



Oaklands Farm Solar Park

Consultation Report

Appendix 8.7 - FAQ Documents

January 2024

Applicant: Oaklands Farm Solar Ltd

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1. Website FAQs (Pre-statutory Consultation) Autumn 2021

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Frequently Asked Questions Oaklands Farm Solar

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Through our initial discussions with local stakeholders and the community we have received a number of recurring queries and comments about the proposals on a range of topics. We have collated these into a 'Frequently Asked Questions' summary below.

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2. Consultation FAQs (Statutory Consultation) (Spring 2022)

Version: 2
Date: December 2021



Frequently Asked Questions

- What are we proposing to develop?

Oaklands Farm Solar Limited is in the early development stages of a large-scale solar project, known as Oaklands Solar Farm, in South Derbyshire, on land west of the village of Rosliston, and east of Walton on Trent, South Derbyshire.

The proposals comprise a solar farm plus energy storage covering approximately 540 acres over two separate parcels of land, connected to the national electricity network by a new overhead cable. The expected generating capacity of the project at this stage is 163 megawatts of solar power, and 37.5 megawatts of energy storage capacity.

The solar farm would comprise of rows of solar panels mounted on metal frames (tables) secured into the ground via simple piled metal stanchions approximately 2.5m high. Energy storage would comprise batteries and electrical components housed in 15 to 20 steel shipping containers approximately 3 metres high, covering about 2 acres of the site. The layout will be designed to protect public footpaths and landscaping measures will include enhancing and improving the network of hedgerows around and within the site.

- Who are Oaklands Solar Farm Ltd/BaWa r.e.?

Oaklands Farm Solar Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of BayWa r.e. UK Ltd (BayWa). BayWa is a global developer of large-scale renewable energy projects.

BayWa is focused on solar projects throughout the UK & Ireland and onshore wind in Scotland and Ireland. The company has delivered 625 solar projects worldwide totalling approximately 1900MW, including 31 solar projects in the UK totalling approximately 536MW.

You can find out more about BayWa by visiting: <https://www.baywa-re.co.uk/en/company/about-baywa-re>.

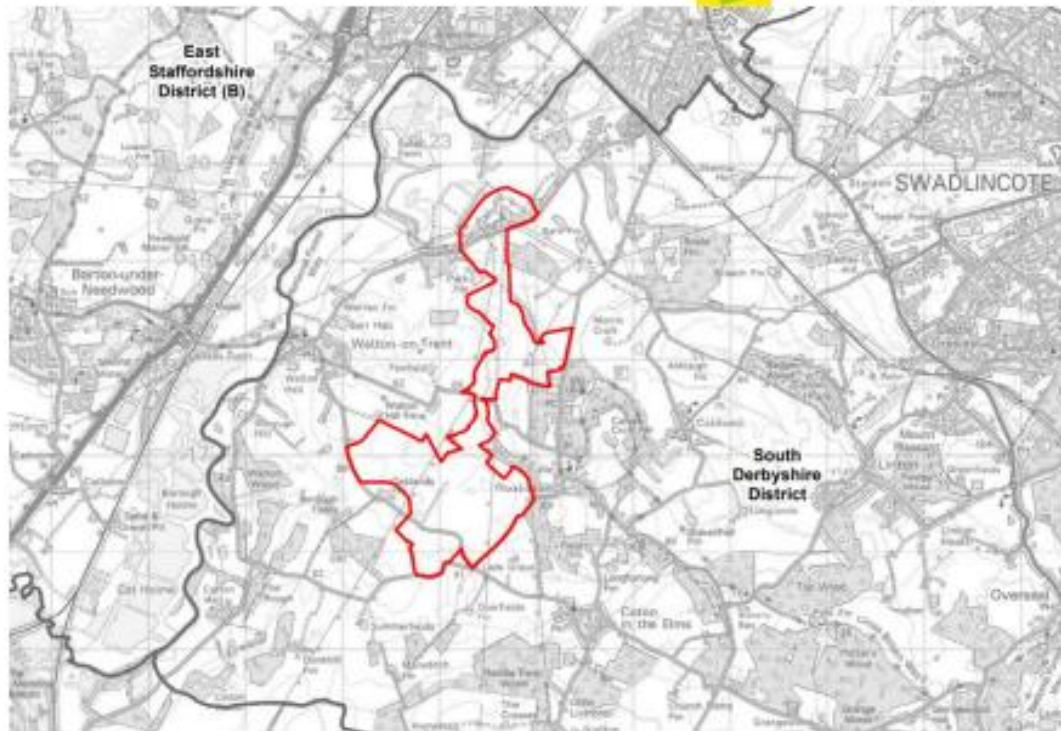
- Where is the site?

