: The site is not located within areas identified by the Government as having special landscape or ecological value, such as National Landscapes (previously Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- Proximity to settlements and agricultural land classification: The land is primarily moderate to good grade agricultural land, and setbacks from residential properties have been incorporated into the design.
- Accessibility: The site is well serviced by the rural road network including the A47, A1075, A1065 and A1122. .

To mitigate potential visual impacts, the Applicant has prioritised sensitive design measures, including setbacks from residential properties and substantial new landscaping. The Outline Environmental Masterplan is available for review as part of the statutory consultation, and an assessment will be included within the Landscape and Visual Assessment of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.

Furthermore, feedback provided at non-statutory consultation, alongside further design evolution workshops, has entailed that some land parcels have been removed from the proposals. Details of these design changes are shown in Table 12 below, and the Outline Environmental Masterplan presented at statutory consultation reflect these updates.

Concerns about the impact the project would have on local walking routes, paths and public rights of way and suggestions for additional routes and bridleways that could be incorporated into the design.

As the proposals developed, the Applicant considered the interface with Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and other informal recreational routes.

The Applicant confirms that PRoWs will be kept open for use during construction wherever possible. Whereby any temporary closures or diversions are required to facilitate construction, these will be limited in duration as far as possible and will be communicated through local signage.

Impact on existing PRoWs will be considered as part of the EIA, however the Applicant notes that new, additional permissive paths are included in the Proposed Development. These have been shaped by local feedback provided through the non-statutory consultation process, which has resulted in a further increase to the provision of permissive paths as part of the proposals. Permissive paths are shown on the Outline Environmental Masterplan provided at statutory consultation.

A draft Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan (oPRoWMP) is provided at statutory consultation which provides the approach to managing PRoW impacted by the Proposed Development.

Preference for solar to be located on rooftops and brownfield land instead of agricultural land.

As one of the most cost-effective forms of clean and renewable energy, solar power is poised to experience a fivefold surge in capacity by 2050, as outlined in the Government's Energy Security Strategy (2022). To keep on track with the UK's ambition to be net zero by 2050, the Government is aiming for a combined 70 gigawatts (GW) of ground-mounted and rooftop solar capacity by 2035. While the Government recognises the need for a mix of rooftop and ground-mounted solar, utility-scale ground-mounted schemes, such as the Proposed Development, are essential to meeting this ambitious target. As part of the site selection process, the Applicant considered the feasibility of alternative sites, including brownfield land, but no suitable options were identified within the search area. Further details of this process can be found in the draft Design Approach Document.

Concerns around impact on food security.

Suggestion that removing agricultural land from the UK will require greater food imports, which thereby counteracts the carbon savings.

The Applicant understands that the local community is concerned about the loss of agricultural land locally and nationally.

To achieve the UK's net zero target by 2050, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommends expanding solar capacity to 85 gigawatts (GW). This expansion would require approximately 1,500 square kilometres of land, which equates to about 0.6% of the UK's total land area. Given that agricultural land comprises roughly 70% of the UK's land area, the land needed for this solar capacity represents less than 1% of the nation's farmland. This minimal proportion suggests that the impact on overall agricultural production would be negligible, allowing the UK to pursue its renewable energy goals without compromising food security.

Once built, 95% of the site can be made available for grazing, allowing the land to retain an agricultural use, whilst also delivering renewable energy. The project will also allow intensively farmed land to recover, supporting future food-security once the land is returned to its original use at the end of the project life.

Impacts to soils and agricultural land will be assessed within the Agricultural Land and Soils chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 5 Agricultural Land and Soils of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.

Visual impact

Concern about the impact that the Proposed Development will have on the rural landscape, and concerns around the industrialisation of the area.

Requests for the project to be well-screened in order to minimise visual impact. Particular concerns raised at the following locations:

- **Hulver Street;**
- **Beeston Road;**
- **To the rear of Ashill Common.**

The Applicant has considered the landscape character of the site and its relationship with nearby communities to identify the potential effects on the local landscape and visual amenity and appropriate mitigation proposals.

The design of the project has been updated following feedback received during non-statutory consultation and ongoing engagement with near neighbours. Additional setbacks and screening have been embedded into the scheme design where appropriate, including in relation to Hulver Street, Beeston Road and adjacent to Ashill Common (refer to Table 12). The Outline Environmental Masterplan reflecting changes made to reduce visual impact in line with non-statutory consultation feedback are available as part of this statutory consultation.

	Impacts on landscape and visual amenity, along any proposed mitigation measures will be included within the Landscape and Visual Assessment of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.
Concern that the panels will cause glint and glare locally, for drivers, and for planes associated with RAF Marham.	As solar panels are designed to absorb sunlight, they do not have highly reflective surfaces. This stands to reason: the more light a panel absorbs, the more power it will generate. This is why the industry has developed high-tech anti-reflective coatings, and ultra-transparent glass to improve panel efficiency. A Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study will be undertaken and reported within the ES which considers potential impacts on users of National Trails and PRow, residential and commercial properties, motorists on local roads, railway receptors, and aviation receptors. Mitigation measures will be proposed where the assessment identifies potential significant impacts, such as hedgerow infilling and planting to obstruct views of panels. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 9 Glint and Glare of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation. The Applicant is also carrying out engagement with RAF Marham to ensure the Proposed Development does not affect the safe operation of the airbase. Furthermore, the Applicant notes that concern for glint and glare also relates to the type of panels to be used, which will be determined at a later stage of the project. Either fixed panels will be used, which would be south-facing, or tracker panels which would move to track the sun east to west through the course of the day.
Ecology, biodiversity, and wildlife	
Concern about how the proposals will impact local ecology and wildlife, including impact on farm animals.	The project will be designed sensitively so that existing habitats are retained and enhanced where possible. The Applicant is undertaking surveys to establish the habitats present on-site,
Concern about how the proposals will impact local ecology and wildlife, including sensitive	

habitats such as the Breckland Forest SSSI, Smeeth Wood & Devil's Dyke CWS, Priority Habitats, and the Breckland Special Protection Area. This includes concern for Stone Curlew.	their potential to support protected and/or priority species, and the potential impact of the Proposed Development on surrounding sites of ecological importance.
Concern for impact on the Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Wild Bird Seed Set Aside Project located in the field opposite Greenbanks Hotel.	The Applicant is engaging with the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds (RSPB), the Environment Agency, and Natural England, to ensure the project avoids or mitigates significant adverse impacts on protected habitats and species. More information regarding this is available in Chapter 6 Biodiversity of the PEIR published as part of this statutory consultation.
Concerns were raised that aquatic insects, bats, and birds might mistake large solar arrays for water bodies, causing them to attempt to breed on them, drink from them, or land on them, which could harm them.	
Suggestion that sheep farming, as portrayed in consultation imagery, is uncommon in the area and might not be suitable as it could disrupt the local ecosystem.	The Applicant confirms that sheep grazing on panel areas will be at the discretion of the relevant landowner.
Suggestion that livestock be removed from the land between April and May to allow flora to seed and flower.	The management and grazing schedules of any livestock on site would be the responsibility of the relevant landowner.
Suggestion that a gap around the entire base of the fence for small mammals and reptiles should be left, with larger gaps or gates for badgers at suitable intervals.	The Applicant confirms that the fencing design will take account of local ecology, and will be discussed with RSPB, the Environment Agency, and Natural England to ensure the project avoids or otherwise appropriately mitigates significant adverse impacts on protected habitats and species. More information regarding this is available in Chapter 6 Biodiversity of the PEIR published as part of this statutory consultation.
Concern that an overall commitment to biodiversity net gain could reduce the population of wildlife such as field mice and skylarks.	The Applicant is engaging with the RSPB, the Environment Agency, and Natural England, to ensure the project avoids or otherwise appropriately mitigates significant adverse impacts on protected habitats and species. More information regarding this is available in Chapter 6 Biodiversity of the PEIR published as part of this statutory consultation.
A Biodiversity Net Gain Report will be submitted within the DCO Application.	

Suggestion that mitigation planting should be guided by the area's soil types, hydrology, nutrient levels, and the needs of local wildlife.

Suggestion that maintenance practices for solar farms avoid the use of non-selective herbicides to support biodiversity.

An Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) will be submitted with the DCO Application. The oLEMP is proposed as a guide to the design, management, maintenance and monitoring of landscape and ecological components proposed by the Proposed Development. The oLEMP will provide guidance for planting subject to existing local conditions such as soil type and condition. A draft oLEMP is published as part of this statutory consultation.

Heritage & archaeology

Concerns in relation to an old railway; the Roman Villa at Common Road, Ashill; woodland that have specific historical value; Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Ashill Common; and High Green which dates back to the Saxons.

Impacts to heritage assets will be assessed within the Cultural Heritage and Archaeology chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.

Land use

Statutory party confirming no assets in the area / expect no impacts.

The Applicant notes this response and thanks the respondent for their confirmation.

Information on utilities assets which should be considered.

The Applicant notes this response and thanks the respondent for the information. The design team has liaised with asset owners and further information on existing utilities and measures to ensure their protection will be included as part of the design of the Proposed Development.

Traffic and access

Concerns about the suitability of some local roads, site access tracks and narrow bridges for construction traffic, including Southend, Dunnetts Close, and the Norwich Road (A47)/North Pickenham Road junction.

Concerns about how the increased traffic during construction will impact local residents.

Concerns about diversions required during construction resulting in extensive journey times or the isolation of communities.

Given the distribution of the Proposed Development across multiple development areas, access to the site will be facilitated from various locations. Indicative access locations were presented at non-statutory consultation, and a detailed review of the feedback received was undertaken to adjust, where appropriate, these access points and routes.

Some changes that resulted from this review include:

- Design updated to include an alternative access point to Southend, aligning with the suggestion put forward by several members of the community. This proposal for an alternative access point received 48 signatures and supported by the landowner in this location. The proposal, and the design change implemented, now uses Hale Road (at Green Lane junction), approximately 840 metres west of Southend and opposite the Gibbet entrance to the Grazing Grounds, for all construction and maintenance traffic.
- The Applicant confirms that in regard to Dunnetts Close, while some construction and maintenance traffic would use this access point, the intention is for most traffic to travel across the land designated for solar in this location from the alternative access points either off Hale Road (at Green Lane junction or at an additional access point now provided further to the west) or Wood Lane off Station Road now in place.
- Following feedback from the non-statutory consultation, the design has been amended to remove a field previously proposed for a solar array, located south of the indicative access point at Norwich Road (A47)/North Pickenham Road. As a result, traffic requiring access to this land will be significantly reduced.

