



Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report

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APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	8
1 Introduction	11
1.1 Purpose of this document	11
1.2 Consultation Report structure	11
1.3 The Project	12
1.4 Summary of consultation milestones	14
2 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation	15
2.1 Overview	15
2.2 Responses to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation	15
3 Consultation under EIA Regulations	20
3.1 Introduction	20
3.2 Scoping	20
3.3 Environmental Statement	20
4 Approach to Statutory Consultation	22
4.1 Overview	22
4.2 Legal requirements for statutory consultation	22
4.3 Statement of Community Consultation	23
5 2022 Statutory Consultation	28
5.1 Consultation material	28
5.2 Methods by which consultees could respond	28
5.3 Part A: Section 42 Consultation	29
5.4 Part B: Section 47 Consultation	35
5.5 Consultation activities	35
5.6 Part C: Section 48 Publicity	39
5.7 Part D: Notifications under Section 46 and Regulation 8	40
5.8 Part E: Responses to Consultation	40
6 2023 Statutory Consultation	48
6.1 Consultation material	48
6.2 Methods by which consultees could respond	49
6.3 Part A: Section 42 Consultation	49
6.4 Consultation activities	50
6.5 Part B: Section 47 Consultation	50
6.6 Part C: Section 48 Publicity	54
6.7 Consultation bodies	55
6.8 Part D: Notifications under Section 46 and Regulation 8	55

6.9	Part E: Responses to Consultation	56
6.10	Feedback form	57
6.11	Consideration of responses	58
6.12	Part F: Changes to land interests and prescribed consultees	62
7	Non-Statutory Engagement	66
7.1	Overview of non-statutory engagement	66
7.2	Newsletters	66
7.3	Community Liaison Panel meetings	66
7.4	Meetings/briefings with stakeholders	67
7.5	Consultation responses received outside of statutory consultation	81
8	Targeted Consultation	82
8.1	Introduction	82
8.2	Relevant guidance	83
8.3	Targeted consultation	83
9	Conclusion	89
	References	90

List of Tables

- Table 1: Key pre-application consultation milestones
- Table 2: Methods of responding to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation
- Table 3: Summary of responses to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation
- Table 4: Details of newspaper notice about the publication of SoCC 1
- Table 5: Details of newspaper notice about the publication of SoCC 2
- Table 6: Details of newspaper notice about the publication of SoCC 3
- Table 7: Section 42(1)(b) local authorities (2022 Statutory Consultation and 2023 Statutory Consultation)
- Table 8: Section 42(1)(b) local authorities (DCO Application)
- Table 9: Details of newspaper publication of section 48 notice
- Table 10: Breakdown of response types received during the consultation
- Table 11: Feedback form responses
- Table 12: Summary of responses and regard had to those responses
- Table 13: Details of newspaper publication of section 48 notice
- Table 14: Breakdown of responses received by response type
- Table 15: Feedback form responses
- Table 16: Summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant
- Table 17: Breakdown of responses received by response type
- Table 18: Summary of non-statutory engagement before 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation
- Table 19: Summary of non-statutory engagement during 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation
- Table 20: Summary of non-statutory engagement after 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation ended and before 2022 Statutory Consultation began
- Table 21: Summary of non-statutory engagement during 2022 Statutory Consultation
- Table 22: Summary of non-statutory engagement after 2022 Statutory Consultation ended and before 2023 Statutory Consultation began
- Table 23: Summary of non-statutory engagement during 2023 Statutory Consultation
- Table 24: Summary of non-statutory engagement after 2023 Statutory consultation ended and before DCO Application was submitted
- Table 25: Breakdown of responses received by response type (2023 Targeted Consultation)
- Table 26: Summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant (2023 Targeted Consultation)
- Table 27: Breakdown of responses received by response type (2024 Targeted Consultation)

Table 28: Summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant (2024 Targeted Consultation)

