

Boxted Solar Farm

Statement of Community Involvement



CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction.....	3
3. Purpose of this Statement of Community Involvement.....	3
4. Community and Stakeholder Mapping.....	5
5. Consultation	5
6. Feedback and Applicant's Response.....	10
7. Conclusion.....	17
Appendices	18

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced for a proposed 20MW solar farm and associated infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on land at Boxted, South Suffolk (the “Application Site”).
- 1.2. The SCI has been prepared by the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.
- 1.3. As well as detailing the stakeholders and community the Applicant has consulted with during the pre-application period, it also details the various consultation methods used.
- 1.4. The SCI goes on to summarise feedback from stakeholders and the community and how this feedback has been taken into account regarding the design of the Proposed Development.

2. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 2.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) accompanies the planning application for a proposed 20MW solar farm and associated infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on land at Boxted, South Suffolk (the “Application Site”).
- 2.2. Please refer to Figure 4 - Infrastructure Layout (04806-RES-LAY-DR-PT-004 v2) for the layout of the Proposed Development.

Proposed Development

- 2.3. Construction and Operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment, necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains.
- 2.4. The Proposed Development will result in the production of clean energy from a renewable energy resource (daylight) and will also involve additional landscaping including hedgerow and tree planting and improved biodiversity management.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 3.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.
- 3.2. Conducting an early and transparent pre-application public consultation is consistent with the guidance within the NPPF (2023). Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:
“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”
- 3.3. The NPPF goes on to state that:
“[Local Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local

community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.”

- 3.4. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 ensures Local Authorities develop strategies to engage the local community in the planning process. These strategies must be set out in a document called a ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ and must be aimed at all sections of society - including identified ‘hard to reach’ groups - and encourage engagement in the planning process. The aim is to encourage ‘ownership’ of the planning process by the community.
- 3.5. As a result, this SCI (for the Proposed Development) also fulfils a formal recommendation of Babergh District Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), by documenting how people have been provided with an opportunity to feed into the design process of a scheme.
- 3.6. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council’s joint Statement of Community Involvement¹ sets out how early community consultation should take place on planning issues. Paragraph 2.1 states:
- “The Councils both wish to pursue the most efficient ways of involving communities in planning across both local authorities. It is therefore necessary for the SCI to provide a framework for community engagement which is flexible, deliverable, effective and provides best value.”*
- 3.7. It goes on to note:
- “Where a proposal is the subject of pre-application dialogue before a planning application is made and is considered to be controversial, or of public interest, the Councils may ask the developer to consider holding a public meeting or engaging in appropriate publicity to gather community views which may include staging an exhibition to enable pre-application community involvement to take place.”*
- 3.8. In addition to the above, the Applicant recognises that local people can make a valuable contribution to the proposals by offering their local knowledge and raising issues that may not have been considered by the project team, in many cases resulting in a stronger proposal.
- 3.9. Consistent with advice in the LPA’s Statement of Community Involvement, this document forms a consultation supporting statement that summarises the consultation activities undertaken by the Applicant, a summary of comments received, and issues raised, and how the Applicant has had regard to these comments.
- 3.10. The approach to community consultation as presented in this SCI reflects the LPA’s advice for community consultation. Throughout the pre-application public consultation, the Applicant has:
- Invited comments at a time when they can inform the process;
 - Provided sufficient information to describe the subject matter of the consultation;
 - Given notice of consultations in advance;
 - Clearly described how to submit comments and emphasised that comments made were not representations to the determining authority (Babergh District Council) and that there would be the opportunity for representations to be made to the determining authority once the planning application was submitted; and
 - Considered the representations received prior to submitting the planning application.

¹ <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/documents/d/babergh/joint-sci-planning-matters-february-2019-final>

4. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

- 4.1. This section details the key local stakeholders the Applicant identified and engaged with during the pre-application public consultation process. Prior to the start of the consultation, the Applicant undertook detailed desktop research to develop a comprehensive understanding of the key stakeholders to engage with during pre-application public consultation. This research involved identifying local stakeholders located around the site of the Proposed Development.
- 4.2. The stakeholder groups identified included:
- The local population around the Application Site, including Boxted, Hartest, Somerton, Glemsford and the surrounding area; and
 - Locally elected political representatives from the following parish meetings and wards:
 - Boxted Parish Meeting;
 - Hartest Parish Council;
 - Ward councillors for Chadacre ward of Babergh District Council;
 - County Councillor for the Melford electoral division of Suffolk County Council.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. The pre-application public consultation began on 16th December 2022. During the pre-application public consultation, a range of communication methods were used to provide information about the Proposed Development and ensure that the local community had the opportunity to provide their feedback. These methods included:

5.1.1 Introductory letter to elected representatives

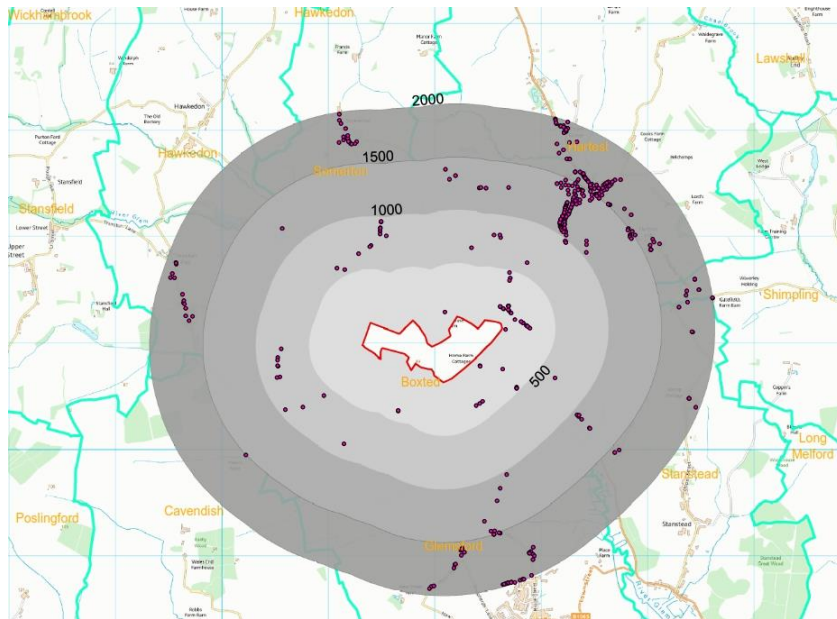
On 16th December 2022, the Applicant wrote to Boxted Parish Meeting, Hartest Parish council, the ward councillors for Chadacre ward and the county councillor for the Melford electoral division, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in the near future. The letter also invited the parties to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the letter can be found at **Appendix A**.

5.1.4 Email to elected representatives

On 30th December 2022, the Applicant wrote to Boxted Parish Meeting, Hartest Parish council, the ward councillors for Chadacre ward and the county councillor for the Melford electoral division, enclosing a newsletter regarding the upcoming public exhibition. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix B**.

5.1.5 Newsletter to local residents

On 30th December 2022, the Applicant sent a newsletter, advertising the upcoming public exhibition, to 293 properties identified within 2km of the site as shown on the map below. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix B**.



5.1.6 Pre-exhibition advertising

The applicant placed an advertisement in the Bury Free Press, on 30th December 2022 to inform the wider community of the public exhibition. A copy of the advertisement can be found at **Appendix C**.

5.1.7 Project website

On 30th December 2022, a project website was launched at www.bosted-solarfarm.co.uk/ containing information on the Proposed Development as well as contact details for the Applicant.

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

5.1.8 Public exhibition

The public exhibition took place between 3pm and 8pm on 11th January 2023 at the Hartest Institute.



All of the information provided on the exhibition boards at the public exhibition was also published on the project website at www.boxted-solarfarm.co.uk/ from 11th January 2023. A copy of the exhibition boards can be found at **Appendix D**.

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

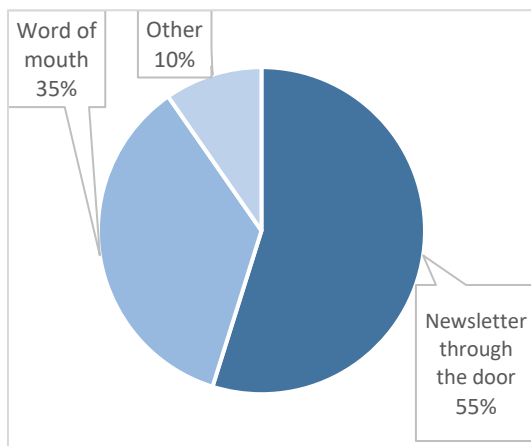
For people without internet access, hard copies of the information on the exhibition boards and comment forms were available upon request. No requests for hard copies were received.

Thirty-one completed comments forms were received by the Applicant. Below is a summary of the answers received to the questions on the comments form.

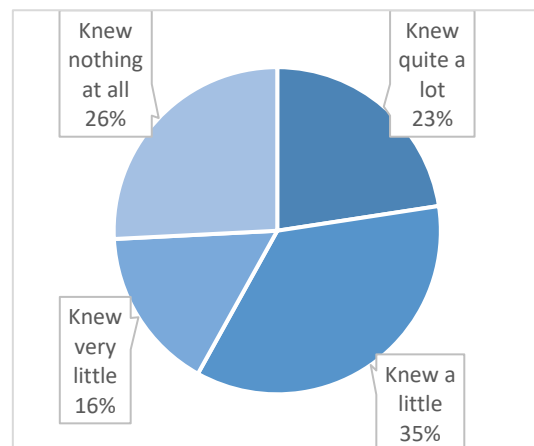
At all stages of the consultation process the Applicant set out clearly the purpose of the consultation and emphasised that comments made were not representations to the determining authority (Babergh District Council) and that there would be the opportunity for representations to the determining authority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

5.1.9 Summary of responses to questions on submitted comments form

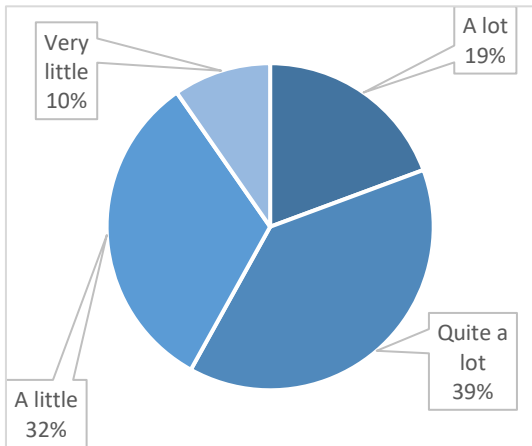
Q1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibition?