The Site lies to the south east of Walton-on-Trent, and mainly comprises land within Oaklands Farm and Park Farm, which are currently used for arable cropping and grazing.

The Site is located in South Derbyshire and within close proximity to East Staffordshire and Lichfield Districts.

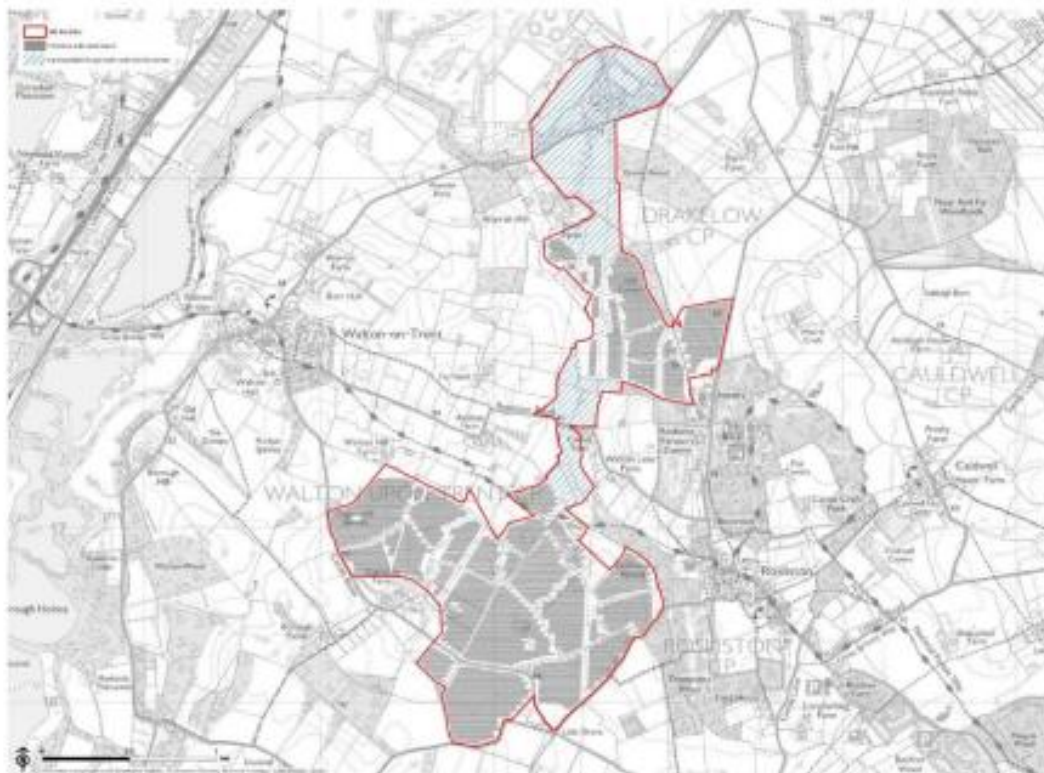
The site lies on open, agricultural land interspersed and surrounded by a network of hedgerows.

A search corridor within and between the two farms along with land to the north has been identified for locating the cable required to the on-site substation and into the Drakelow National Grid Substation.