Proposed access points are shown on the Outline Environmental Masterplan, provided at non-statutory consultation.

Traffic and transport impacts including from the construction stage of the Proposed Development will be assessed within the Traffic and Transport chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 13 Traffic and Transport of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.

	An outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) will be submitted with the DCO Application. The oCTMP will include the proposed methods for the management of construction traffic and staff vehicles during the construction of the Proposed Development. It will also set out the monitoring activities designed to ensure that such management measures are carried out, and that they are effective. A draft oCTMP is published as part of this statutory consultation.
Concerns that the construction traffic may impact the air quality in the area and counteract environmental benefits of installing solar.	Impacts on to air quality as a result of traffic emissions, and dust and particulate matter was assessed within the EIA Scoping Report submitted on 6 September 2024. Although air quality was scoped out as a specific aspect chapter for the ES, a construction dust assessment will be provided with the ES for the DCO Application.
Construction	
Concerns about increased levels of noise during the construction period.	As part of the DCO Application, the Applicant will investigate potential local impacts of construction and proposed measures to mitigate them if necessary. An Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) will be submitted with the DCO Application. The oCEMP will outline key strategies and measures that will be implemented to manage construction activities throughout the construction process.
Concerns about security lighting required during construction that will cause light pollution.	The oCEMP will set out strategies and measures for managing construction activities, including stakeholder engagement, site management, environmental considerations, community impact, health and safety, and monitoring and compliance. The oCEMP ensures responsible construction practices while minimising disruptions and environmental impacts.
Concerns about disruption including hour of work during construction.	A draft oCEMP is published as part of this statutory consultation.
Noise	
Concern about noise created from the operation of panels and battery storage.	Noise and vibration impacts from the Proposed Development will be assessed within the Noise and Vibration chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation. Baseline noise survey data from existing background levels have been utilised to understand the existing noise

climate within the surrounding area. Noise sensitive receptor locations have been identified and agreed with Breckland Council as part of the EIA process.

Good design and high-quality infrastructure serves to reduce noise at source, however, should there be a further requirement for mitigation, sources of operational noise will be located as far as reasonably possible from existing sensitive receptors.

Flood risk

Concerns about the project increasing the risk of flooding.

The project may increase the impermeable area on site, which has the potential to increase flood risk.

Surface water needs to be managed to ensure the level of run off does not exceed current levels, which are high in particular locations such as Watery Lane, and Hills Road culvert.

Impacts from the Proposed Development to flood risk will be assessed within the Water Resources and Flood Risk chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 14 Water Resources and Flood Risk of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.

A Flood Risk Assessment will be prepared to support the Water Resources and Flood Risk ES Chapter. This is both to ensure the Proposed Development itself is designed to be safe and resilient to flood risk, as well as ensuring that the Proposed Development does not increase flood risk to neighbouring receptors.

An Outline Drainage Strategy will also be prepared to support the Water Resources and Flood Risk ES Chapter. This document will demonstrate the appropriate management of runoff from the Proposed Development.

Drafts of both documents are published as part of this statutory consultation as Appendices 14.1 and 14.2 of the PEIR.

Furthermore, solar panels are fixed to the ground by frames so water can easily flow underneath the panels.

Health & safety hazards

Concern around EMF and the potential impact on existing health conditions.

Impacts to sensitive receptors from electromagnetic fields (EMF) was assessed within the EIA Scoping Report submitted on 6 September 2024. The EIA Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate confirmed that EMF could be scoped out on the basis of the following:

- The construction of the Proposed Development would not generate any electromagnetic fields (EMF).
- The maximum voltages of the cables and on-site substations do not exceed 132kV and are therefore not anticipated to exceed the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines.
- The 400kV substation will not be publicly accessible and will be located as far as reasonably possible from existing sensitive receptors, and therefore is not anticipate to exceed the ICNIRP exposure guidelines (the Applicant notes that since the EIA Scoping Opinion was issued, National Grid have confirmed that they would be responsible for the consenting, construction and operation of the 400kV substation and on this basis, it no longer forms part of the assessment for High Grove).

The EMF levels associated with solar farms are typically low and comparable to those from common household electrical devices. The design and operation of solar farms adhere to strict safety standards to ensure minimal EMF exposure. The electrical infrastructure, such as inverters and transformers, is designed with shielding and is often located at a distance from residential areas to further reduce any potential EMF exposure. Extensive studies have shown that solar farms do not pose significant health risks related to EMF exposure to nearby residents, and therefore there is no anticipated impact on existing health conditions.

Numerous accident hotspots are located in close proximity to the indicative access points.

An analysis of the proposed construction routes and access feasibility will be included within the Traffic and Transport chapter of the ES. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 13 Traffic and Transport of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation.

Many roads in the area lack footpaths and therefore concerns around pedestrian safety

A Transport Statement will be prepared to support Traffic and Transport ES Chapter.

An outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) will be submitted with the DCO Application. The oCTMP will include the proposed methods for the management of construction

in relation to increased traffic from construction.

traffic and staff vehicles during the construction of the Proposed Development. It will also set out the monitoring activities designed to ensure that such management measures are carried out, and that they are effective. A draft oCTMP is published as part of this statutory consultation.

Construction vehicles often travel at slower speeds, which could potentially reduce the likelihood of incidents caused by speeding including those that involve pedestrians.

The Proposed Development will implement various traffic management measures, such as clear signage, designated routes, and controlled access points, can enhance safety for all road users during the construction phase.

Concerns around the likelihood of fires from the Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and the need for a larger fire-break around the proposed BESS locations.

An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan (oBSMP) will be submitted with the DCO Application in consultation with the Norfolk Fire and Resue Service. The oBSMP will set out the Proposed Development's proposals for:

- minimising the chances of a battery fire event through design measures;
- minimising the chances of fire spread in the event of a fire through design and operational measures; and
- setting out the proposed operational response to a fire event.

Queries regarding alternatives to lithium-ion batteries and whether the local fire services are trained and equipped to deal with fires of this type.

Concerns were raised about toxic fumes respondents understood to be produced by BESS, the potential for water run off to pollute the soil and groundwater, and the impact of this on the Bradenham drinking reservoir aquifers, which are in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.

In the unlikely event of a fire, the oBSMP provides the proposed methodology for fire suppression. The Applicant's intention is to use an automatic clean agent rather than a water-based system which is regarded as good practice, which would reduce the risk for contaminated water.

A draft oBSMP is published as part of this statutory consultation.

Operation of the solar farm

Question over the efficiency and suitability of solar technology in the UK.	Solar is an affordable, reliable and predictable form of energy generation in the UK. The overall efficiency of solar panels themselves is continually improving, while developments in component and system design mean that more light can be captured in other ways too.
Concern that the manufacture of solar panels will not be outweighed by the clean energy generated.	The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (2024) has shown that the average carbon payback period for solar panels is one to four years. This means that over their lifetime, each panel will generate zero-carbon and zero-pollution electricity for decades after any carbon emitted in its production has been paid back.
Pollution concerns were raised such as the manufacturing process of panels - including the emissions involved in transportation - and the end of life recyclability of the panels.	The Proposed Development also includes further environmental measures such as tree and hedgerow planting, which actively remove carbon from the atmosphere. Furthermore, as manufacturing processes improve and advance, it is anticipated that the carbon payback period for solar will only decrease. A Greenhouse Gas (GHG) assessment will be undertaken and reported within the Climate Change chapter of the ES to consider the change in GHG emissions due to the Proposed Development (including transport of materials and replacement of panels) through an assessment of whole life carbon. A preliminary assessment is included within Chapter 7 Climate Change of the PEIR, published as part of this statutory consultation. An Outline Materials and Waste Management Plan will be submitted as part of the DCO Application which will include a section on the panel recyclability.
Cable route & new substation infrastructure	
The cables must be located underground.	All the cables required to connect the five development areas to one another, and to the new National Grid 400kV substation would be underground.
Inability to comment due to lack of 400kV substation location on plans.	To connect High Grove to the grid and distribute the renewable energy generated, a new 400kV substation is required. The new substation is not just needed for High Grove, however; other developments coming forward in the region will also require this new grid connection point.

Because of this, National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) are responsible for choosing the location, size and design of the new substation. They have started on this work and anticipate that they will have a preferred location at the end of this year (2025). As there is still a lot of information to be confirmed about the location, size and design, we have not included this within our preliminary assessment.

The community will be consulted on this new substation once more information is available. This is not an uncommon approach for developments of this nature.

Community Benefit Fund

Distrust regarding the Community Benefit Fund and the amount.

The Applicant is committed to delivering a solar farm that contributes to local and national energy goals, while also providing tangible benefits to the local community, both within the land areas and through a Community Benefit Fund that can be used to support local causes and initiatives. This Community Benefit Fund would take the form of annual payments spread across the 40-year lifespan of the project's operation.

The Applicant will work with local community representatives to understand how this fund can be best used to meet the area's needs and aspirations.