List of Figures

Figure 1: Administrative boundaries of section 42(1)(b) authorities (2022 Statutory Consultation and 2023 Statutory Consultation)

Figure 2: Administrative boundaries of section 42(1)(b) authorities (DCO Application)

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Project website with consultation material (2022 Statutory Consultation)

Figure 4: Screenshot of the Project website with consultation material (2023 Statutory Consultation)

List of Appendices

Appendix	Sub-appendices
<p>Appendix A: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix A-1: Press release ▪ Appendix A-2: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Materials ▪ Appendix A-3: Regard had to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Feedback ▪ Appendix A-4: Community Organisations Consulted ▪ Appendix A-5: Briefing Presentation
<p>Appendix B: Preparation and Compliance with the Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix B-1: Letters Consulting Host Authorities on Statement of Community Consultation 1 ▪ Appendix B-2: Regard had to Host Authorities' Responses to Statement of Community Consultation 1 ▪ Appendix B-3: Published Statement of Community Consultation 1 ▪ Appendix B-4: Section 47 Notices for Statement of Community Consultation 1 ▪ Appendix B-5: Sample Emails Consulting Community Groups on the Statement of Community Consultation 1 ▪ Appendix B-6: Emails Consulting Host Authorities on the Statement of Community Consultation 2 ▪ Appendix B-7: Regard had to Host Authorities' Responses to Statement of Community Consultation 2 ▪ Appendix B-8: Published Statement of Community Consultation 2 ▪ Appendix B-9: Section 47 Notices for Statement of Community Consultation 2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix B-10: Emails and Letters Consulting Host Authorities on the Statement of Community Consultation 3 ▪ Appendix B-11: Regard had to Host Authorities' Responses to Statement of Community Consultation 3 ▪ Appendix B-12: Published Statement of Community Consultation 3 ▪ Appendix B-13: Section 47 Notices for Statement of Community Consultation 3
<p>Appendix C: Distribution Lists and Sample Letters for 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix C-1: List of Section 42(1)(a) and (b) Consultees for 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix C-2: List of Section 42(1)(d) Consultees for 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix C-3: Sample Letters Sent to Section 42 Consultees for 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix C-4: Section 46 Notification and Acknowledgment for 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix C-5: List of Section 42(1)(a) and (b) Consultees for 2023 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix C-6: Sample Letters Sent to Section 42 Consultees for 2023 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix C-7: Section 46 Notification and Acknowledgment for 2023 Statutory Consultation
<p>Appendix D: Community Organisations Consulted During 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix D-1: Community Organisations Consulted During 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix D-2: Emails to Community Organisations 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix D-3: Community Organisations Consulted During 2022 Statutory Consultation Presentation Material ▪ Appendix D-4: Community Organisations Consulted During 2023 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix D-5: Emails to Community Organisations Consulted During 2023 Statutory Consultation
<p>Appendix E: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix E-1: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2022 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix E-2: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2023 Statutory Consultation ▪ Appendix E-3: Site Notices for 2022 Statutory Consultation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix E-4: Site Notices for 2023 Statutory Consultation
<p>Appendix F: 2022 Statutory Consultation Materials and Consultation Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix F-1: 2022 Statutory Consultation Information Pack ▪ Appendix F-2: Sample Letter and Land Interest Questionnaire ▪ Appendix F-3: Consultation Advert and Poster ▪ Appendix F-4: Exhibition Boards and Screenshots of Website ▪ Appendix F-5: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses ▪ Appendix F-6: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses
<p>Appendix G: 2023 Statutory Consultation Materials and Consultation Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 1 ▪ Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 2 ▪ Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 3 ▪ Appendix G-2: 2023 Statutory Consultation Leaflet, Advert and Poster ▪ Appendix G-3: 2023 Statutory Consultation Exhibition Boards and Screenshots of Project Website ▪ Appendix G-4: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses ▪ Appendix G-5: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Consultee Responses
<p>Appendix H: Compliance with Legislation, Guidance and Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix H: Compliance with Legislation, Guidance and Statement of Community Consultation
<p>Appendix I: Consultation Outside of Statutory Consultation Stages (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix I-1: Introductory Leaflet November 2021 ▪ Appendix I-2: June 2022 Newsletter ▪ Appendix I-3: November 2023 Newsletter ▪ Appendix I-4: Community Liaison Panel Terms of Reference and Meeting Minutes