- **Will panels cover the whole area?**

No. As is shown on the plan below, we are proposing to site panels in two areas (shown as grey on the plan), one in the north and one in the south. The remaining blue hatched areas depicts a corridor within which the grid connection cable will be located. This cable will connect the on-site substation to Drakelow substation to the north and will only require a strip of land approximately 20 metres wide.



- **Where and how are you connecting to the National Grid**

The site will connect into the UK's National Grid System at the site of the decommissioned Drakelow Power Station. We are currently undertaking studies to identify the best connection route and design. It is expected that the cable will be partially overhead, on 15m wooden poles or 30m metal pylons, and partially underground. The final route and design will be provided following these studies.

- **Why here?**

One of the key drivers for siting renewable energy projects is being close to a suitable connection point to export power to the National Grid. As a decommissioned coal fired, powerstation the substation at Drakelow offers a viable connection point. The existing electrical infrastructure is enabling the energy transition from coal to clean, renewable energy.

A site search for suitable brownfield and agricultural sites, within a 10km radius of Drakelow, identified the Oaklands site as the preferred option for development.

- **What are the impacts on the local environment and biodiversity?**

A well-designed solar farm provides many opportunities for local ecological and biodiversity improvement particularly on land that has previously been intensively farmed. Potential biodiversity enhancements include reinforcement of existing and planting new hedgerows, planting of native grasses and wildflowers within and around the solar farm itself. We will incorporate planting that meets with the objectives of local initiatives and are consulting with the National Forest. We welcome suggestions from the local community about planting and other environmental benefits we could implement on site.

- **Will the project mean that the existing footpaths and rights of way will be closed?**

No. There may be some temporary diversions during construction, however, existing rights of way will remain accessible during operation. We are also considering opportunities to provide new permissive footpaths across the sites to improve connectivity.

- **Will the proposals cause an increase in flood risk locally?**

Solar panels are mounted on frames which are driven into the ground on spikes. No concrete bases are required for the panels, meaning that dispersal of rainwater can continue into the ground. As part of the application, we are required to assess drainage and flood risk, and put in place appropriate drainage and other mitigation measures to ensure that there is no net increase in water runoff from the site.

- **Will the solar panels be visible from my house?**

Visibility of the proposed development from surrounding areas will be a key design consideration. At 2.7 m height the PV panels are relatively low lying and although the proposals will be visible as you move through the local area the proposed development will be screened from most residential areas by topography and/or intervening vegetation. Enhancing the hedgerows throughout the site will also improve screening from local roads and villages.

- **When the panels reach the end of their life, will the land be deemed 'brownfield' making it easier to build on in future?**