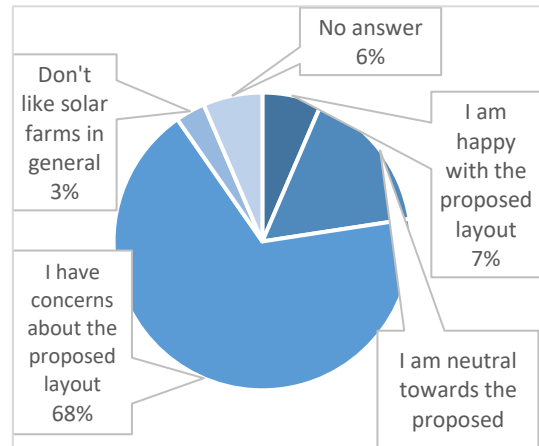
Q1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Boxted Solar Farm?



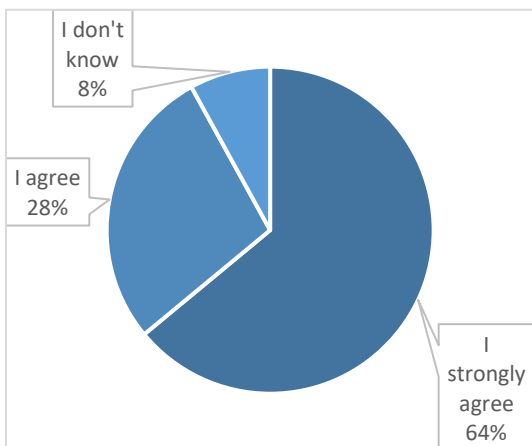
Q1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Boxted Solar Farm?



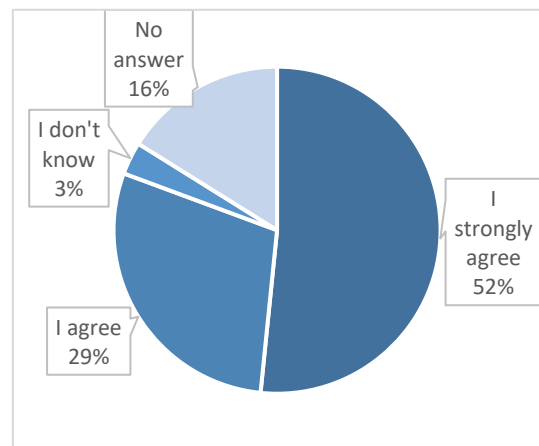
Q2.1 What do you think about the proposed preliminary design layout of Boxted Solar Farm?



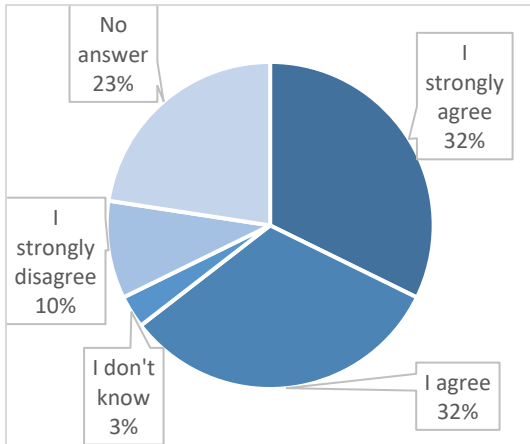
Q4.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?



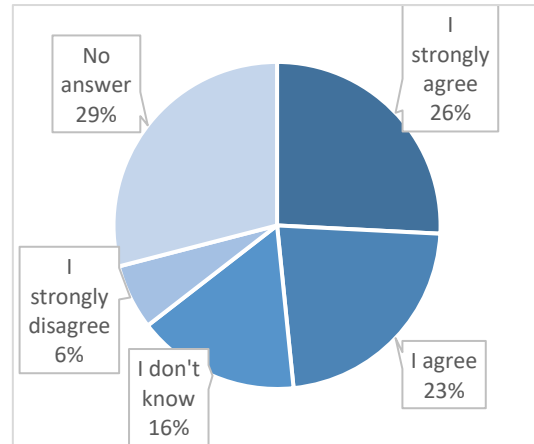
Q4.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?



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



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



5.1.9 Project Information Sheet - February 2023

In February 2023, the Applicant developed an information sheet in response to common questions and comments raised during the consultation. The information sheet was sent by email to all enquiries from local residents and was also published on the project website. The information sheet can be found at **Appendix F**.

5.1.10 Project Update (Newsletter) - October 2023

On 6th October 2023, the Applicant released a project update. The update, by way of newsletter, was sent to Boxted Parish Meeting, Hartest Parish Council, the ward councillors for Chadacre ward and the county councillor for the Melford electoral division as well as 300 local properties. This included all properties contacted as part of the newsletter mailing referenced in section 5.1.5 and other local residents who had attended the public exhibition and asked to be kept updated on the Proposed Development. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix G**.

5.1.11 Other consultation

In addition to the activities outlined in sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.10, the Applicant has been receiving and responding to enquiries and comments from local residents via email. Thirty-two letters and emails were received from members of the public following the public exhibition.

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

6. FEEDBACK AND APPLICANT'S RESPONSE

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

6.1. Need for Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"We live on an island, surrounded by water with tidal flow twice a day, surely this could be harnessed as a much more reliable source of energy."

"This will only benefit the company supplying the solar panels and the landowners who own the land which the panels are placed on."

"I would prefer wind turbines. Less visual impact and better electricity generation in Winter/at night."

"Better put on all new houses and grants for older houses"

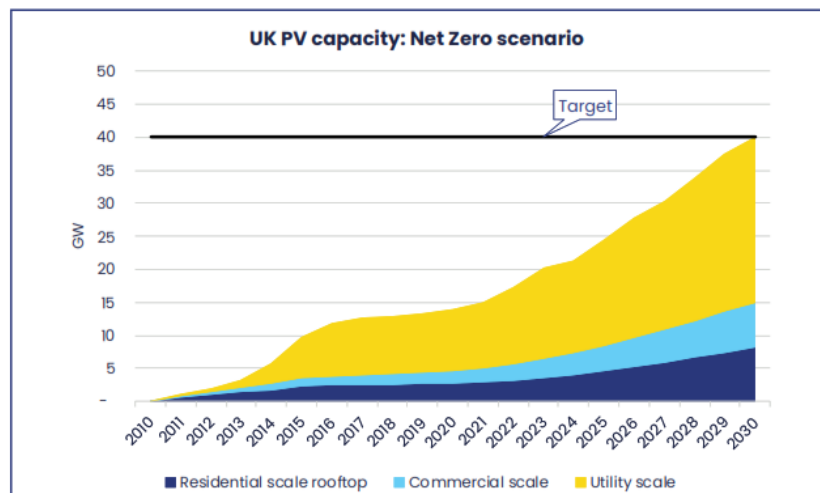
"There are other options, but solar will be part of the mix"

"Put them by prisons but not around small villages, put them alongside motorways and above supermarkets like they do in France."

Applicant response:

As laid out in its Net Zero Strategy published in October 2021, the UK Government has made it clear that solar and wind will be the backbone to achieving a secure, affordable and low carbon energy supply. Analysis from the Climate Change Committee² and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero by 2050.

Solar Energy UK² has published an analysis, as shown in the table below, estimating that residential and commercial development is expected to account for nearly 37% (15GW) of the total 2030 solar PV deployment with the remaining 63% (25GW) coming from large scale ground mounted solar farms.



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

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

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

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

Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind is now the cheapest form of electricity generation. This makes developments like the Proposed Development not just good for the environment but also for the consumer. If consented, the Proposed Development would be capable of producing clean, green electricity for approximately 8,900 homes³ every year.

6.2. Loss of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Land Classification

Sample of Comment(s) received:

*"I feel it is a large area to take over and cut off food production in such a small village."
"Destruction of valuable farm land"
"Poor use of fertile land"*

Applicant response:

The Proposed Development would not pose a threat to food security. One of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. This is clear from recent reports on how last year's drought affected harvests of staple crops including potatoes, carrots and onions⁴.

Already in 2023, we are seeing the effects of climate change. The UK's hottest June on record has caused unprecedented deaths of fish in rivers and disturbed insects and plants, and the world's average temperature reached a new high for the third time in a week.

The Proposed Development will help towards tackling climate change and furthermore, is specifically designed to be dual purpose, enabling continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing, and renewable generation.

Agricultural land covers between 56% and 70% of UK land. Solar farms in the UK currently have a combined capacity of around 15GW which makes up just under 0.1% of land in the UK. By comparison, the total land used by the UK's golf courses is 0.5% and airports is 0.2%. The UK Energy Security Strategy⁵ commits to increase the UK's current 14GW of solar capacity by up to 5 times by 2035. If the government meets its target of increasing solar capacity fivefold, ground-mounted solar would cover a total of around just 0.3% of the UK's land surface⁶.

Typically solar farms are designed in such a way that around just 5% of the land is physically occupied by the solar infrastructure. This allows remaining land to be

³ The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).

⁴ <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-drought-farmers-struggle-feed-cattle-cheap-meat-heatwave-1793194>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy>

⁶ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-is-solar-power-a-threat-to-ukfarmland/#:~:text=This%20is%20significant%20because%2C%20as,to%20grow%20biofuels%20for%20cars.>

accessible for plant growth, wildlife enhancements and complementary agricultural activities such as grazing.

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

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

The trustees of the estate on which the Proposed Development would be located have been responsible custodians of the land for generations. There is a significant threat to farming practices across the UK due to the challenges caused by the changing climate, which is having an impact on the viability of some agricultural businesses. Projects like the Proposed Development can enable diversification of agricultural businesses whilst tackling the effects of climate change.

An **Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey** accompanies the planning application. The largest proportion of land has been classified as Subgrade 3b which is not classified as best and most versatile land. In assessing the Proposed Development, consideration has been given as to whether any lower grade land was available. Based on Natural England mapping, which gives an indication of agricultural land quality across regions, the Babergh District Council area only has 1.83% of land classified as Grade 4 and there is no Grade 5 land.

6.3. Location/Visual Impact

Sample of Comment(s) received:

“What a blot on the landscape”

“The proposed commercial site is a potential blight on the landscape which is a particularly special part of Suffolk”

“Personally it does not affect my view so I have no personal impact”

“On beautiful rising landscape, visible for miles away ruining our special valley”

“My limited understanding is that it has an impact on the views into and out of the village”

“This is an area of special landscape. The solar farm will have a detrimental visual impact because of the slope of the land”.