Suggestions for the Community Benefit Fund including:

- Creation of new footpaths, bridleways and public rights of way and maintenance of the existing ones;
- Discounted energy packages for impacted residents;
- Grants to local charities, particularly for cancer, dementia, arts, and foodbanks;
- Support for existing and new community assets including village halls, playing fields, local pubs,

The Applicant would like to thank respondents for their comments and suggestions for community benefits for the project. These suggestions will be used to inform the development of the Community Benefit Fund.

children's play areas and health centres; • Improvements to local road infrastructure, including provision of footpaths and road resurfacing; • Tours and training of existing solar farms to help upskill the local workforce; • Improvements to local broadband and phone service.	
Community Fund should not be managed by the Local Authority.	The Community Benefit Fund will be managed by an independent body, although consultation with Local Authorities will support the determination of how and where to direct these funds.
More detail and information is required to make an informed decision on the proposals.	The Proposed Development is currently at an early stage of development. The aim of the non-statutory consultation was to introduce the proposals to the community and get feedback on early stage plans in advance of statutory consultation.
Concerns about how feedback and comments would be used as part of the non-statutory consultation, and scepticism of the consultation exercise.	All the feedback the Applicant has received has been reviewed, considered and used to help develop the proposals further. The updated proposals are presented as part of the statutory consultation.
Comments asking for the views of the community to be considered as the proposals are finalised.	
Maps shown at consultation events were inadequate.	Thank you for your comment. Your comments helped us to provide updated and improved plans for statutory consultation.
Need for solar	

Statements that there is no need for solar projects such as the Proposed Development or investment in renewables at all.

The UK has made a legally binding commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Reaching net zero means fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas will need to be replaced by sources of clean, low carbon electricity.

The Government's Energy Security Strategy proposes that by 2035, 100% of electricity be delivered through low carbon sources produced in the UK – with 70GW of this power delivered through solar.

The Proposed Development will generate 720MW of clean energy, enough to power the equivalent of approximately 363,000 typical UK homes, and will make an important contribution to helping the UK build a more secure energy system and reach net-zero targets.

Statements critiquing the profit of the Applicant.

The Proposed Development project aims to provide benefits to both landowners and the wider community.

Solar projects can offer several benefits to landowners:

Landowners will benefit more than the community.

- Additional income through lease agreements, providing financial stability and diversification of income sources over an extended period;
- Land use compatibility allowing solar farms to coexist with some agricultural activities, should the landowner wish to do so.

Solar projects can offer several benefits to the community:

- The project includes a Community Benefit Fund, which can be used to support local projects and initiatives, enhancing community life and well-being;
 - The project is expected to create job opportunities during both the construction and operational phases (and in due course the decommissioning phase), which could benefit local residents;
 - The project will deliver significant environmental benefits, such as increased biodiversity and improved soil health, which can positively impact the community;
-

- The project will contribute to the local economy through significantly increased business rates and increased local spending during construction and maintenance, and in due course during decommissioning;
- Broader benefits will also be realised, as the project will make a significant contribution to the UK's net zero target, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change. This will contribute to the protection of communities locally and across the UK from the long-term effects of climate change.

5.1.1.3 Table 12 below outlines specific locations within the Proposed Development, whereby the removal or relocation of particular land parcels were suggested, and have been responded to directly in the design following consideration of feedback by the Applicant. The Outline Environmental Masterplan presented at statutory consultation reflect these changes and provide a visual representation of Table 12 below.

Table 12 Specific locations suggested to be removed from design

Location	Feedback / suggestions	Reason / concern	Applicant's response
Beeston Road	Remove the land parcel north of the river / A47 adjacent to Beeston Road.	Concerns about traffic and safety issues in the area.	After careful consideration, the Applicant has removed a section of panel area adjacent to Beeston Road, to create a larger buffer zone between residential properties and the solar array, and to include an additional site for environmental mitigation measures.
	Move the land parcel further east, closer to Honeypot Lane, to protect the views from residents of Beeston Road.	Fewer residential dwellings in close proximity to this alternative location.	

North Pickenham Road	Relocate indicative access point located at North Pickenham Road / Norwich Road (A47).	Suggestion that the North Pickenham Road / Norwich Road (A47) junction is an accident hotspot.	To ease the concerns regarding traffic pressures on this junction, the field to the south of Norwich Road (A47), running adjacent to North Pickenham Road, has been designated for environmental mitigation.
Adjacent to RAF Marham	Remove land parcel in proximity to RAF Marham.	Suggestion that the panels would interfere with the airbase. Protect the stone curlew population in this area.	The Applicant has designated two of the westernmost fields in this location to bird mitigation. This decision was taken as a result of engagement with RSPB and Natural England, to provide additional habitat for the local stone curlew population. The Applicant will continue to engage with RAF Marham to ensure the project does not impede the safe operation of the airbase.
South of Main Road / Dereham Road in Wendling, opposite Greenbanks	Remove the land parcel opposite Greenbanks.	Protect the views from Greenbanks Hotel, and minimise disruption to existing efforts to preserve and enhance local ecology.	The Applicant has engaged with the owners of Greenbanks Hotel and in order to partially address their concerns, has increased the setback between the hotel and the proposed solar array. Furthermore, additional hedgerow planting has been proposed within the retained panel area, to break-up and soften the view of the solar array from the hotel, and to offer additional biodiversity benefits.
Saham Hills / Saham Toney	Remove fields located between Saham Hills and Saham Toney.	Close proximity to a number of dwellings on Hills Road. Considered to be an 'add on' with a location distinct from the main proposals.	The Applicant has responded to concerns raised by residents in this area by assigning the field in closest proximity as a site for environmental mitigation, thereby increasing the distance between residential properties and the proposed solar array.

Southend, Hale Road and Ashill Common	Remove panels in proximity to Southend and Hale Road. Remove panels in close proximity to Ashill Common.	Existing flooding issues in the area may be exacerbated by the installation of solar panels. Protect the views from Ashill Common, a well-used recreational area.	The Applicant has removed solar array from the fields to the east of Ashill Common and has also provided increased setbacks from the Common to the proposed solar array area to the north. An increased buffer zone has also been applied around the Scheduled Monument (Roman enclosure) situated over the historic railway line further to the east along Dunnetts Close/Common Road. Panels are not proposed to be located in immediate proximity to Hale Road or Southend. Flooding will be considered via a Flood Risk Assessment, which will inform the design to ensure the proposals do not impact flood risk either on or off site. This will be submitted with the DCO application. A Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is available as Appendix 14.1 of the PEIR.
Goggles Lane	Remove panels in close proximity to residential properties on Goggles Lane.	Protect the views from residential properties on Goggles Lane.	The Applicant has refined the proposals in this location to remove solar array from one field and to increase the setback of the retained solar array from residential properties in other fields. The Applicant is also proposing additional hedgerow planting and other landscaping to provide screening and soften views.

5.1.1.4 Table 13 below outlines the location of additional permissive paths that have been incorporated into the design following non-statutory consultation. The Outline Environmental Masterplan presented at statutory consultation provide a visual representation of the below information.

Table 13 Additional Permissive Paths following design review

Location	Detail	Justification for inclusion
Swaffham Road adjacent to RAF Marham	Permissive paths are proposed either side of Swaffham Road (A1122) within the Western development area.	The additional permissive paths proposed for this location respond to the general request for additional pathways to be incorporated into the proposals.
North of Swaffham Plashes	Permissive paths are proposed amongst proposed solar array between West Acre Road and Swaffham Road (A1065).	Existing permissive paths in this location are relatively disconnected. The Applicant has therefore proposed additional permissive paths to improve connectivity for recreational users. The Applicant has also worked collaboratively with Island Green Power who are the developer of the adjacent project, The Drovers Solar Farm, which would be located to the north west of the Central Panel Area. Should both projects be granted development consent, the permissive paths included in their respective designs will seamlessly connect, enhancing overall connectivity. This coordinated approach realises the opportunities set

out in the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Strategy, prioritises the needs of the community, and delivers a unified benefit across both developments.

East of Sporle	Permissive paths are proposed amongst proposed solar array and existing woodland in the proposed panel area located east of Sporle.	The additional permissive paths proposed for this location would increase connectivity to an existing woodland in the centre of this proposed panel area.
Opposite Greenbanks Hotel	Permissive paths are proposed in the field directly opposite Greenbanks, supporting a circular loop encompassing the proposed panel area.	Engagement with Greenbanks Hotel confirmed that some of their guests enjoy walking in the local surrounds and that notwithstanding wider concerns raised by the Hotel in respect of the proposals, a permissive path in proximity to the Hotel would be a welcome addition. The Applicant has incorporated a permissive path in the field opposite the Hotel.
Adjacent to Ashill Common	Permissive paths are proposed along the historic railway line in the Southern development area with options both north-easterly and north-westerly.	Feedback from the non-statutory consultation evidenced that the residents of Ashill and its surrounds typically use Dunnetts Close / Common Road as part of their recreational walking activity, noting however that this route is disconnected, and requires a there-and-back. In response, the Applicant has proposed a new permissive path that extends from Dunnetts Close in a north-westerly direction along the historic railway line. The proposed permissive path delivers a circular loop for users, returning into the starting point of Ashill village. Alternatively, a longer extension of the route is provided by a permissive path travelling north-easterly, and ultimately connecting into the Peddars Way National Trail.

General sentiment poll

5.2 Context for the poll

- 5.2.1.1 The Applicant conducted a poll which gathered public sentiment on key issues related to solar energy and the UK's climate policies. The opinion poll covered a representative sample of 1000 people in the East of England. Below is a summary of the primary themes that emerged from the survey results.

5.3 Results summary

5.3.1 There is support for the UK's Net Zero policy

- 5.3.1.1 The UK's Net Zero target received broad approval, with 68% of respondents viewing it positively, though with some demographic variations. Men and younger age groups (ages 18-34) showed particularly strong support. Degree holders and Liberal Democrat or Green Party supporters also displayed a more favourable view compared to other groups. Notably, women and older age groups expressed more uncertainty, indicating that tailored communication could help bridge gaps and foster a more unified perception across these demographics.

5.3.2 There is support for government action on Climate Change and people feel this is an important issue

- 5.3.2.1 A strong majority, 82%, believe government intervention on climate change is essential, with 45% deeming it "very important." The sentiment was particularly pronounced among women, younger respondents, and degree holders. Politically, support was highest among Labour and Green Party supporters, while a segment of Reform UK supporters displayed resistance. This finding suggests a need for communication that underscores the universal relevance and immediate benefits of climate policies.