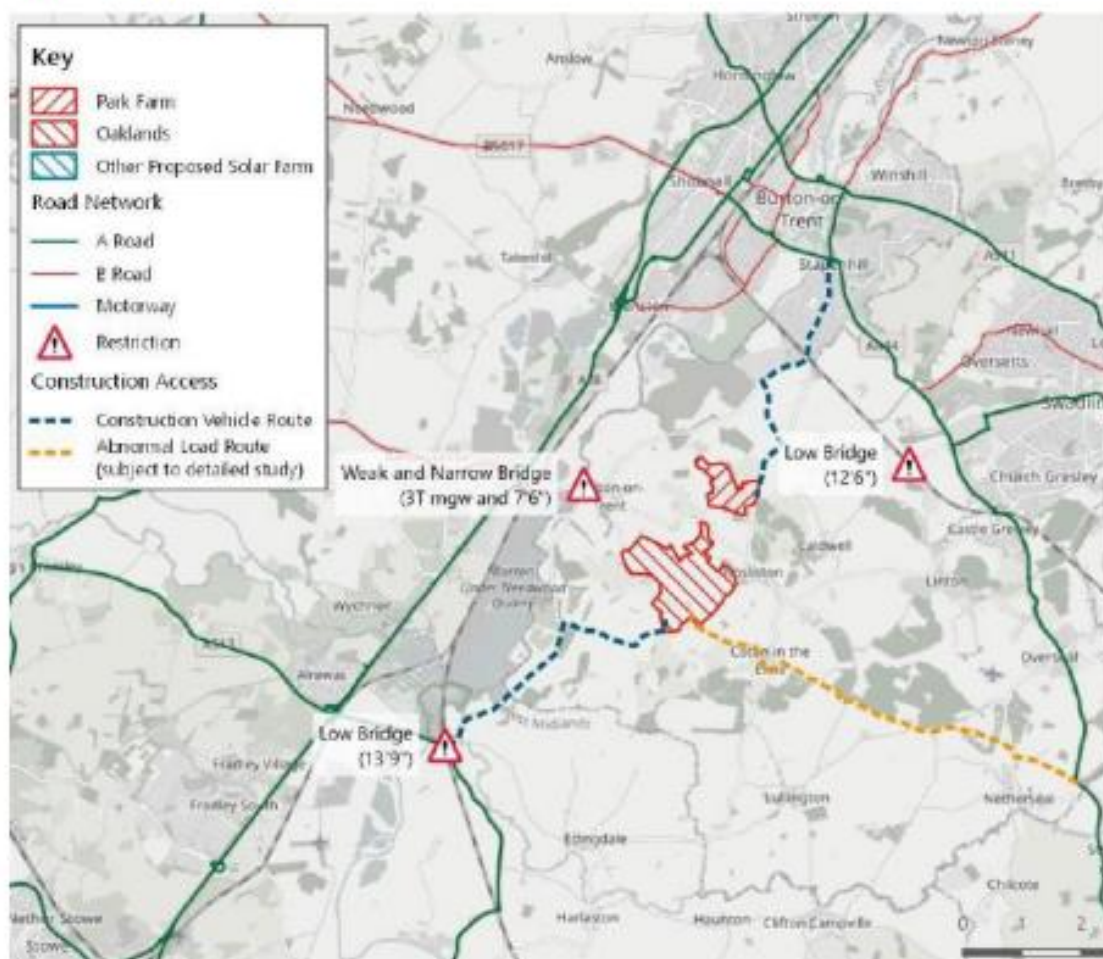
No. The planning approval will require the site to be fully decommissioned and returned to agricultural use at the end of the project life.

- **Will these proposals cause additional traffic through Walton on Trent, Rosliston and the wider road network?**

During construction traffic will not be permitted through either Walton on Trent or Rosliston. Once installed, solar farms require very little maintenance and give rise to minimal traffic during operation.

As can be seen on the plan below, the proposed construction routes approach from the south and the north, and avoid Walton on Trent and Rosliston. There may be one abnormal load delivered through Coton in the Elms, and this will be confirmed following further traffic survey and assessment. The suitability of these routes will be confirmed by detailed on-site assessment and traffic surveys and agreed with Derbyshire County Council, South Derbyshire District Council and Highways England.

All construction traffic will be subject to a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that will be agreed with the local authorities. This will agree specific points, such as delivery times, restrictions, and routes to ensure that construction traffic does not have a detrimental impact to the local road network.



- **Who will decide whether this Project receives planning permission?**

As the solar farm will have an electrical output greater than 50 megawatts (MW), an application to the Planning Inspectorate will be submitted under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime (Planning Act 2008) in 2022.

NSIPs are major infrastructure projects such as new harbours, roads, power generating stations (such as larger scale solar farms) and electricity transmission lines, which require a type of consent known as 'development consent' under procedures governed by the [Planning Act 2008](#). Development consent, where granted, is made in the form of a Development Consent Order (DCO).

Anybody wishing to construct an NSIP must first apply for consent to do so. For such a project, the Planning Inspectorate examines the application and will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who will make the decision on whether to grant or to refuse development consent.

Further information about the process can be found [here](#).