“This is a terrible place to put the farm and will destroy the beautiful views for so many.”

“You cannot screen a hill. It will ruin everyone’s enjoyment of local walks and scenery. Put them on flat ground that can be screened.”

“Way too visible from far too many vantage points”.

Applicant response:

The site of the proposed Bosted Solar Farm is not located within any National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) and this includes the proposed extension to the Dedham Vale AONB.

Our iterative design process is informed by site surveys and assessments, and feedback from the community and stakeholders. Following an initial landscape review, at an early

stage we removed any infrastructure from the north-west corner of site, to reduce potential visibility.

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

- Removal of solar infrastructure from lower, north-facing slopes in the northern portion of the site, following the topography, and by the driveway to Moorhouse Farm. This would reduce potential visibility from the north side of the Glem Valley and Braggon's Hill and the driveway to Moorhouse Farm, respectively.
- Significant additional woodland planting proposed along the northern perimeters of the site to further reduce potential visibility.

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

A **Landscape and Visual Assessment**, which accompanies the planning application, provides an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed solar farm on the existing landscape and visual amenity of the site and the surrounding area and accompanies the planning application. The LVA considers the landscape character of the site and the surrounding areas and the features that define it, as well as views from key points locally, eg nearby PROW. It is noted that the emerging local plan removes the Stour Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA), however, the LVA includes an assessment of any potential impact of the Proposed Development on the SLA.

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

The **Landscape Masterplan** also provides further details on measures to protect existing vegetation, proposed species and specifications for new vegetation.

6.4. Traffic and Construction

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"Concerns over access road, very narrow, already difficult with delivery trucks."

"There is a very small and old bridge to be crossed to access the site - will this be strengthened?"

"The potential damage to the small bridge in Boxted which the construction traffic has to use is likely to be damaged."

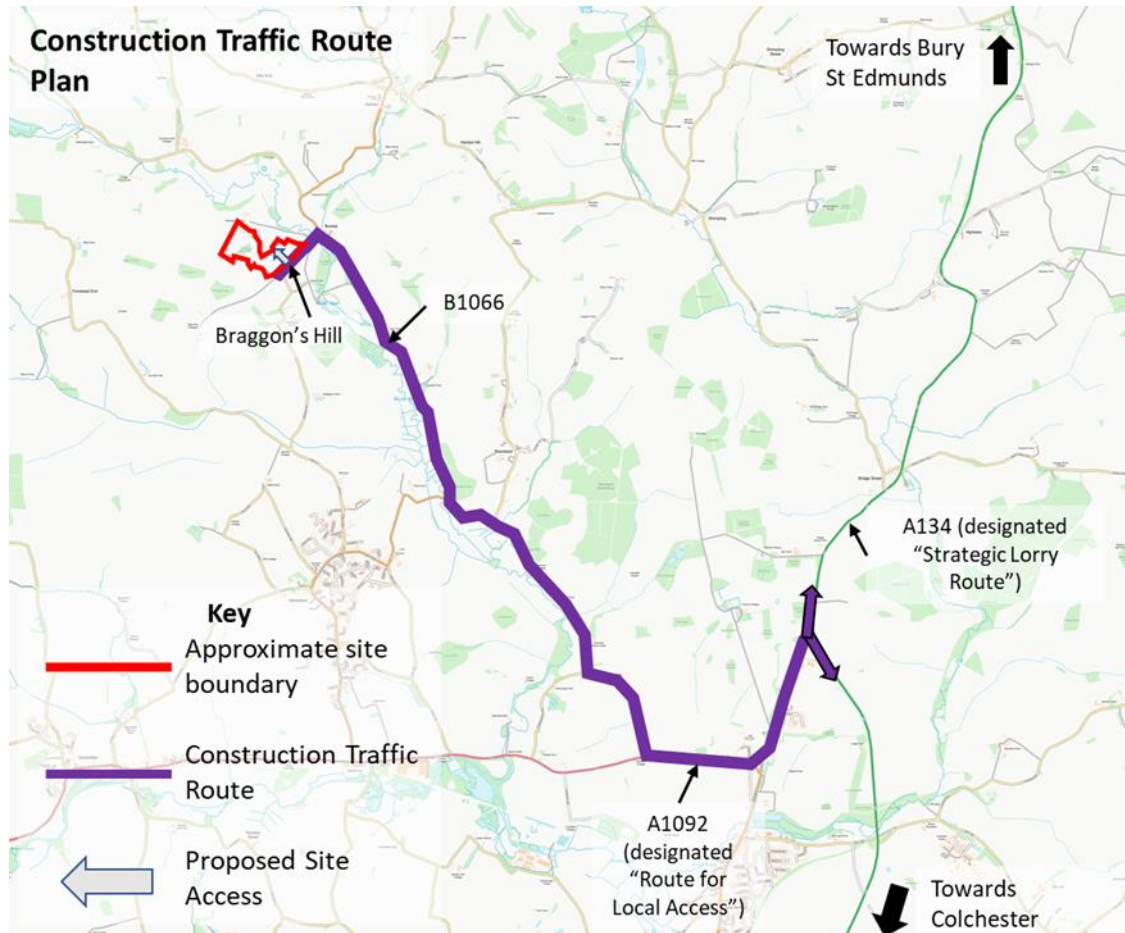
Applicant response:

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

The proposed delivery route will be from the A134, which is designated as a strategic lorry route on the Suffolk County Council's Recommended Lorry Route Network Map⁵. At the junction with the A1092 High Street, vehicles will turn onto the A1092 and proceed southwest through Long Melford for c.2km. Delivery traffic will then turn right onto the B1066 and will proceed north for c. 5km towards Boxted. Traffic will then turn left onto Braggon's Hill before turning right into the site access. The delivery route is shown on the plan below.

⁵ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/lorry-management/lorry-route-plan-review-in-suffolk/recommended-lorry-route-network-map>

It is proposed that an existing agricultural access, which is currently taken off Braggon's Hill, will be upgraded to serve the proposed site.



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

Hours of operation and traffic movements will be limited to avoid morning and evening peak times. There will also be a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to engage with local residents, throughout the construction and operational phases. A pre-and post-construction condition survey of access roads and tracks will be undertaken and the Applicant will be liable to repair any damage caused as a result of the solar farm construction.

It is anticipated that the construction phase would span a period of around just six months, with the peak number of vehicles movements occurring in the first three months, during the enabling works.

The peak number of construction trips are anticipated to be c.42 two-way construction vehicle trips per day (excluding construction staff trips), of which nine are expected to be HGV trips. The number of trips per day will fluctuate depending on the construction phase and as such the typical daily trips will be lower.

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

6.5. Ecology and Biodiversity

Sample of Comment(s) received:

"A fence is proposed around the entire site. Could wildlife corridors be considered?"

"I don't wish to see this proposal implemented, surrounded by fencing curtailing the movement of deer and other mammals."

"Trying to enhance biodiversity having destroyed the landscape and the environment is not something that I support."

"Once established, create a herbal area for maximum biodiversity, rain water infiltration & biological activity through managed grazing by sheep & possible various other species like cattle, deer, chickens & pigs"

"Hedging around the deer fencing. Lessens the visual impact and creates wildlife corridors."

"Lots of biodiversity already there so leave it be!"

"Don't build a solar farm on a diverse landscape. Ancient woods - how will the Fallow/Roe/Muntjack cross the areas?"

Applicant response:

The site of the Proposed Development lies outside of any ecological designations and an **Ecological Assessment**, to accompany the planning application has been undertaken for the proposed solar farm, to assess the potential impacts on local ecology as a result of the development. The short-term disturbance resulting from the Proposed Development will not be significant. With the proposed mitigation undertaken and, with the implementation of pre-commencement surveys, there will be no significant adverse effects upon protected or notable species.

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

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

Such measures include:

- 5m buffer from hedgerows
- 3m drainage ditch buffer
- Tree buffers
- 15m buffer from ancient woodland

Through significant planting and biodiversity enhancement measures, put forward as part of the Proposed Development, there is potential to deliver a 99% biodiversity net gain in habitat units and a 48% biodiversity net gain in hedgerow.

The Ecological Assessment is supported by a **Skylark Mitigation Strategy (SMS)**. The SMS sets out how c. 70 acres of land within the Proposed Development will provide suitable additional habitat features to support a minimum of nine skylark territories.

In addition to the skylark territories, the wildflower rich grassland created as part of the Proposed Development will also offer significantly improved foraging opportunities for skylark nesting adjacent to the Proposed Development, as the grassland habitats will support a larger biomass of insect prey items than the arable land they will replace.

With the mitigation measures proposed, any potential adverse impact on the local skylark population will be avoided.

6.6. Efficiency

Sample of Comment(s) received:

“Could it not be positioned within the park at Boxted Hall on a flatter piece of land, so that the panels can face south?”

“Poor use of fertile land - especially on a north-facing slope. Solar should be on flat south-facing sites.”

“The north facing slope is inefficient.”

Applicant response:

Technological advancements in solar panel manufacture in recent years has been significant. This includes an industry standard move towards the use of the more efficient Monocrystalline (single crystal) technology. Monocrystalline solar cells are made from a very pure form of silicon, making them the most efficient material when it comes to the conversion of sunlight into energy.

Furthermore, we are proposing the use of bifacial modules for the Proposed Development, which as the name suggests, have two sides of solar cells, enabling additional energy generation from the reflected and diffused light on the rear-side of the panels. Solar panels do not require direct sunlight to produce energy - diffuse sunlight is sufficient, and a grass surface reflects enough light to justify the use of bifacial modules. The use of bifacial panels means that there is potential to produce more electricity in less space.

Whilst some of the Proposed Development is located on north/north-east facing land, the solar panels will be oriented in a south-facing direction and the topography of the land has been factored into the design.

It is worth noting that whilst flat/south-facing land provides the optimum orientation for solar generation, solar panels on east, west and north facing land are still viable in terms of the amount of energy produced from both direct and diffuse sunlight.

6.7. Cultural Heritage

Sample of Comment(s) received:

“Several listed properties in Hartest overlooking site”

“Hartest is a conservation area”

“Hartest has a widely drawn conservation area containing numerous listed buildings. The setting of a listed building is as important as the building. At least 5 listed buildings on Hartest Hill will be observed against a backdrop of the proposed farm, destroying the previous settings.”