5.3.3 There is public support for renewable energy and solar farms specifically

- 5.3.3.1 There is broad public support for renewable energy, with solar and wind power emerging as the top choices for government prioritisation, while nuclear energy holds mid-level preference and oil ranks the lowest. Men showed a stronger preference for nuclear energy, whereas women leaned more towards solar and wind, with younger respondents favouring wind energy alongside solar, reflecting generational alignment with renewables. Notably, 75% of respondents support new solar farms, with 70% expressing strong backing for local developments. Enthusiasm is highest among middle-aged individuals and degree holders, with men showing more "active support" and women favouring "moderate support." This public mandate for renewable energy expansion, particularly solar, highlights the strategic potential for solar projects. Targeted public education on the economic and environmental benefits of solar farms could further bolster support, especially among younger and older age groups.

5.3.4 People have concerns around land use and environmental impacts that need to be overcome

- 5.3.4.1 The public exhibited mixed feelings about repurposing agricultural land for solar farms, with 53% supporting it but a significant portion expressing concerns about food security and visual impact. Opposition was higher among older respondents and non-degree holders. Addressing these concerns through clear communication on sustainable land management and local environmental benefits may help alleviate scepticism.

5.3.5 People place differing levels of trust in different information sources

- 5.3.5.1 The poll revealed that local farmers and environmental groups were the most trusted sources for information on solar projects, especially among younger respondents and women. Conservative respondents and those neutral towards solar projects were particularly receptive to these trusted local figures. Engaging with input and support from these trusted community figures could bolster credibility and foster wider acceptance of solar initiatives.
- 5.3.5.2 These findings provide valuable context for the scheme, highlighting broader public attitudes towards renewable energy and solar farms. While the statutory consultation remains focused on engaging with those directly affected by the high Grove Solar Farm, the poll offers additional insights to inform the Applicant's approach to addressing key concerns and communicating the benefits of the Proposed Development.
- 5.3.5.3 The full findings of the poll are included in Appendix D for further reference.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1.1.1 The non-statutory consultation process for the Proposed Development was a comprehensive and inclusive effort to engage with local residents, stakeholders, and statutory consultees. Through a combination of in-person events, digital platforms, and targeted communication, a wide array of feedback was obtained, reflecting the diverse perspectives and issues of interest to the community.
- 6.1.1.2 Key themes emerged during the consultation, including strong support for renewable energy development balanced against concerns about land use, biodiversity, and visual and environmental impacts. The public expressed a preference for sustainable land management practices and highlighted the need for considered mitigation strategies to address localised issues such as construction traffic, noise, and habitat preservation. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of transparency and ongoing dialogue throughout the project lifecycle.
- 6.1.1.3 The feedback received during the non-statutory consultation phase was instrumental in shaping the proposals for statutory consultation. Design updates were made in response to community and stakeholder concerns, and feedback has been taken into account as the development and assessment of the proposals has progressed more broadly. The current phase of consultation provides an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the updated proposals.
- 6.1.1.4 In conclusion, the consultation feedback demonstrates the critical importance of balancing local and environmental concerns with the strategic imperative to advance renewable energy solutions. By continuing to engage openly and address stakeholder feedback, the Proposed Development aims to contribute meaningfully to the UK's net zero goals while respecting and responding to the concerns of the local communities.

7 Appendices

- 7.1.1.1 Appendix A – Flyer for promotion of consultation
- 7.1.1.2 Appendix B – Near neighbour letters
- 7.1.1.3 Appendix C – Non-statutory press release
- 7.1.1.4 Appendix D – Solar public sentiment poll report
- 7.1.1.5 Appendix E – Feedback form
- 7.1.1.6 Appendix F – Screenshot of Commonplace map
- 7.1.1.7 Appendix G – Granular analysis of interactive map feedback

**RWE Renewables UK Solar and
Storage Ltd**

Windmill Hill Business Park,
Whitehill Way,
Swindon,
Wiltshire,
England,
SN5 6PB
www.rwe.com

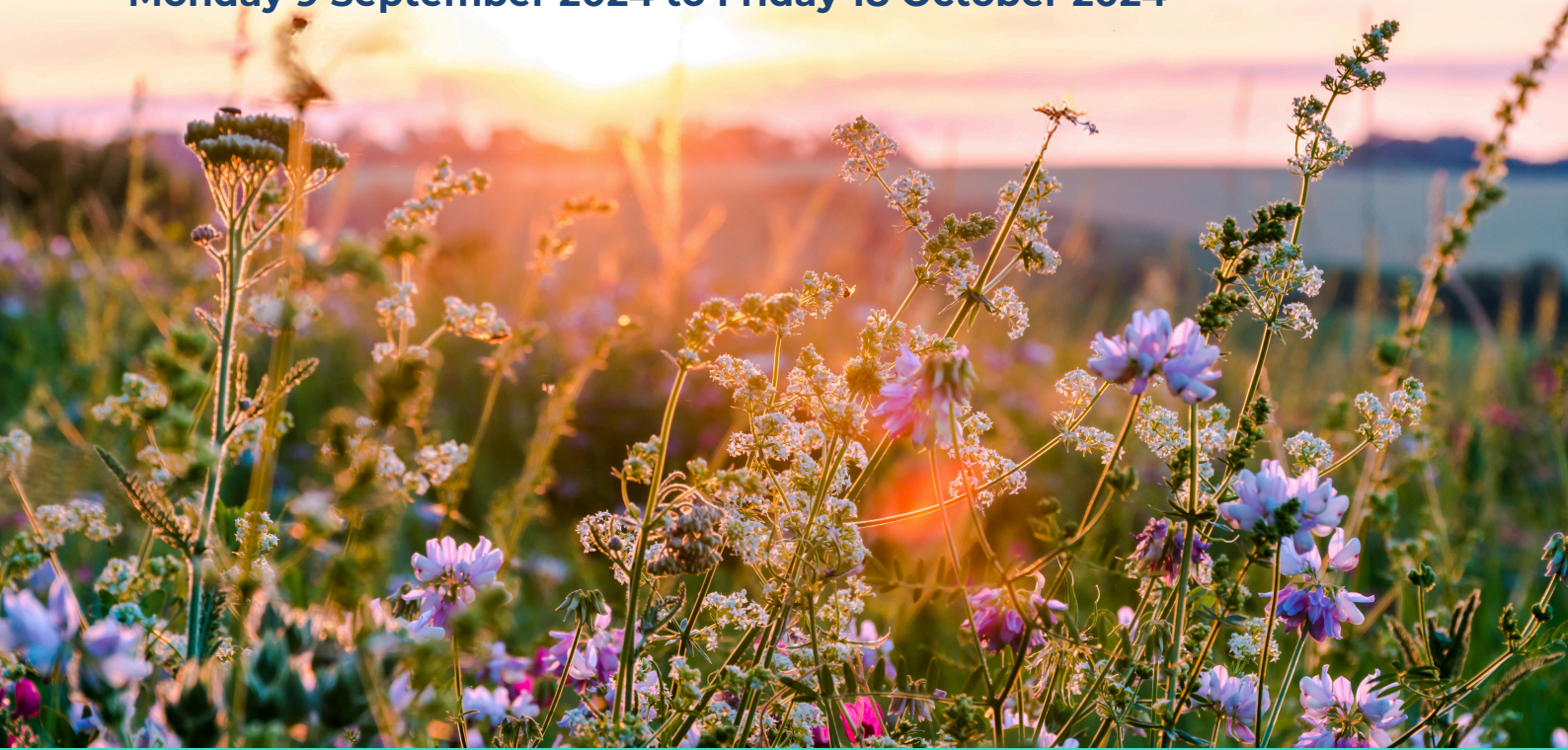
Appendix A

Non-Statutory Consultation Flyer

High Grove Solar Farm

Non-statutory consultation

Monday 9 September 2024 to Friday 18 October 2024



RWE is excited to present the initial proposals for the High Grove Solar Farm, a new 720MW solar farm project with integrated battery storage, located in the heart of Breckland District.

The project would play a key role in advancing the UK's energy ambitions, improving energy security, while supporting the transition away from fossil fuels.

The UK has a legally binding commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Solar energy, being one of the most cost-effective and swiftly deployable renewable resources, is pivotal in fulfilling this commitment.

With the UK Government aiming for a solar capacity of 70 gigawatts by 2035 - quintupling the present capacity - and recent post-election announcements reinforcing a commitment to solar projects through supportive policies and incentives, our proposals for High Grove Solar Farm will make a substantial contribution to this national objective.

Our Proposals

The High Grove Solar Farm will harness the power of the sun to provide a substantial 720MW of clean energy, contributing significantly towards the UK's net zero carbon emissions target by 2050.

The proposals will include solar panels and co-located battery storage situated across five distinct Proposed Development Areas, with the site extending from about 1.5km southwest of Dereham in the east to the west of Swaffham.

We want to hear the views of local people about our plans, so turn over to find out more, or visit our website to have your say!

Scan the QR code to visit our consultation website:



rwe.com/highgrove



Who is RWE?

We are key drivers of the energy transformation – working to achieve ambitious goals.

The proposals for High Grove Solar Farm are being brought forward by RWE. RWE is a leading provider of renewable energy. The company is committed to driving the transformation towards a sustainable energy future, focusing on generating electricity, building new storage capacities, and energy trading. With significant investments in the expansion of renewables and storage technologies, RWE plays a vital role in enhancing national energy security and sustainability.



Community & Environmental Benefits

Biodiversity and Habitat Enhancement: We are committed to environmental enhancement and mitigation, ensuring a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of **at least 50%** and providing **several kilometres of new native hedgerows and trees.**

Community Benefits:

We will provide additional opportunities for public recreation with proposed new footpaths, outdoor picnic areas and benches. We are also proposing to provide up to **£11.5 million** over the operational lifetime of High Grove. This would take the form of annual payments spread across the **40-year period.**

RWE has a long track record of involving communities in shaping a benefits package that works for them. We want to hear your ideas for the High Grove Solar Community Benefit Fund.

Project Timeline

- September 2024**
EIA scoping report submission
- Sept-Oct 2024**
Non-statutory consultation
- Late 2024**
Review all consultation feedback and refine design
- Early 2025**
Publication of the PEIR & statutory consultation
- Mid 2025**
Review all consultation feedback and refine design
- Late 2025**
Submission of the DCO application
- 2026**
Examination of DCO application by the Examining Authority
- 2027**
Recommendation from the Examining Authority
- 2027**
Decision by the Secretary of State following the Examining Authority's recommendation
- 2028**
Commence construction



Anticipated generation capacity of up to 720MW



Displacing over 24.8M tonnes of CO₂ from equivalent fossil fuel energy



Enough to power 363,000 typical households*



Equivalent to taking 368,573 cars off the road for a year!