- **Will the impacts on agricultural land be considered?**

Yes. The solar farm will be located on agricultural land currently used for arable cropping and grazing. As such a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) study has been carried out which shows that there are a range of agricultural quality land across the site. The EIA will be required to assess the amount of agricultural land being impacted and consider the impacts in the wider context as part of this assessment we are required to consult Natural England. One of the benefits of solar development is the protection and improvement of soil quality as it will no longer be subjected to intensive farming or use of pesticides and herbicides. At the end of its operational life the solar panels will be removed and the land returned to agricultural use.

During operations the site can still be used for grazing livestock (such as sheep), and there are often significant improvements to local biodiversity through enhancement and active management of site boundaries.

- **How will the proposed Project benefit the local community, support the economy and involve the local supply chain?**

This scheme represents an important contribution to meeting the UK's legally binding target under the Climate Change Act 2008 to achieve a 'net zero' carbon account by 2050. Renewable energy developments deliver both the local community and wider population a clean, secure source of electricity that is generated in the UK using natural resources. Solar power represents a 'clean' source of renewable energy as it doesn't release any harmful emissions or pollutants. More information about solar technology can be found [here](#).

Solar energy is also one of the cheapest forms of new renewable power generation in the UK, and consequently can contribute to controlling consumer's energy bills into the future.

In addition, local benefits include:

- **Local jobs and investment** - we are committed to using local labour and contractor wherever we can throughout the construction and ongoing operational life of the project.
- **Potential biodiversity** enhancements including reinforcement of existing hedgerows and the planting of new hedgerows, native grasses and wild flowers within and adjacent to the solar farm itself.
- Maintenance and enhancement of footpaths throughout the site.
- **Annual Community Benefit Contribution – Oaklands Farm Solar Ltd has volunteered to make an annual donation into a community benefit fund. We intend to consult with the local community and relevant organisations as to how best to organise this fund and feedback on this is welcome.**

Through the consultation process, we are also keen to hear about any other potential local benefits that we could facilitate or deliver directly. We look forward to sharing more information about this soon and receiving your suggestions.

- **When will an application be submitted?**

We are currently aiming to submit the application to the Planning Inspectorate in 2022. Pre-application consultation with consultees and the local community will take place throughout the rest of 2021 and early 2022.

How can local communities and interested parties influence the development of the proposals?

We will be undertaking an extensive pre-application community consultation exercise prior to submitting an application to the Planning Inspectorate. This will incorporate two drop in public exhibitions in Walton on Trent and Rosliston as well as a virtual exhibition online. Further information about this will be provided through local letter mailings, social media and website updates.

Our approach to consultation will be set out in a Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC). Prior to publication this formal document will be agreed with Derbyshire County Council and South Derbyshire District Council.

We will be communicating further information about this consultation and how local residents and interested parties can be involved in due course. All information and links to the virtual consultation exhibition will be available on the project website ([Oaklands Solar Farm Project Information Page \(baywa-re.co.uk\)](https://www.baywa-re.co.uk/oaklands-solar-farm-project-information-page)). Comments and feedback will be encouraged throughout the pre-application process. The website will contain details about how to provide your comments (via an online form, freepost or freephone) and will be regularly updated over coming weeks. We will publicise further details on this shortly.

- **When will the consultation take place?**

Informal consultation started in 2021 and this will continue until the formal consultation process which is scheduled for early 2022. This formal or "statutory consultation" requires us to issue formal notices, communications and broader publicity explaining how to find out about the application, and how to have your say on the proposals.

The website will contain details about how to provide your comments (via an online form, freepost or freephone) and will be regularly updated over coming weeks. We will publicise further details on this shortly.

- **How can I contact the Project Team to find out more and provide my comments?**

You can get in touch with us in a number of ways. The website is the best place to start: [Oaklands Solar Farm Project Information Page \(baywa-re.co.uk\)](https://www.baywa-re.co.uk/oaklands-solar-farm-project-information-page). We have an online comment form to provide your comments or ask any questions.

We also have a freephone number (**0800 0699 0081**). If you wish to write to us, you can post to 'FREEPOST TC CONSULTATION' (no further stamp or address required).