Applicant response:


A **Heritage Statement** has been prepared for the Proposed Development and accompanies the planning application. The Heritage Statement assesses the acceptability of the scheme in relation to impacts on the historic environment and archaeological resource within and surrounding the site. The Heritage Statement concludes that the Proposed Development would result in less than substantial harm at the low end of the spectrum on the Grade II listed Moorhouse Farm and Water Hall and no harm to other identified heritage assets.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has provided an overview of the engagement and consultation activities that have been, and continue to be, undertaken by the Applicant on the Proposed Development.
- 7.2. The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has allowed the Applicant to identify and respond to local issues and potential concerns.
- 7.3. Analysis from the comments forms has shown that those who attended the public exhibition felt better informed about the proposals further to their attendance. 58% increased their understanding of the Proposed Development either 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' following attendance at the exhibition.
- 7.4. Of the issues raised during the consultation, issues relating to the visual impact, impact on cultural heritage and loss of agricultural land were of particular importance to the community. Constructive comments on these and other topics have been taken into consideration by the Applicant before the submission of the planning application.
- 7.5. This feedback has resulted in the Applicant undertaking an iterative design process in order to integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding site as sensitively as possible, while taking account of comments received during the pre-application consultation.
- 7.6. Changes that have been made throughout the pre-application process include:
 - Removal of solar infrastructure from lower, north-facing slopes in the northern portion of the site and by the driveway to Moorhouse Farm. This would reduce potential visibility from the north side of the Glem Valley and Braggon's Hill and the driveway to Moorhouse Farm, respectively.
 - Additional woodland planting proposed along the northern perimeters of the site to further reduce potential visibility.
 - Increased setback distance from 10m to 15m from Dripping Pan Wood to align with the setback distances from the ancient woodlands of Lownage Wood and Park Wood.
 - Any infrastructure has been removed from within the small area of flood risk zone associated with the River Glem.
- 7.7. The Applicant is committed to continuing the open dialogue it has established with the local community during pre-application public consultation as the application process continues, as outlined within this SCI.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	Introductory letter to elected representatives
APPENDIX B	Public exhibition newsletter
APPENDIX C	Public exhibition newspaper advert
APPENDIX D	Public exhibition materials
APPENDIX E	Comment form
APPENDIX F	Project Information Sheet
APPENDIX G	Project update (Newsletter)



16 December 2022

Dear 

RE: Boxted Solar Farm Proposal

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land south of Moorhouse Farm Lane, Boxted, Suffolk.

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

Analysis from the Climate Change Committee and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero targets. Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation making developments like the proposed Boxted Solar Farm not just good for the environment but also consumers.

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

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

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

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

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,



Matt Looker
New Sites Manager
M: 07884 580779
E: matt.looker@res-group.com

BOXTED SOLAR FARM

JANUARY 2023



RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land at Boxted, South Suffolk.

Environmental and technical surveys have been ongoing in recent months to ensure that the site is suitable for a solar farm development and to inform a preliminary layout and design.

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

Public Exhibition

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



Wednesday 11th January
3pm to 8pm

Boxted and Hartest Institute
The Green, Hartest, Suffolk IP29 4DH

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at

www.boxted-solarfarm.co.uk

from 11th January 2023.

The public exhibition initiates a consultation period being run by RES to gather written comments on the proposal. **The closing date for comments on the preliminary design is 31st January 2023.**

Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development. Comments on the proposal should be provided in writing by either filling out a comment form at the public exhibition or online, or by writing to RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR.

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

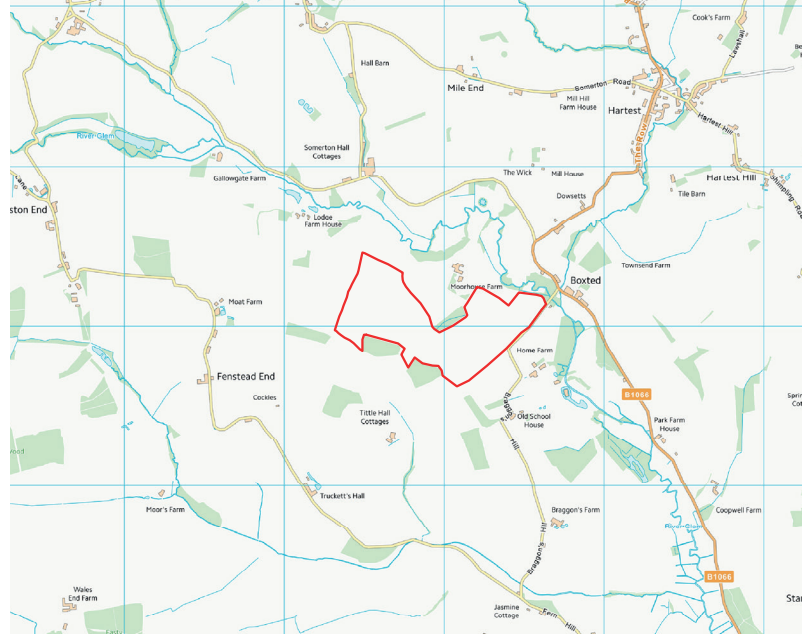
Boxted Solar Farm at a Glance

The proposed Boxted Solar Farm is located on land in Boxted, South Suffolk.

It is anticipated that the solar farm would be capable of generating up to 20MW of clean, low cost renewable electricity, enough to power approximately 8,000¹ homes.

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

Solar projects like Boxted can be quick to deploy, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply and contribute to Net Zero targets. They are also the cheapest form of new electricity generation², alongside onshore and offshore wind. This makes developments like Boxted not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.



© Crown Copyright 2022. All rights reserved. License number 0100031673.

About RES

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

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



Matt Looker
New Sites Manager
✉ matt.looker@res-group.com
☎ 07884 580 779



Carey Green
Community Liaison Officer
✉ carey.green@res-group.com
☎ 01872 226 931

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

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

¹ The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average, annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,748 kWh (Dec 2021).

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf



BOXTED SOLAR FARM

Public Exhibition



RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm in Boxted, South Suffolk.

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding a public exhibition in the local area to enable people to find out more about the early stage proposal and provide us with their views. RES staff will be on hand to answer any questions and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

Wednesday 11th January 2023
3pm to 8pm

Boxted and Hartest Institute
The Green, Hartest, Suffolk IP29 4DH

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at www.boxted-solarfarm.co.uk from 11th January 2023.

The public exhibition initiates a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the proposal. **The closing date for comments on the preliminary design is 31st January 2023.**

Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development. Comments on the proposal should be provided in writing by either filling out a comment form at the public exhibition or online, or by writing to RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR.

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

For more information please visit our website at
www.boxted-solarfarm.co.uk

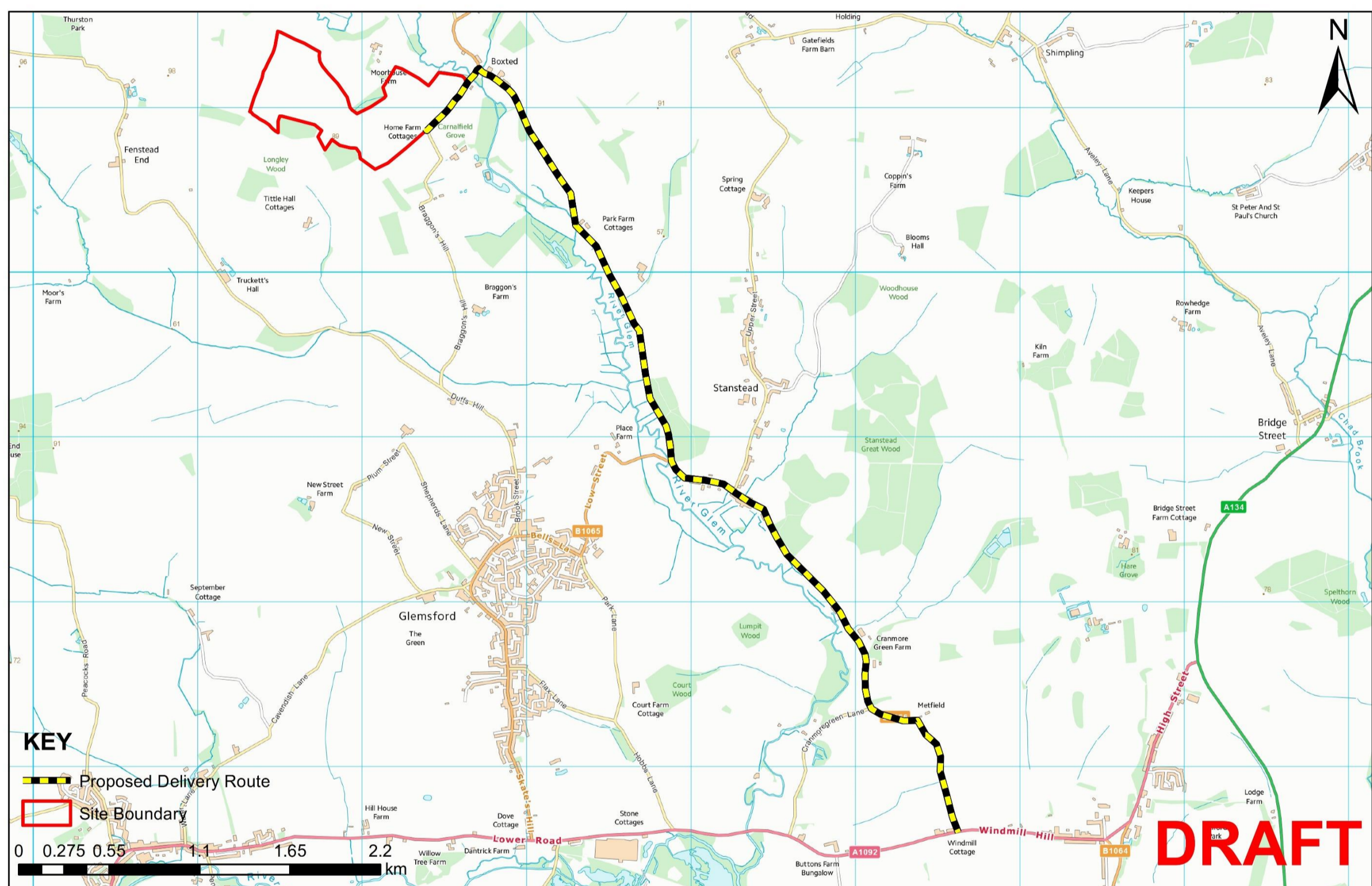


Potential Access Route

Access is an important consideration when selecting a potential solar farm site.