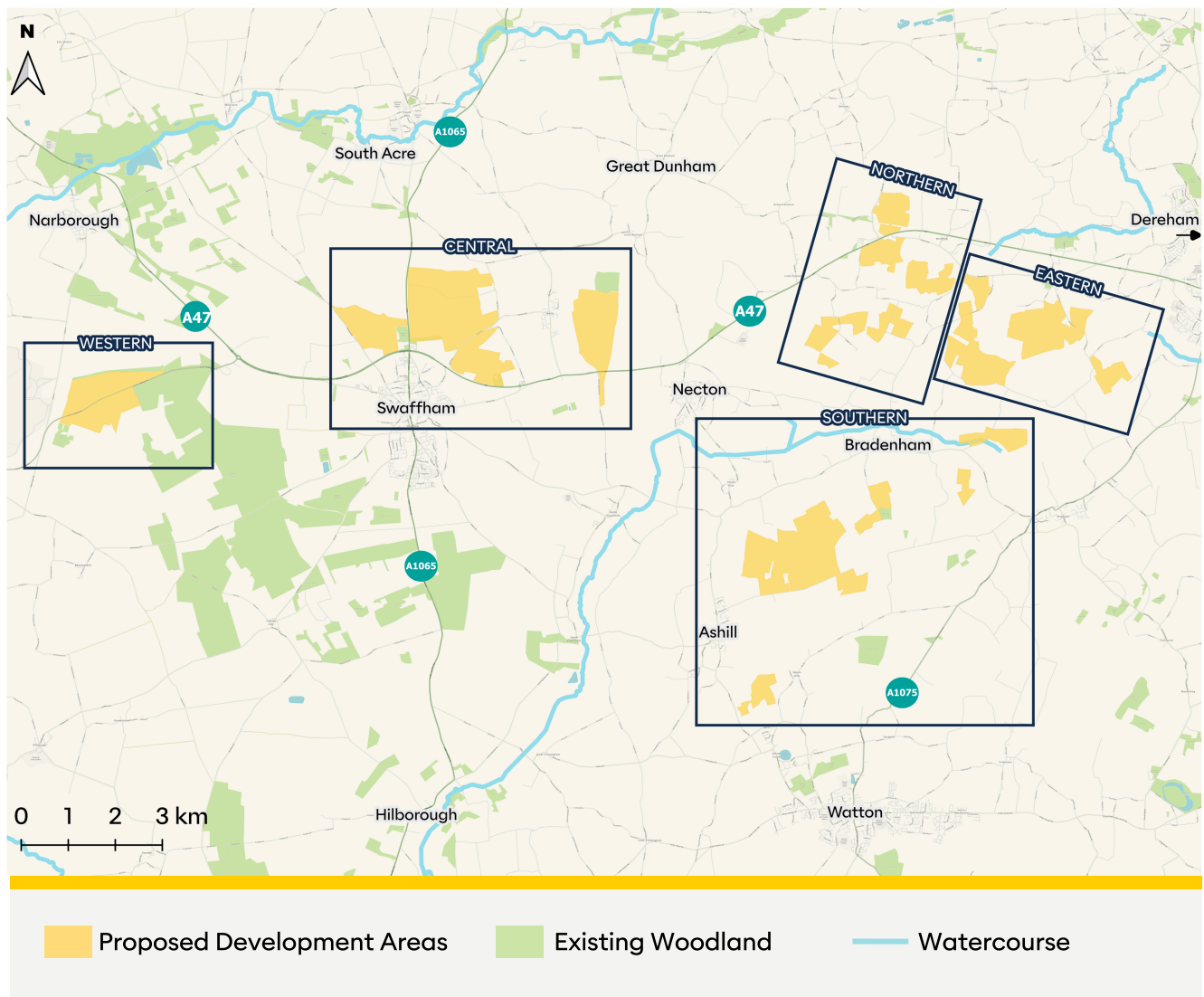
Over 95% of the panel areas can be used for sheep grazing, should the landowner wish to do so



On-site battery storage providing flexibility to deliver energy to the grid when it is needed most

*Based on 2022 generation, and assuming average (mean) annual household consumption of 3,240kWh, based on latest (Jan 2024) statistics from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Proposal Map



Our vision for High Grove is to deliver a project that not only contributes to the UK's net zero target, but also incorporates a wide range of ecological and community enhancements. New planting will reduce landscape and visual impact, while delivering a network of habitat creation. Existing footpaths would be improved, and new connections created, providing access to educational trails, picnic areas and outdoor classrooms.

Consultation and Your Views

We are at the preliminary design stage and keen to integrate community feedback into our plans. The consultation period starts on Monday 9 September 2024 and will conclude on Friday 18 October 2024.

After the current consultation phase concludes, we will carefully review and integrate community feedback into our proposals as appropriate before conducting a subsequent 'statutory' consultation on our refined plans, currently scheduled for early 2025.

We greatly value your contributions and are eager for your ongoing involvement as we refine our proposals throughout the next year.





How to get involved

We hope that you will take the opportunity to learn more about High Grove and help shape the development plans.

The deadline for responses to this early consultation is Friday 18 October 2024.

Here is how you can get involved:

Visit our website

View our plans, learn more about solar, sign up to our webinars, and provide your feedback by visiting our consultation website at rwe.com/highgrove

You can also register for updates to ensure you receive important notifications about the proposal as the project progresses.

Contact Us

If you have any questions, suggestions, or would like to provide feedback on our proposals, our dedicated team is here to assist you. You can reach us via:

 01362 350 063

 rwe.com/highgrove

 info@highgrovesolar.co.uk

 FREEPOST HIGH GROVE SOLAR

Attend our events

Join us at our in-person consultation events or webinars to engage directly with our project team, ask questions, and share your thoughts. You'll find a full list of event details below.

Date	Time	Location
Tuesday 17 September	2.00pm-7.00pm	Regency Room, Swaffham Assembly Rooms, Swaffham PE37 7AB
Wednesday 18 September	10.30am-2.30pm	Scarning Village Hall, Scarning, NR19 2PF
Thursday 19 September	6.30pm-7.30pm	Online webinar (register at rwe.com/highgrove)
Friday 27 September	2.00pm-7.00pm	Letton Hall, Shipdham, Thetford IP25 7SA
Saturday 28 September	10.30am-2.30pm	Ashill Community Centre, IP25 7AX
Tuesday 1 October	1.00pm-2.00pm	Online webinar (register at rwe.com/highgrove)
Tuesday 1 October	6.30pm-7.30pm	Online webinar (register at rwe.com/highgrove)
Friday 4 October	1.00pm-6.00pm	Necton Community Centre, PE37 8EH
Saturday 5 October	10.30am-2.30pm	Sporle Village Hall, PE32 2DR

Materials in alternative formats

If you are unable to access the internet or you have particular accessibility requirements, our consultation materials can be made available in alternative formats. All requests should be made by email via info@highgrovesolar.co.uk or via our dedicated phoneline, 01362 350 063

A physical copy of the consultation documents, along with feedback forms will be available for inspection at two deposit locations throughout the consultation period.

- Swaffham Library, The Pightle, PE37 7DF
- Dereham Library, 59 High St, NR19 1DZ

Appendix B

Near Neighbour Letter



[Salutation]
[Address Line 1]
[Address Line 2]
[Town]
[Postcode]

XX September 2024

Invitation to Participate in Public Consultation for the Proposed RWE High Grove Solar Farm

Dear [Salutation]

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Mike Greslow, and I am the Project Manager at RWE overseeing the development of the proposed High Grove Solar Farm which will, if delivered, be located on land across the Breckland District. We understand that you are a landowner with property in close proximity to the site of the proposed solar farm. Although your property is not directly impacted by the project in terms of land take, we recognise the importance of keeping neighbouring landowners informed and involved in the planning process.

At RWE, we are committed to transparent and thorough engagement with all stakeholders, particularly those in the local community, such as yourself. As such, I would like to extend a personal invitation to you to participate in the upcoming public consultation phases for the project. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn more about the proposed solar farm, review the potential benefits it offers to the community, and provide your valuable feedback.

Public Consultation Events

We are hosting several drop-in public consultation events and would be delighted if you could attend one of these sessions. These events are designed to be informal and informative, where you can speak directly with project representatives, ask questions, and complete a feedback form. The details of the events are as follows:

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Tuesday 17 September	2.00pm-7.00pm	Regency Room, Swaffham Assembly Rooms, Swaffham PE37 7AB

Wednesday 18 September	10.30am-2.30pm	Scarning Village Hall, Scarning, NR19 2PF
Friday 27 September	2.00pm-7.00pm	Letton Hall, Shipdham, Thetford IP25 7SA
Saturday 28 September	10.30am-2.30pm	Ashill Community Centre, IP25 7AX
Friday 4 October	1.00pm-6.00pm	Necton Community Centre, PE37 8EH
Saturday 5 October	10.30am-2.30pm	Sporle Village Hall, PE32 2DR

Private Consultations



Understanding that individual circumstances may vary, we are also offering private consultations for those who prefer a more personal discussion regarding the project. Please feel free to contact us on the details provided below, at your convenience, to schedule a meeting. Alternatively you can scan this QR code using a smartphone and book a 1-2-1 call with a member of our project team in under 60 seconds.

Engagement and Feedback

In addition to attending our events, please find enclosed a newsletter which outlines the project in detail and highlights key information, including the timeline and benefits of the solar farm. Further details will also be provided on the project website which can be viewed at www.highgrovesolar.co.uk We encourage you to review the plans and engage with the consultation process by completing the feedback form, either at one of our events or via the website. Your input is invaluable to us and will help shape the development of the project.

We sincerely hope you will take this opportunity to engage with us and share your views. The project is still at an early stage, with the Development Consent Order application expected to be submitted in 2025, following extensive consultations. Your feedback now will play a crucial role in ensuring that the project benefits all stakeholders and is developed with the community's interests in mind.

Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any immediate questions or require further information. You can contact us by email at info@highgrovesolar.co.uk or by phone on 01362 350 063. We look forward to your participation and to hearing your views.



Thank you for considering this invitation. We hope to see you at one of our consultation events.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Greslow
High Grove Project Manager, RWE

Appendix C

Press Release



Press release

RWE announces non-statutory public consultation for High Grove Solar Farm

- **Solar farm could provide electricity for around 363,000 typical UK homes and save almost 25M tonnes of CO2 emissions over its lifetime**
- **RWE welcome community to view project plans and have their say**

Swindon, 06 September 2024

RWE, a global leader in renewable energy projects, is excited to announce the launch of a non-statutory public consultation to allow local people to have their say on plans for High Grove Solar Farm.

The solar farm proposed will be located across parts of Breckland District near Dereham and Swaffham and could deliver up to 720MW solar farm with integrated battery storage. The solar panels will be connected via underground cables, culminating at a new National Grid substation, which will connect into the existing high-voltage electricity transmission network.

This ambitious project will provide a significant contribution to the UK's renewable energy capacity and the UK's net zero carbon emissions target by harnessing the power of the sun to provide renewable, sustainable energy. The project is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and will require an application to be made for a Development Consent Order (DCO). Once submitted, the application would be considered at a public examination by the Planning Inspectorate, who will advise the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero before a decision on the application being made.

As part of a commitment to engaging with the local community, RWE has launched an early public consultation, to allow residents and stakeholders the opportunity to view the proposals, engage with members of the project team, ask questions and provide feedback. All feedback will be considered and used to help shape the next stage of the plans, where the public will have a further opportunity to provide comments.

Mike Greslow, RWE Project Manager for the High Grove Solar Farm, said: "The High Grove project will generate renewable electricity for the equivalent of around 363,000 typical UK homes and save almost 25M tonnes of CO2 emissions over its lifetime. As we prepare to submit our DCO application in Autumn 2025, this early non-statutory consultation presents an excellent opportunity for the public and stakeholders to review



our initial proposals and share their thoughts.”

RWE understand the importance of community consultation, as only by working with local people can we ensure the best possible scheme is delivered. The company hope local people will take the opportunity to find out more about the plans by visiting the website and attending one of the drop-in events or webinars.”

In addition to generating renewable energy, RWE is committed to delivering wider benefits to the environment and the community. This will include the creation of a community benefit fund, developed with input from communities to ensure it supports local initiatives and delivers tangible benefits. It is expected that up to £11.5 million will be provided over 40 years in annual payments and RWE is open to exploring the types of community initiatives that the fund could support during the consultation process.

The public consultation commences today and will conclude on Friday 18th October. Over 5,300 newsletters have been distributed to local people with details of the proposals, consultation events and how feedback can be provided. Members of the community are invited to learn more and share their input at one of six public drop-in events:

Tuesday 17 September - 2.00pm-7.00pm, Regency Room, Swaffham Assembly Rooms, Swaffham, PE37 7AB

Wednesday 18 September - 10.30am-2.30pm, Scarning Village Hall, Scarning, NR19 2PF

Friday 27 September - 2.00pm-7.00pm, Letton Hall, Shipdham, Thetford IP25 7SA

Saturday 28 September - 10.30am-2.30pm, Ashill Community Centre, IP25 7AX

Friday 4 October - 1.00pm-6.00pm, Necton Community Centre, PE37 8EH

Saturday 5 October - 10.30am-2.30pm, Sporle Village Hall, PE32 2DR

Further details are also provided on the project website, www.rwe.com/highgrove and local residents are encouraged to complete the feedback form, either at one of the events or via the website. Members of the project team can also be contacted via email at info@highgrovesolar.co.uk or by phone on 01362 350 063.

For further enquiries:

Rachel Scott
Media Relations
E rachelscott@ardent-management.com

RWE

RWE is leading the way to a green energy world. With its investment and growth strategy Growing Green, RWE is contributing significantly to the success of the energy transition and the decarbonisation of the energy system. Around 20,000 employees work for the company in almost 30 countries worldwide. RWE is already one of the leading companies in the field of renewable energy. Between 2024 and 2030, RWE will invest 55 billion euros worldwide in offshore and onshore wind, solar energy, batteries, flexible generation, and hydrogen projects. By the end of the decade, the company's green portfolio will grow to more than 65 gigawatts of generation capacity, which will be perfectly complemented by global energy trading. RWE is

RWE Renewables Europe & Australia GmbH | Group Corporate Communications & Public Affairs | RWE Platz 4 | 45141 Essen | Germany
T +49 201 5179-5008 | communications@rwe.com | www.rwe.com/press



decarbonising its business in line with the 1.5-degree reduction pathway and will phase out coal by 2030. RWE will be net-zero by 2040. Fully in line with the company's purpose - Our energy for a sustainable life.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The personal data processed in connection with the press releases will be processed in compliance with the legal data protection requirements. If you are not interested in continuing to receive the press release, please inform us at communications@rwe.com. Your data will then be deleted and you will not receive any further press releases from us in this regard. If you have any questions about our data protection policy or the exercise of your rights under the GDPR, please contact ukdataprotectionrwe@rwe.com.

Appendix D

Public Sentiment Poll



Public Opinion Poll

High Grove Solar Farm
December 2024

Contents

1	Executive summary	1
2	Methodology	2
3	Results	2
3.1	Opinion on the UK's Net Zero Policy	2
3.2	Importance of Government Action on Climate Change	2
3.3	Perceptions of the UK's Promotion of Renewable Energy	3
3.4	Preferred Energy Sources for Government Prioritisation	4
3.5	Support for New Solar Farms in the UK	4
3.6	Support for New Solar Farms in Local Areas	5
3.7	Actions to Oppose Local Solar Farms	5
3.8	Actions to Support Local Solar Farms	6
3.9	Repurposing Agricultural Land for Solar Farms	6
3.10	Environmental Costs vs. Benefits of Solar Farms	7
3.11	Land Use Preferences for Farming vs. Solar Farms	7
3.12	Benefits of solar farms	8
3.13	Perceived Drawbacks of Building New Solar Farms	8
3.14	Effective Mitigations for Solar Farm Proposals	9

1 Executive summary

- 1.1.1.1 This report summarises the findings of a public opinion poll commissioned by RWE, in partnership with Ardent, to assess attitudes towards solar energy and the proposed High Grove Solar Farm. The poll surveyed over 1,000 individuals across the East of England, using a mixed-methods approach to capture a representative cross-section of opinions, including those from underrepresented demographics.
- 1.1.1.2 The poll was designed to complement, rather than replace, the ongoing public consultation and stakeholder engagement exercises focused on Breckland and the local area. While the poll covers a broader regional audience, its purpose is to provide additional context and insights to enrich the consultation process, ensuring that the voices of local residents and stakeholders remain at the heart of decision-making.
- 1.1.1.3 Key findings include:**
- **Strong Support for Renewable Energy:** 68% of respondents support the UK's Net Zero target, and 75% favour the construction of new solar farms nationally, with 70% supporting solar farms in their local area. Solar and wind were identified as the most preferred energy sources for government prioritisation.
 - **Broad Recognition of Benefits:** Reducing carbon emissions (56%) and enhancing energy independence (53%) were seen as the most significant advantages of solar farms. Additional benefits such as cost savings, job creation, and income for farmers were also acknowledged.
 - **Key Concerns:** Visual impacts (45%) and reduced food production (48%) were the most cited drawbacks, alongside scepticism about solar power's environmental impact (28%).
 - **Effective Mitigations:** Measures such as offering local energy discounts (78% positive sentiment), creating wildflower meadows (73%), and using low-quality agricultural land (72%) were most effective in improving public sentiment.
- 1.1.1.4 The findings highlight widespread public support for renewable energy, including solar farms, while also underscoring concerns about land use, food security, and visual impacts. Together with insights from the local consultation, these results can help RWE refine its approach to community engagement for the High Grove Solar Farm. By addressing concerns transparently, demonstrating effective mitigation measures, and showcasing the environmental and economic benefits, the project can foster public trust and build strong support across local and regional communities.

2 Methodology

- 2.1.1.1 A poll commissioned by RWE in partnership with Ardent assessed the general public's sentiment towards solar energy. The poll surveyed over 1,000 people across the East of England, using a mixed methods approach (using both qualitative and quantitative data) for a deeper understand of the local opinion. The poll was designed using an online, accessibility-compliant platform to reach a broad cross-section of respondents, this ensured that views from underrepresented demographics, such as those without higher education, young people, and those with disabilities, were captured to reflect the diversity of the local area.

3 Results

3.1 Opinion on the UK's Net Zero Policy

- 3.1.1 **Question 1: The UK government has set a Net Zero target to ensure the amount of greenhouse gases the UK emits into the atmosphere is balanced by the amount the UK removes from the atmosphere by 2050. Do you think this is a good policy or a bad policy?**

3.1.1.1 **Poll Results:**

- Support: 68% of respondents think the Net Zero target is a good policy, with 24% considering it "very good."
- Opposition: 19% of respondents think it is a bad policy, with 8% considering it "very bad."
- Uncertainty: 12% of respondents were unsure.

3.1.1.2 **Context for the High Grove Solar Farm**

- 3.1.1.3 The poll indicates substantial support for the UK's Net Zero target across a broad audience, suggesting widespread recognition of the importance of addressing climate change. These findings provide useful context for understanding public attitudes towards renewable energy initiatives, such as the Highgrove Solar Farm.

3.2 Importance of Government Action on Climate Change

- 3.2.1 **Question 2: How important is it to you that the Government takes action to tackle climate change?**

3.2.1.1 **Poll Results:**

3.2.1.2 Support for Government Action: 82% of respondents believe government action on climate change is important, with 45% rating it as "very important" and 37% as "somewhat important."

3.2.1.3 Opposition: 18% of respondents consider it unimportant.

3.2.1.4 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.2.1.5 The poll reveals widespread agreement on the importance of government-led climate action, with a clear majority recognising its significance. This highlights public support for initiatives like renewable energy projects, which align with national and local efforts to combat climate change.