A transport survey is ongoing in consultation with the Highways Authority. The preliminary plan below shows the potential access route currently under consideration which could be used for delivery of materials and access for construction and maintenance.

Boxted Proposed Delivery Route



© Crown copyright and database rights 2023
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Approximate Location: 581926, 250938

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

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

How a Solar Panel Works



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

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

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

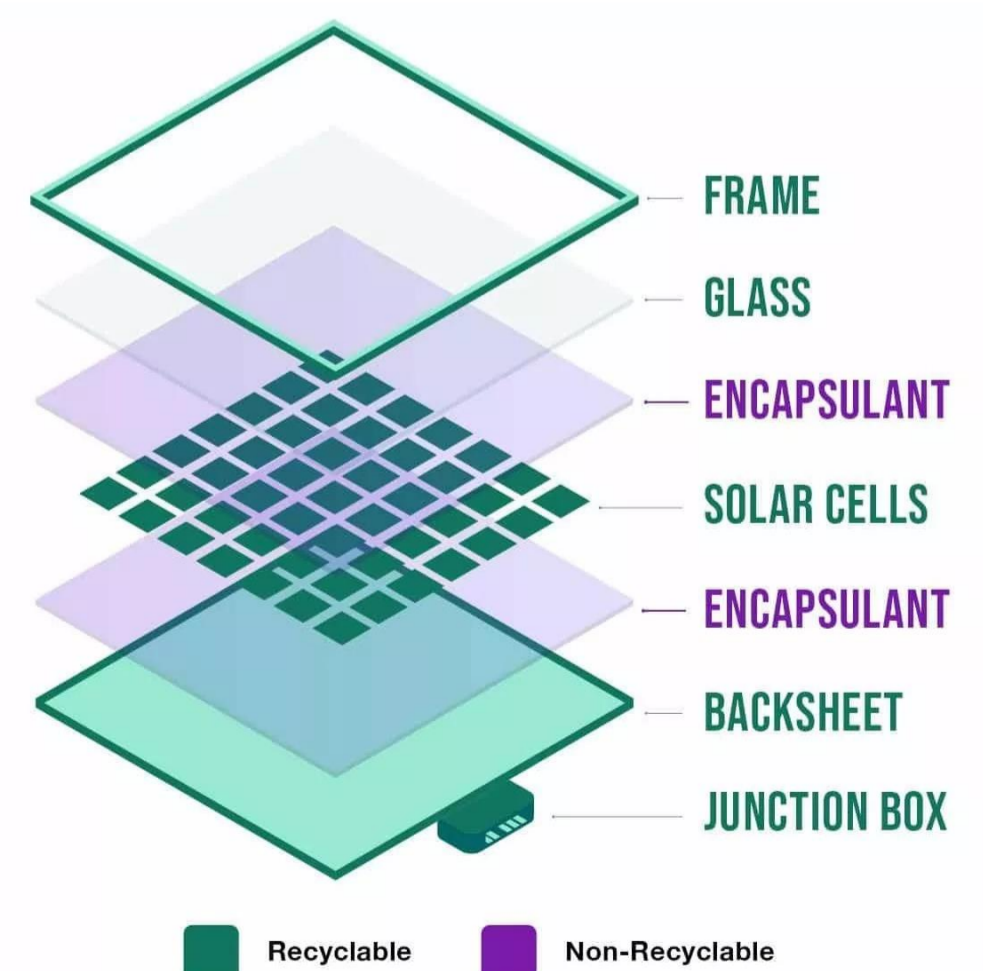
Bifacial modules have two sides of solar cells, enabling additional energy generation from the diffuse light reflected off the grass, on the rear-side of the panels.

Recycling

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

They are working with solar developers to minimise electrical waste and recycle old panels in line with the Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations¹.

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

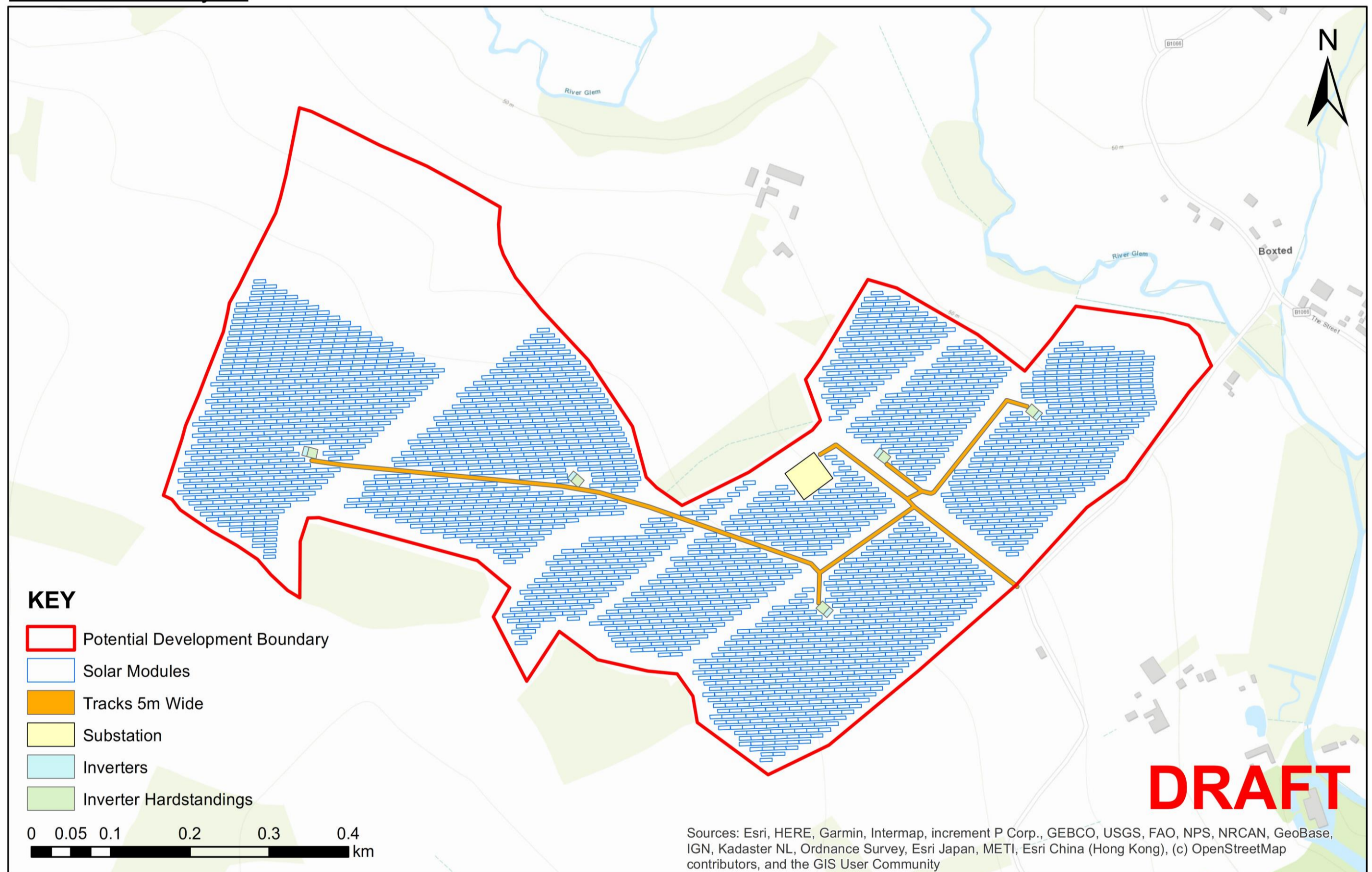


Source: ecowatch.com/solar-panel-recycling

Design Layout and Infrastructure

The plan below shows the preliminary layout for Boxted Solar Farm which will be capable of producing 20MW of clean and renewable electricity. The preliminary layout is based on initial findings from environmental and technical surveys which are ongoing. We are currently consulting on this layout and as such, it is subject to change.

Boxted Solar Layout



Approximate Location: 581926, 250938

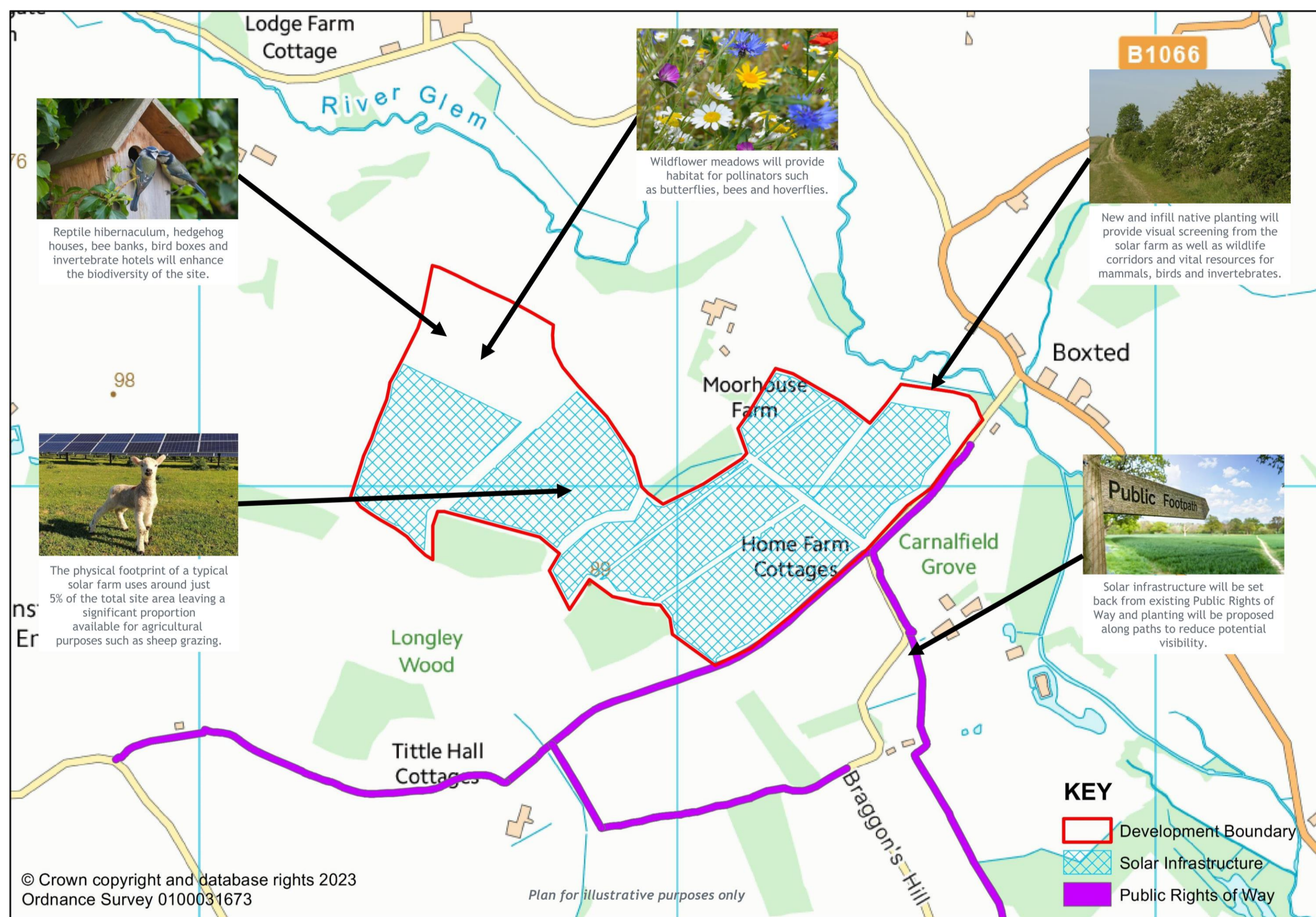
In addition to the solar panels, the site infrastructure is expected to include:

- A network of on-site access tracks;
- A substation/transformer with security fencing;
- Inverters on hardstandings;
- Temporary construction compound; and
- Deer fencing around the perimeter of the solar farm.

Landscape and Ecology

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

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



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

In addition, the LEMP will provide information on the timings and aftercare regime for all planting for the lifetime of the proposed Boxted Solar Farm, if it is consented.

WHY SOLAR?

- » Renewable energy at lowest cost to the consumer¹
- » Tackling climate change by supporting the UK's target of net zero by 2050
- » Specifically designed to be dual purpose, combining continued agricultural use and renewable generation
- » Quick to deploy
- » Modern, efficient technology allowing more electricity generation in less space
- » Diversification of agricultural business
- » Significant biodiversity enhancement opportunities by supporting new and existing plant and animal habitats
- » High level of public support²



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

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

We believe in meaningful and effective consultation

The aims of our consultation process are to:

Engage early with the local community to facilitate a constructive consultation process to help identify and understand concerns.

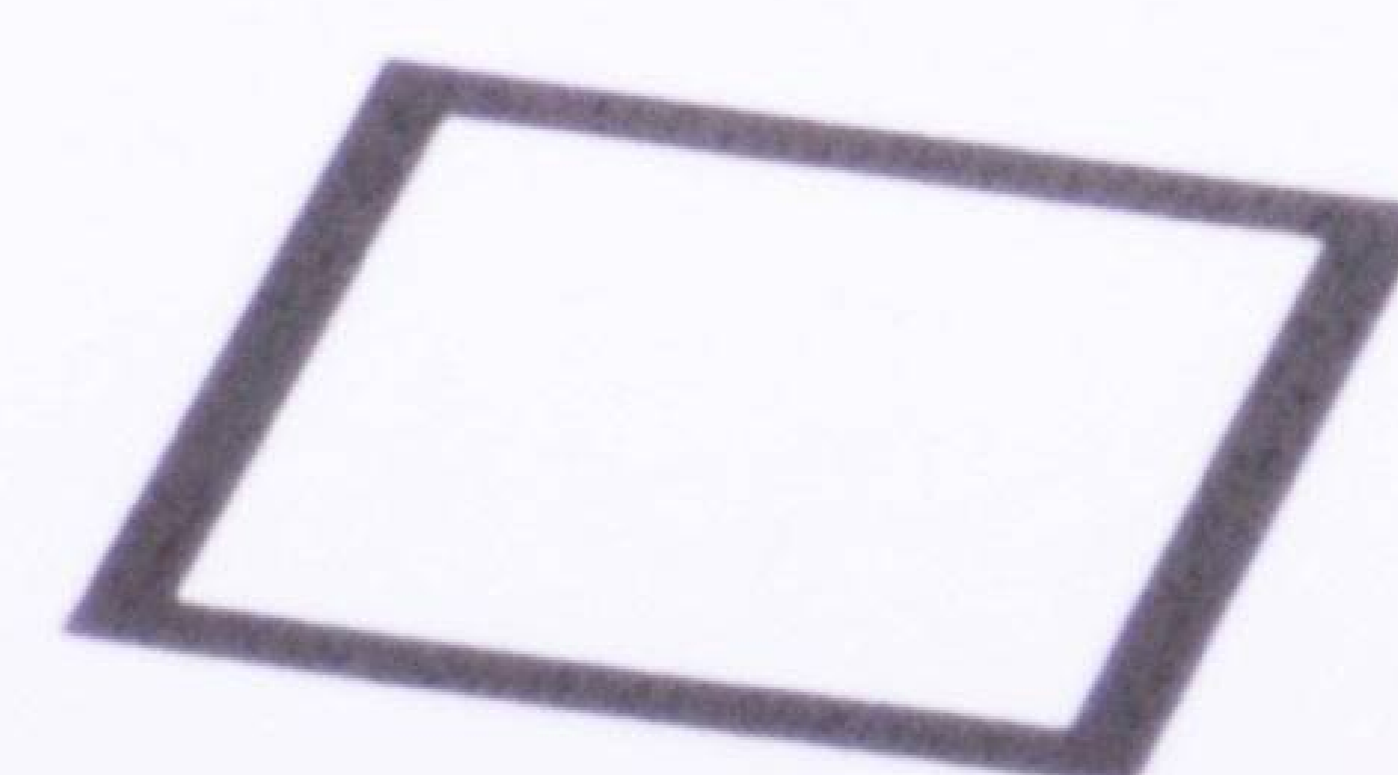
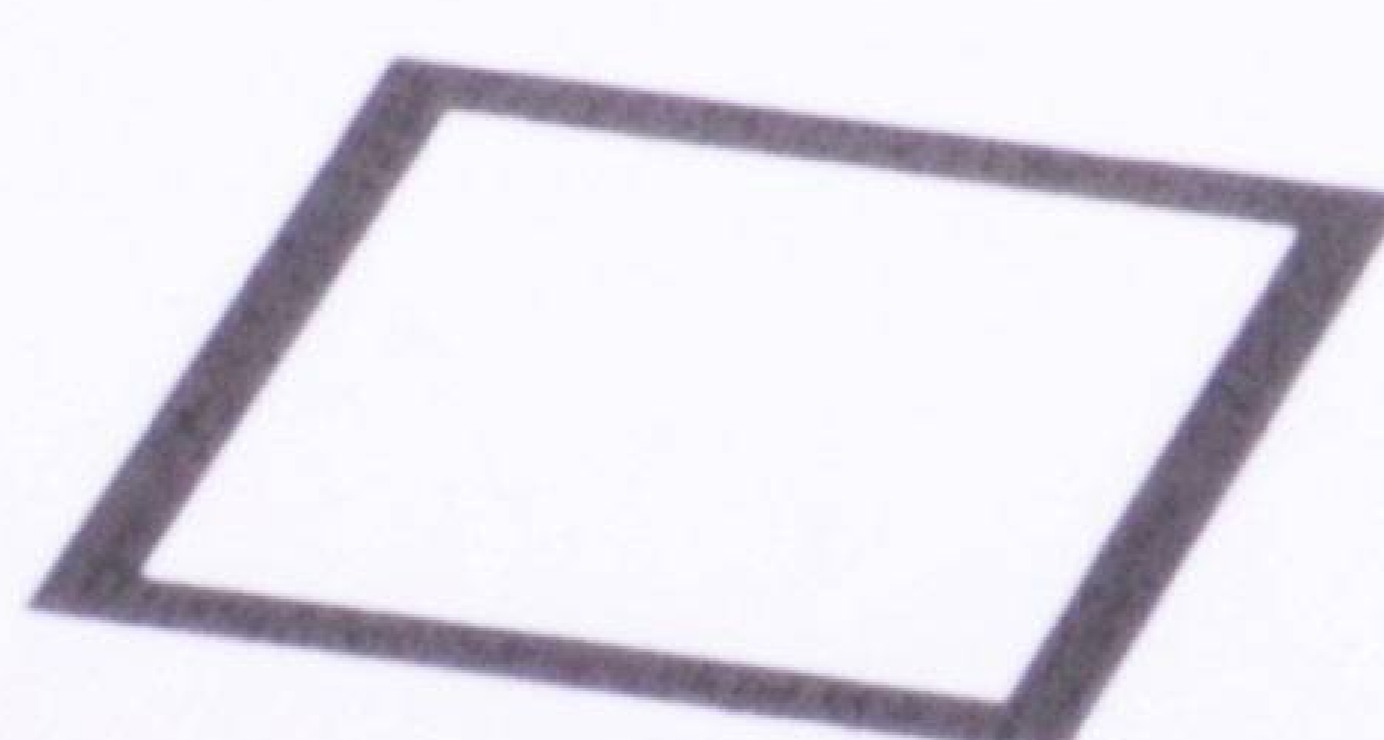
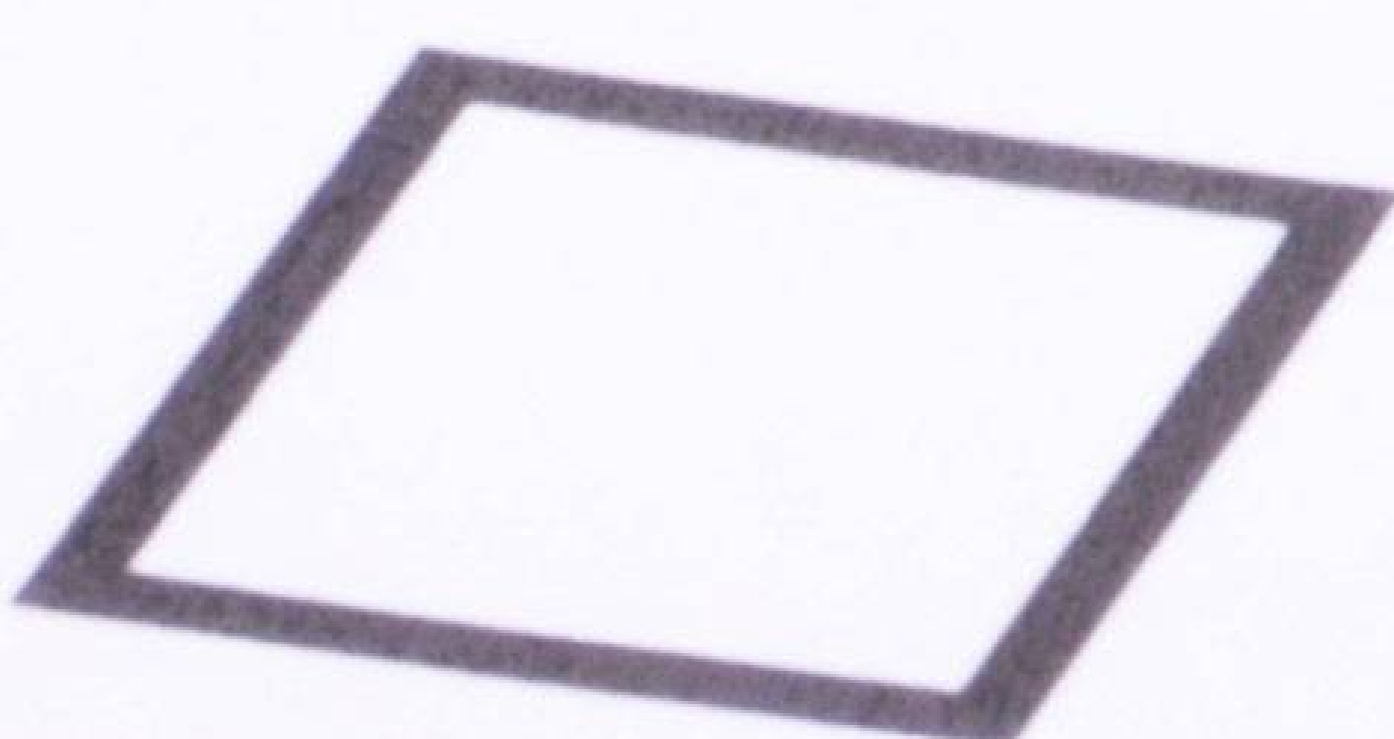
Assist the local community in understanding the benefits and potential impacts of the proposed solar farm.

Add value and improve the quality of our proposal through meaningful and productive consultation.

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

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

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



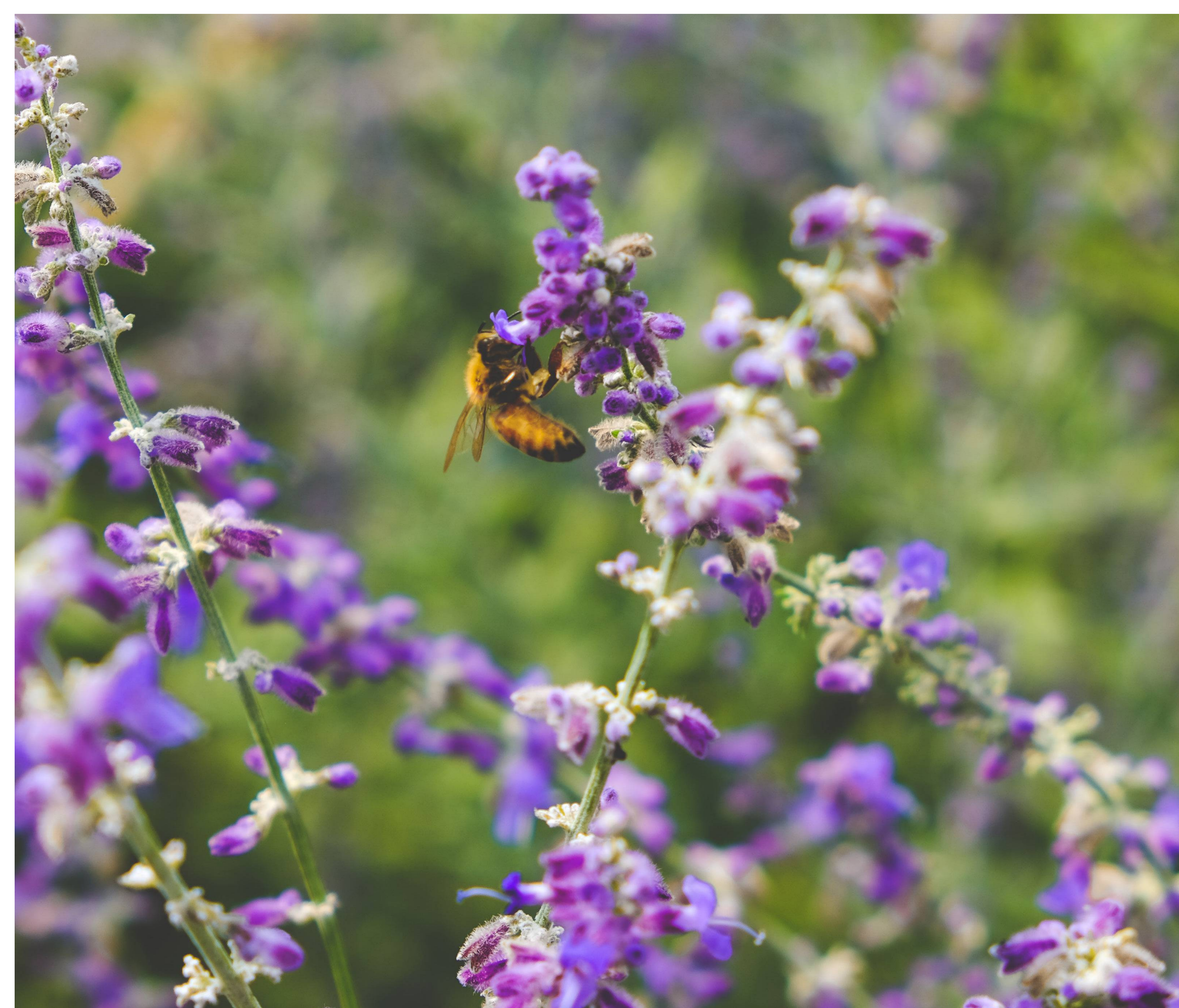
RES design their solar farms so that they will fit sensitively in the surrounding landscape

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

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

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

The assessments will accompany any planning application that is made.



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

At the Public Exhibition we have presented preliminary design drawings. Feedback from the local community on the preliminary design is an important part of our pre-application consultation and we would be grateful if you could take the time to fill out this comments form with your feedback. The closing date for comments on the preliminary design is **31st January 2023**. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

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

1 Boxted Solar Farm public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibitions?

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Boxted Solar Farm Proposal

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

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

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

Further comments:

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

3 Local benefits

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

Wildflower planting

Bird and bat boxes

Bee banks/hives

Invertebrate hotels

If you have any other ideas or suggestions for biodiversity enhancement measures, please let us know in the box below.

3.3 We firmly believe that solar schemes should provide meaningful benefits locally and we will work with the local community to gain feedback on their priorities and deliver projects that will help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits. This approach will help to deliver a tailored package of benefits that are aligned with the local communities' priorities.

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

4 Climate change, energy security and renewables

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

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

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

Further comments:

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

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

Further comments:

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

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

Further comments:

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

I strongly agree

I agree

I don't know

I disagree

I strongly disagree

Further comments:

5 Your details

Please provide your name and contact details below.

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

Name	
Email	
Address	

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

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

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

RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land at Boxted, South Suffolk. We recently held a public exhibition in the local area to share information on the preliminary design and to enable people to provide us with their feedback. This information sheet addresses some of the common questions and comments raised by the community, following the public exhibition in January 2023.

Loss of Agricultural Land

Boxted Solar Farm would not pose a threat to food security. One of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. This is clear from recent reports on how last year's drought is affecting harvests of staple crops including potatoes, carrots and onions¹.

The solar farm will help towards tackling climate change and furthermore, is specifically designed to be dual purpose, enabling continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing, and renewable energy generation.

Agricultural land covers between 56% and 70% of UK land. Solar farms in the UK currently have a combined capacity of around 14GW which makes up just under 0.1% of land in the UK. By comparison, the total land used by the UK's golf courses is 0.5% and airports is 0.2%. The UK Energy Security Strategy² commits to increase the UK's current 14GW of solar capacity by up to 5 times by 2035. If the government meets its target of increasing solar capacity fivefold, ground-mounted solar would cover a total of around just 0.3% of the UK's land surface³ which is still less than the total land used by the UK's golf courses.



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

Furthermore, where a solar farm is installed on land which has been intensively farmed, it enables the ground underneath to recover, while providing income for the farming business. Solar farms also help regenerate soil quality, and so are helping to ensure the continued availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for future generations.

According to Natural England mapping, the site is classified as Grade 3 land. We will undertake an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey and the results will provide confirmation of the quality of the land. The ALC survey will accompany any planning application that is made.

Efficiency

Technological advancements in solar panel manufacture in recent years has been significant. This includes an industry-standard move towards the use of the more efficient Monocrystalline (single crystal) technology. Monocrystalline solar cells are made from a very pure form of silicon, making them the most efficient material when it comes to the conversion of sunlight into energy.

Furthermore, at Boxted Solar Farm we are proposing the use of bifacial modules, which as the name suggests, have two sides of solar cells, enabling additional energy generation from the reflected and diffused light on the rear-side of the panels. Solar panels do not require direct sunlight to produce energy - diffuse sunlight is sufficient, and a grass surface reflects enough light to justify the use of bifacial modules. The use of bifacial panels means that there is potential to produce more electricity in less space.

¹ <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-drought-farmers-struggle-feed-cattle-cheap-meat-heatwave-1793194>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy>

³ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-is-solar-power-a-threat-to-uk-farmland/>

Ecology and Biodiversity



The site of the proposed Boxted Solar Farm lies outside of any ecological designations and an Ecological Assessment will be undertaken to assess the potential impacts on local ecology as a result of the development.

Solar infrastructure will be set back a minimum of 5 metres from existing hedgerow and a minimum of 15 metres from woodland.

Solar farms have the potential to be of great benefit to certain fauna, particularly some bird species. The image to the left shows a kestrel using the solar panels at the RES-managed Stour Fields Solar Farm in Manningtree to hunt prey. As a result of eco-cutting at the solar farms that RES manages, the untouched wild grass has provided cover for small animals such as voles, wood mice and shrews which in turn have attracted birds of prey.