3.3 Perceptions of the UK's Promotion of Renewable Energy

3.3.1 Question 3: Compared to most other countries, how would you say the UK does in promoting renewable energy?

3.3.1.1 This question evaluates public perceptions of the UK's global leadership in promoting renewable energy. Responses are mixed but lean positive, with political alignment and education levels influencing opinions.

3.3.1.2 Poll Results:

- Positive Perception: 46% of respondents believe the UK is performing better than other countries, with a smaller proportion viewing it as "much better."
- Neutral View: 41% think the UK is performing "about the same."
- Room for Improvement: The responses suggest a mix of pride in progress but recognition that further efforts are needed.

3.3.1.3 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.3.1.4 The poll highlights a generally positive view of the UK's efforts in renewable energy but acknowledges public recognition of room for improvement. This provides an opportunity for the High Grove Solar Farm to position itself as part of the broader effort to enhance the UK's leadership in renewable energy.

3.4 Preferred Energy Sources for Government Prioritisation

3.4.1 Question 4: Which of the following sources of energy should the Government prioritise for supplying power to households and businesses in the UK? Please rank the following in order with 1 being the top priority and 5 being the lowest priority

3.4.1.1 Poll Results:

- Top Choices: Solar and wind emerged as the most prioritised energy sources, with average rankings of 2.2 and 2.4, respectively.
- Middle Ground: Nuclear energy received mixed support, ranked below renewables but above fossil fuels.
- Lowest Priority: Oil consistently ranked the lowest, with an average ranking of 3.9.

3.4.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.4.1.3 The poll demonstrates strong public support for renewable energy, particularly solar and wind, which aligns closely with the objectives of the High Grove Solar Farm. This is especially noteworthy given the rural and semi-rural context of the survey, where assumptions might lean towards lower support for renewable projects.

3.5 Support for New Solar Farms in the UK

3.5.1 Question 5: Would you support or oppose the construction of new solar farms in the UK?

3.5.1.1 Poll Results:

- Support for Solar Farms: 75% of respondents support new solar farms, with 37% “strongly support” and 38% “tend to support.”
- Low Opposition: Only 8% oppose new solar farms, while 17% remain neutral or unsure.

3.5.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.5.1.3 The poll indicates strong public support for new solar farms across the UK **in principle**, underscoring the general enthusiasm for renewable energy **projects**.

3.6 Support for New Solar Farms in Local Areas

3.6.1 Question 6: Would you support or oppose the construction of new solar farms in your local area?

3.6.1.1 Poll Results:

- Support for Local Solar Farms: 70% of respondents support local solar projects, with 33% “strongly support” and 37% “tend to support.”
- Low Opposition: 10% oppose local solar farms, while 20% remain neutral or unsure.

3.6.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.6.1.3 The poll demonstrates substantial public support for local solar farms in principle, indicating a strong foundation for projects like the High Grove Solar Farm. This reflects a significant level of community interest in renewable energy at a local level although the response to this question (and the rest of the poll) was not specific to High Grove Solar Farm and the specific circumstances associated with this project.

3.7 Actions to Oppose Local Solar Farms

3.7.1 Question 7: You said you would oppose the construction of new solar farms in your local area. If a solar farm was proposed, in which of the following ways, if any, would you oppose the proposal?

3.7.1.1 Poll Results:

- Common Opposition Actions:
 - Sharing views with friends and family: 40%
 - Writing to MPs: 36%
 - Attending public protests: 22%
- Low Intensity of Resistance: A notable proportion (28%) indicated they would take none of these actions.

3.7.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.7.1.3 The poll indicates that most opposition to local solar farms is expressed through informal or formal communication, such as sharing opinions or writing to MPs, with minimal likelihood of active protest.

3.8 Actions to Support Local Solar Farms

3.8.1 Question 8: You said you would support the construction of new solar farms in your local area. If a solar farm was proposed, in which of the following ways, if any, would you help support the proposal?

3.8.1.1 Poll Results:

- Common Support Actions:
 - Sharing support with friends and family: 37%
 - Attending public meetings: 26%
 - Writing to local officials: 8%
 - Attending protests: 5%
- Informal Advocacy Dominates: Support is most commonly expressed through informal discussions rather than formal actions.

3.8.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.8.1.3 The poll highlights that supporters of local solar farms are most likely to advocate informally, through conversations with friends and family, or by attending community meetings.

3.9 Repurposing Agricultural Land for Solar Farms

3.9.1 Question 9: Do you think that repurposing some agricultural land for solar farms is a good idea or a bad idea?

3.9.1.1 Poll Results:

- Support for Repurposing: 53% of respondents think it is a good idea.
- Opposition and Uncertainty: 25% oppose, and 22% are uncertain, indicating mixed views and notable concerns about land use and food security.

3.9.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.9.1.3 The poll reveals moderate support for repurposing agricultural land for solar farms but highlights significant concerns about food security and land use, particularly among certain demographics.

3.10 Environmental Costs vs. Benefits of Solar Farms

3.10.1 Question 10: Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Solar farms have more environmental costs than benefits
- Solar farms have more environmental benefits than costs
- Don't know

3.10.1.1 Poll Results:

- Belief in Benefits: 54% believe solar farms provide more environmental benefits than costs.
- Uncertainty and Scepticism: 26% are uncertain, while 20% believe the costs outweigh the benefits.

3.10.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.10.1.3 The poll indicates a majority view solar farms positively for their environmental impact, but there is notable uncertainty.

3.11 Land Use Preferences for Farming vs. Solar Farms

3.11.1 Question 11: Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Using rural land for farming is better for the local environment
- Using rural land for solar farms is better for the local environment
- Don't know

3.11.1.1 Poll Results:

- Preference for Farming: 44% believe farming is better for the local environment.
- Support for Solar: 29% think solar farms are better for the local environment.
- Uncertainty: 27% are unsure.

3.11.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.11.1.3 The results show a preference for farming over solar farms, reflecting concerns about transitioning agricultural land.

3.12 Benefits of solar farms

3.12.1 Question 12: In your opinion, what are the most significant benefits of building new solar farms?

- Creating employment opportunities in the local economy
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Making Britain less reliant on foreign imports of energy
- Making energy bills cheaper
- Generating extra income for farmers
- Giving agricultural land time to recover from intensive farming and use of pesticides
- There are no *benefits*

3.12.1.1 Poll Results:

- Top Benefits Identified:
 - Reducing Carbon Emissions: 56%
 - Making Britain Less Reliant on Foreign Energy Imports: 53%
 - Making Energy Bills Cheaper: 45%
 - Other notable benefits include creating local employment (34%) and generating income for farmers (28%).
- Limited Opposition: Only 8% believe there are no benefits.

3.12.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.12.1.3 The poll highlights broad public recognition of solar farms' environmental and economic benefits, particularly in reducing carbon emissions and enhancing energy independence.

3.13 Perceived Drawbacks of Building New Solar Farms

3.13.1 Question 13: In your opinion, what are the most significant drawbacks of building new solar farms?

- Spoiling the view of the countryside
- Solar power is an unreliable energy source
- Decreasing house prices in the local area
- Reducing the amount of food produced in the UK
- Increased traffic and disruption during construction

- Damaging the environment
- There are no drawbacks

3.13.1.1 Poll Results:

- Top Concerns Identified:
 - Spoiling the Countryside's View: 45%
 - Reducing Food Production in the UK: 48%
 - Other concerns include increased traffic during construction (36%) and scepticism about solar's environmental impact (28%).

3.13.1.2 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.13.1.3 The results highlight key public concerns, particularly visual impacts and potential reductions in food production.

3.14 Effective Mitigations for Solar Farm Proposals

3.14.1 Question 14: Please consider the following and say whether they would make you feel more positively or negatively about proposals to build new solar farms in your local area.

- The solar farm was temporary and could be converted back to farmland in future
- Solar farms were only built on low quality agricultural land
- Local farmers supported the new solar farm
- Local residents got discounts on their energy bills
- The land underneath and between the solar panels was used to create wildflower meadows for local wildlife
- Livestock such as sheep could graze on the land underneath and between the solar panels
- Jobs for the maintenance and construction of the site were reserved for local people
- The businesses constructing the site invested in training and apprenticeships in the solar power industry for local workers
- The businesses constructing the site invested in new community facilities, like GP surgeries and new bus routes
- The solar farm was hidden from view by trees and hedgerows

3.14.1.1 Poll Results:

The following mitigations were most effective in improving public sentiment.

- Local Energy Discounts: 45% would feel "much more positive," and an additional 33% "slightly more positive." Only 1% felt negatively.
- Wildflower Meadows for Wildlife: 38% "much more positive" and 35% "slightly more positive."
- Using Low-Quality Agricultural Land: 36% "much more positive" and 36% "slightly more positive."
- Livestock Grazing Underneath Panels: 37% "much more positive" and 36% "slightly more positive."

3.14.1.2 Other notable findings:

- Temporary Permissions for Solar Farms: 32% "much more positive" and 39% "slightly more positive."
- Local Farmers Supporting Solar Farms: 31% "much more positive" and 38% "slightly more positive."
- Job Creation and Community Investment:
 - 31% "much more positive" for jobs reserved for local people, with an additional 37% "slightly more positive."
 - 38% "much more positive" for investments in community facilities like GP surgeries and bus routes.
- Visual mitigation also performed well:
 - Hidden by Trees and Hedgerows: 29% "much more positive" and 35% "slightly more positive," though 32% said it would make no difference.

3.14.1.3 Context for the High Grove Solar Farm

3.14.1.4 The poll highlights clear opportunities to use a range of mitigation measures to improve public support or address concerns raised by the public.