According to the Barn Owl Trust⁴, solar farms have the potential to be of great benefit to Barn Owls as the array frameworks are typically at a height from which Barn Owls can perch-hunt. Grass below and around the arrays can provide good Barn Owl foraging habitat.

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

The Boxted Solar Farm also has significant potential to enhance biodiversity and deliver a biodiversity net gain. The site is capable of hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. We would endeavour to maintain all existing hedgerow and trees, however, new and infill planting proposed will be at least equal to, but likely significantly much higher, than the area of any hedgerows and trees removed.

Good for the Environment and the Consumer

As laid out in its Net Zero Strategy⁵ published in October 2021, the UK Government has made it clear that solar and wind will be the backbone to achieving a secure, affordable and low carbon energy supply.

Large-scale solar, alongside offshore and onshore wind is now the cheapest form of electricity generation. The UK is still heavily reliant on gas for electricity generation and with the volatile price of gas unlikely to return to pre-Covid levels, accelerating the switch to renewables will lead to reductions in electricity bills.

If consented, Boxted Solar Farm would be capable of producing clean, green electricity for around 8,000⁶ homes every year.

In addition, if consented, we estimate Boxted Solar Farm would deliver around £60,000 in business rates annually. Babergh District Council retains 100% of all the business rates from renewable energy businesses to fund vital local services for all local residents.

We believe that solar schemes should also provide meaningful benefits locally and we want to work with the local community to gain feedback on their priority projects and aims in the area, which the solar farm may be able to support.

This makes developments like Boxted Solar Farm not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.

Landscape and Visual



The site of the proposed Boxted Solar Farm is not located within any National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) and this includes the proposed extension to the Dedham Vale AONB.

Our iterative design process is informed by site surveys and assessments, and feedback from the community and stakeholders. Following an initial landscape review, at an early stage we removed any infrastructure from the north west corner of site, to reduce potential visibility due to the gradient of the land. The land, however, will not go to waste. It will enable us to use the area for significant biodiversity enhancements measures.

RES will seek to design the solar farm so that it will fit sensitively in the surrounding landscape and a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be undertaken and accompany any planning application. The LVIA, which will be undertaken by an independent landscape consultant, will identify any likely adverse effects predicted during the operational phase of the proposed solar farm on the landscape and visual resources of the site and surrounding landscape. Should any adverse effects be identified, appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed, and where practicable, embedded within the design of the project. The LVIA will include a series of visualisations of what the solar farm could look like, from various viewpoints in the area, as agreed with the local planning authority. The height of hedgerows and the solar panels will also be determined as part of the LVIA.

*Hale Farm Solar Farm, Wiltshire
For illustrative purposes only*

A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will also be produced when we have a final design and also accompany any planning application. In addition to the appropriate setting back of the solar infrastructure from residential properties and Public Rights of Way, potential visibility will be reduced by existing trees and hedgerow and proposed new and infill native planting. As well as providing screening, the planting will provide wildlife corridors and vital resources for mammals, birds, and insect species. The LEMP will set out the location of all new and infill planting, details of the proposed planting mixes and information on timings and aftercare.

What Happens Next?

RES is at a very early stage in the design process for the proposed Boxted Solar Farm. A large range of environmental and technical surveys and assessments are to be undertaken and the results of these will be fed into the iterative design process. Feedback from stakeholders and the local community will also be fed into this process as the design is refined and finalised in due course.

If you wish to be kept up to date on the progress of the project, and you have not completed the comments form which was available at the public exhibition and on our website, please email carey.green@res-group.com to request that your details are added to the mailing list.


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

Further Information

If you have any questions, or would like further information, please contact:




Matt Looker
New Sites Manager

 07884 580779

 matt.looker@res-group.com



Carey Green
Community Relations Manager

 01872 226931

 carey.green@res-group.com

Or visit our website at:
www.boxted-solarfarm.co.uk

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

⁴ <https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/hazards-solutions/barn-owls-ground-mounted-solar-panels/>

⁶ The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,748 kWh (Dec 2021).

BOXTED SOLAR FARM

OCTOBER 2023



20 MW

Capable of producing up to 20MW of clean, low-cost electricity

8,900¹ homes

Equivalent to the average, annual electricity consumption of 8,900 homes

13,000² tonnes

of carbon emissions saved every year

Project update

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

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

Overleaf is the updated layout for the proposed solar farm. As a direct result of feedback, we have made a number of design changes including:

- » Removal of solar infrastructure from lower, north-facing slopes in the northern portion of the site and by the driveway to Moorhouse Farm. This would reduce potential visibility from the north side of the Glem Valley and Braggons Hill and the driveway to Moorhouse Farm, respectively.
- » Additional planting proposed along the northern perimeters of the site to further reduce potential visibility.
- » The largest majority of the land within site has been classified grade 3b and is not deemed Best and Most versatile (BMV). To minimise the use of small sections of land which have been classified as BMV, where possible, we have removed some solar infrastructure from the north-east portion of the site.
- » Increased setback distance from 10m to 15m from Dripping Pan Wood to align with the setback distances from the ancient woodlands of Lownage Wood and Park Wood.
- » Any infrastructure located on hardstandings have been removed from within the flood risk zone associated with the River Glem.
- » We are also working on including a habitat management area, measuring approximately 70 acres, to improve existing habitat to benefit wildlife.

¹ The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).

² Carbon reduction is calculated by multiplying the anticipated total amount of electricity generated by Boxted per year by the number of tonnes of carbon which fossil fuels would have produced to generate the same amount of electricity using DESNZ's "all non-renewable fuels" emissions statistic of 424 tonnes of carbon dioxide per GWh of electricity supplied in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (July 2023) Table 5.14 ("Estimated carbon dioxide emissions from electricity supplied")

RES is proud to have been innovators in the development of the global renewable energy market and we continue to seek new and pioneering ways to improve the efficiency and generation potential of our schemes. Following recent technological and commercial advancements, we also propose to include hybrid battery storage units as part of the proposed development to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities for Boxted Solar Farm.

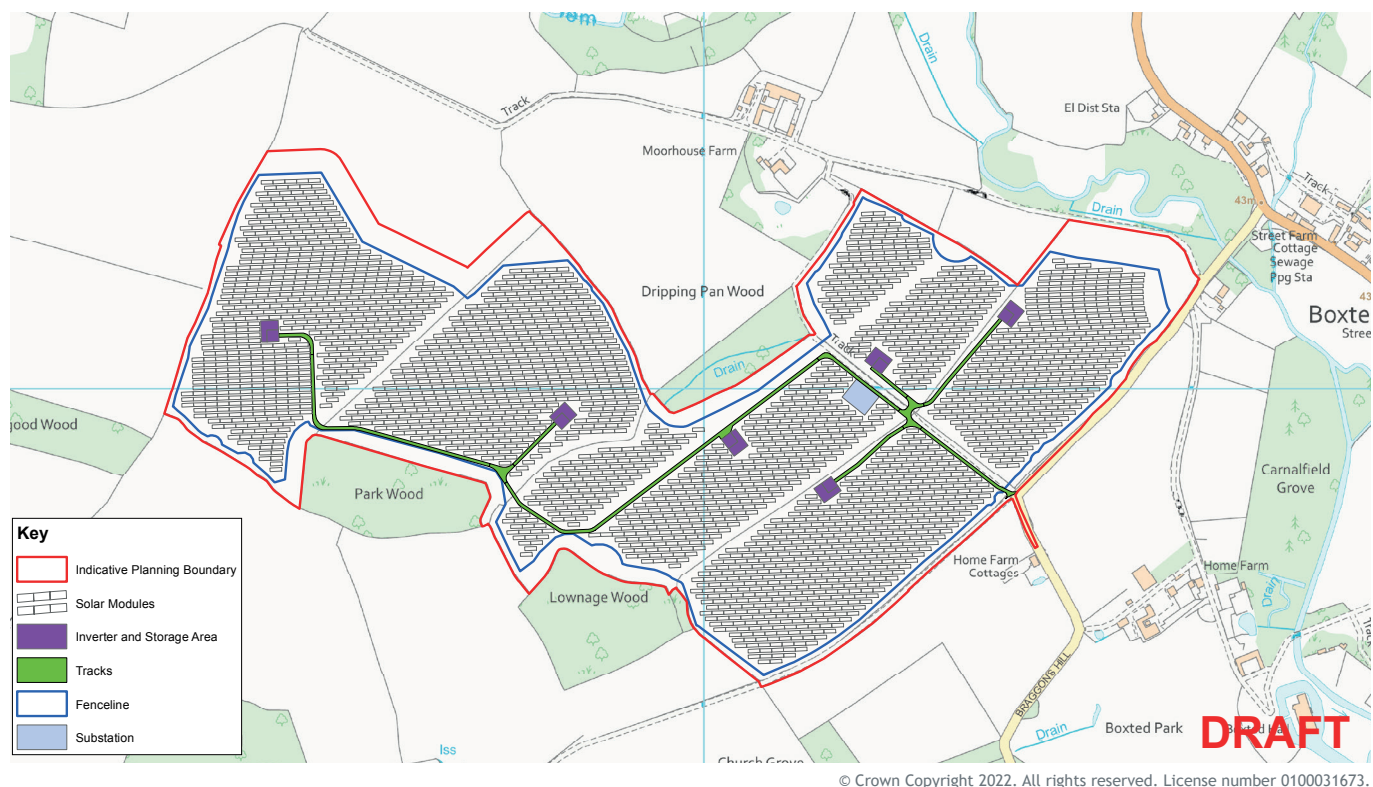
Energy storage will be a key part in managing the increasingly complex supply and demand needs of the 21st Century. The grid network must be finely balanced; electrical demand must match electrical generation at all times. If this balance is not achieved, it can lead to blackouts and the failure of grid circuits.

The addition of battery storage units would enable excess generation from the solar farm to be stored, then released back to the grid network during times of no or low generation from the solar panels.

It is proposed to include 2 x battery storage containers, each measuring 6m x 2.5m x 3m (length x width x height) at each inverter location (shown in the plan overleaf). A small amount of solar infrastructure has been removed to accommodate the energy units, however, the capacity of Boxted Solar Farm would remain 20MW.

We will be in touch again once the planning application has been validated by Babergh District Council, however, in the meantime please contact us if you have any questions.

The following plan is also available to view and/or download from www.boxted-solarfarm.co.uk.



Get in touch

If you have any questions, or would like further information please contact:



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



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

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

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