Appendix E

Feedback Form

RWE



High Grove Solar Farm

Non-Statutory Consultation Survey

**Monday 9 September 2024 to Friday
18 October 2024**

rwe.com/highgrove

The Parcels Building,
Level 4, 14 Bird Street,
W1U 1BU London

<https://uk.rwe.com/>

RWE



Your feedback

About you

We want to make sure we are reaching a wide and representative range of voices so that we can ensure our proposals are the best they can be. Though participation in this section is not obligatory, we kindly request your postcode to ensure we are reaching people who are local to our proposals.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Age:

☐ Under 18

☐ 18 - 34

☐ 35 - 54

☐ 55 - 74

☐ 75 and over

Would you like to sign up to our project newsletter?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Email address:



Views on the proposals

This section focuses on your overall views toward the initial proposals, and intends to understand the areas of the project that are most important to you.

1) How would you describe your interest in High Grove Solar Farm?

☐ Local resident

☐ Local representative

☐ Landowner (within site)

☐ Statutory organisation

☐ Local business owner

☐ Other:

☐ Regular visitor

2a) How do you feel about the use of solar farms as part of the mix of renewable electricity generation required to meet the UK Government's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050?

☐ Strongly support

☐ Support, but with concerns

☐ Neutral

☐ Oppose

☐ Strongly oppose

2b) Please provide any comments explaining your response:

3a) Based on the information we have presented as part of our early stage consultation, how do you feel about our emerging proposals?

☐ Strongly support

☐ Support, but with concerns

☐ Neutral

☐ Oppose

☐ Strongly oppose

3b) Please provide any comments explaining your response:

4a) Which environmental elements of the project are most important to you?

☐ Traffic, access and construction

☐ Ecology and biodiversity

☐ Noise and amenity

☐ Archaeology and heritage

☐ Water and flood risk

☐ Landscape and visual

☐ Land use and agriculture

☐ Other:

4b) Please provide any comments explaining your response:

4c) We have had some early thoughts on potential environmental measures to include in the project. Are there any measures you would particularly like to see included?

☐ Wildflower meadows

☐ Bat and bird boxes

☐ Bee hives or bug hotels

☐ Sheep grazing

☐ Wetland creation

☐ Other:

4d) Do you have any other information about the area and local environment which you think we should take into account?

5) High Grove is proposed to be distributed over several development areas. Do you have any comments on any of the specific areas? Please tick the relevant areas and add comments in the box below.

☐ Western

☐ Central

☐ Northern

☐ Eastern

☐ Southern

6) Do you have any comments on the Indicative Cable Route Corridors, including any areas you think we should avoid as we select our preferred alignments?

Contributing to the community

7a) Do you have any ideas you would like to share about how High Grove Solar could support the local community, such as educational initiatives, wellbeing facilities, and community assets?

7b) Are you aware of any existing community funds or organisations that might be interested in partnering with us for the High Grove Community Benefit Fund?

Closing questions

8) How did you find out about this consultation?

☐ Social media

☐ Word of mouth

☐ Newspaper, radio, TV

☐ Project newsletter

☐ A local group or organisation

☐ Other

9) How informative have you found our early stage consultation?

☐ Very informative

☐ Somewhat informative

☐ Not very informative

☐ I don't know

10) If we wanted to contact you to clarify any of your responses to our consultation, how would you prefer to be contacted?

☐ No, please do not contact me again

☐ Email

☐ Post

☐ Mobile

Preferred contact details:

Please return your completed feedback form at one of our events or via post to FREEPOST HIGH GROVE SOLAR. No stamp required.

Privacy statement

Ardent are working on behalf of RWE to undertake community consultation on plans for High Grove Solar Farm. By filling in this form, you are agreeing that Ardent can hold and process your personal data in relation to this proposed DCO application. Ardent may share your comments and personal data with the Planning Inspectorate and RWE's planning, environmental and legal teams as part of a Consultation Report. This will be a publicly available document. Your comments will be anonymous and we will only identify you in these reports with your express permission.

Data protection

We process all personal data in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (the GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Your personal data will not be transferred outside the European Economic Area. You can see our full privacy notice, data protection policy, and data retention policy and find out how to exercise any of your data subject rights at the following website address: <https://uk.rwe.com/data-protection/> If you have any questions or concerns about the way we are processing your personal data, please contact us on 01362 350 063 or info@highgrovesolar.co.uk.

Appendix F

Commonplace



Appendix G

Granular Analysis of Interactive Map

Granular Analysis of Interactive Map feedback

Introduction

The online platform Commonplace featured an interactive map for location-based comments, including an accessible version for visually impaired users. A total of 98 comments were submitted (88 on the main map and 10 on the accessible version). The analysis was conducted by development area: Western, Northern, Central, Eastern, and Southern.

Western

Five respondents added comments for the Western area. One responded that they “loved” the plans stating enthusiastic support for solar farms in general but suggested using wildflower seeds under the panels instead of grass. Another said they were “satisfied” with the plans and noted that they thought this was a good use of space near an airfield. The remaining three said they “didn’t like it”, they raised concerns about the impact on aviation at RAF Marham, biodiversity concerns and dissatisfaction with the proximity to settlements, primarily due to the visual and landscape impact.

Central

12 respondents added comments to the map for the Central development area. Three commented that they felt “neutral” towards the proposals for this area they all mentioned access concerns with one commented on the impact to Public Right Of Way (PRoW) and noting a desire for permissive paths to be created as part of the project. Two said they were “dissatisfied” with the proposals with one again calling for permissive paths to be added to the project and a desire for the visual impact to be as minimal as possible and the other noting a general enthusiastic support for solar but stating a preference for solar on brownfield land and expressing corporate cynicism towards the location choice. The other seven commentators said they “disliked” the proposals.

These comments focused on concerns around the location choice, size and scale, and the loss of agricultural land, stating a preference for solar to be placed on brownfield and commenting that the UK needs to rely less on energy imports. They also expressed concerns about biodiversity, the visual and landscape impact, disbenefits to the local economy and tourism, access concerns (specifically for PRoWs), an increase of traffic due to the construction, expressed corporate cynicism, and the impact on human health.

Northern

Eight respondents added comments on the Northern area of the project. One commented that they felt “neutral” towards the project and requested that wildflower planting be used as opposed to tree planting. Another said they were “dissatisfied” and showed a preference for solar to be placed on brownfield sites. The other six said they “disliked” the proposals and referenced themes such as concern for the loss of agricultural land, location choice, size and scale of the project, and a general preference for solar on brownfield land. There were also environmental concerns such as potential pollution, landscape and visual impact, landscape and heritage preservation, concern for biodiversity and general environmental disruption. In terms of economic concerns, respondents commented on adverse effects on property values, disbenefits to the local economy and tourism including impacts on local businesses. There was criticism of the UK Government and its policies, disagreement with the proximity to settlements as well as safety concerns – specifically relating to fire concerns.

Eastern

Eight respondents added comments on the map for the Eastern development area. One respondent added that they “love” the project proposals, adding that they hope the disruption from construction is kept to a minimum. Another added that they felt “neutral” and stated concern over construction traffic. Another said they were “dissatisfied” noting a preference for solar on brownfield land. The other five respondents noted that they “dislike” the project proposals, noting concerns over loss of agricultural land, preference for solar on brownfield, biodiversity concerns, landscape and visual impact and noise when operational.

In addition to the above, there were eight map comments that referenced the Northern and Eastern areas together as they cross over each other. One respondent commented that they were “dissatisfied” with the project plans in this area and stated a preference for solar on brownfield, whilst stating a disagreement to the proximity of settlements, and the impact of construction traffic. The other seven respondents said they “disliked” the project plans, environmental concerns included landscape and visual impact, impact on biodiversity, pollution, noise when operational, impact on farm animals and landscape and heritage preservation. Economic comments included a concern about the potential negative impact on the local economy and tourism, as well as concerns about the adverse effects on property values. There were also site choice comments raised regarding a general preference for solar on brownfield sites and concern around the location choice, size, scale and loss of agricultural land. Other issues raised were the potential for glint and glare, disagreement with the proximity to settlements, traffic concerns (specifically vehicular access), and construction disruption.

Southern

The Southern region received the most comments, with 42 respondents contributing to this area. Six commented that they “loved” the proposals, stating a general enthusiasm for solar projects, one noted that whilst in favour local road network improvements would be needed to support construction traffic. Two commented that they felt “neutral” towards the project plans, but cited challenges with vehicular traffic and safety concerns around utility infrastructure. Two added comments to say they were “dissatisfied” with the proposals they noted that they were concerned about an increase in traffic during the construction of the project and other general concerns around construction disruption, it was also noted that concerns around vehicular traffic access to the area and noise from the development once operational, there was a comment on access to PRow and landscape and visual impacts.

The other 32 commented that they “disliked” the proposals. 14 of these comments mentioned biodiversity concerns in the area, 10 raised concerns for the visual and landscape impact of the project, eight raised concerns around vehicular access, seven raised concerns around the loss of agricultural land, six added comments about pollution concerns, construction disruption and access to PRowS, five commented on the noise when operational, four raised concerns on the location choice, the adverse effects on property values, disagreements with the proximity to settlements, environmental disruption and concerns around landscape and heritage disruption, there were three comments regarding a preference for solar on brownfield land and the impact on human health.

Four respondents selected “all” for the area and expressed that they “dislike” the proposals. They commented that they had biodiversity concerns and were worried about the potential of glint and glare, as well as noted that the project will have a negative effect on local businesses and aviation in the area. They criticised the consultation imagery, expressed corporate cynicism, raised concerns around risk of fire and emphasised their interest in the project having more environmental enhancements. 11 respondent did not specify an area, and three of these didn’t leave any comments but noted that they “didn’t like” the plans. Two respondents said they “loved” the plans showing enthusiastic support for solar farms but noting some concern for house prices and asking for financial incentives to combat this. One respondent said they were “satisfied” and one other said they were “neutral” citing biodiversity concerns, landscape and visual impacts, concerns around access to PRow and impacts on human health. One commented that they were “dissatisfied” and referenced ancient woodland as a concern. Three others responded that they “didn’t like it” these responses focused on concerns around size and scale and the loss of agricultural land, preference for solar on brownfield sites and other energy sources, concerns about biodiversity, landscape and visual impact, construction disruption, pollution and general environmental disruption, property values and disagreement about the proximity to settlements were also raised.

RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Ltd

Windmill Hill Business Park,
Whitehill Way,
Swindon,
Wiltshire,
England,
SN5 6PB