<p>Appendix J: 2023 Targeted Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix J-1: List of Consultees ▪ Appendix J-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to Consultees ▪ Appendix J-3: Regard had to 2023 Targeted Consultation Consultee Responses
<p>Appendix K: Changes to Land Interests and Prescribed Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix K-1: List of Consultees ▪ Appendix K-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to New Land Interests and Prescribed Consultees
<p>Appendix L: 2024 Targeted Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix L-1: List of Consultees ▪ Appendix L-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to Consultees ▪ Appendix L-3: Regard had to 2024 Targeted Consultation Consultee Responses
<p>Appendix M: Regard had to Consultation Responses Received Outside of Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix M: Regard had to Consultation Responses Received Outside of Statutory Consultation

Executive Summary

This Consultation Report ('Report') relates to the Stonestreet Green Solar project (the 'Project').

EPL 001 Limited¹ (the 'Applicant') has submitted an application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero for the Project (the 'DCO Application'). The Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ('NSIP') as defined in the Planning Act 2008 (the 'PA 2008')¹.

In accordance with section 37(3)(c) of the PA 2008, the Applicant has submitted this Report as part of the DCO Application. This Report explains how the Applicant has complied with the consultation requirements set out in the PA 2008, summarises the responses received to the consultation and explains the account taken by the Applicant of those responses in finalising the DCO Application. This Report also provides information about the non-statutory consultation and engagement undertaken by the Applicant about the Project.

The Applicant carried out comprehensive pre-application consultation on its proposals prior to submitting the DCO Application, including a five-week non-statutory consultation, two five-week statutory consultations and two four-week targeted consultations. The consultation accorded with the requirements of the PA 2008, the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 ('APFP Regulations')² and the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017 ('EIA Regulations')³ and had regard to guidance issued under section 50(3) of the PA 2008. In addition, the Applicant undertook non-statutory engagement throughout the pre-application stage.

The Applicant consulted in a variety of ways to maximise consultee participation. A large number of consultees provided feedback and the Applicant is grateful to all those who took the time to engage in the consultation process.

Section 1 of this Report explains the purpose and structure of this Report, describes the Project and summarises the key pre-application consultation milestones.

Section 2 describes the non-statutory consultation undertaken from 25 March 2022 to 29 April 2022 ('2022 Non-Statutory Consultation'), summarises the responses received to that non-statutory consultation and explains how the Applicant had regard to those responses. This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix A: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 3 provides information about the consultation that was undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate pursuant to the EIA Regulations in relation to the environmental impact assessment ('EIA') for the Project. It notes that the Applicant sought a scoping opinion from the Planning Inspectorate. This section should be read in conjunction with **ES Volume 4**,

¹ EPL 001 Limited of 2nd Floor, Regis House, 45 King William Street, London, United Kingdom, EC4R 9AN (company number 12444050) registered in England and Wales.

Appendix 1.1: Scoping Report (Doc Ref. 5.4) and ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.2: Scoping Opinion (Doc Ref. 5.4).

Section 4 provides an overview of the statutory consultation, sets out the legal requirements for the statutory consultation and details the preparation and publication of the Statement of Community Consultation ('SoCC'), including how the Applicant consulted on a draft SoCC, details of local authority responses to the draft SoCC and how the Applicant had regard to the local authority responses. This Report demonstrates how the Applicant has undertaken the consultation process in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance, as well as relevant advice from the Planning Inspectorate. This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix B: Preparation and Compliance with the Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)** and **Appendix H: Compliance with Legislation, Guidance and Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 5 sets out details of the statutory consultation undertaken by the Applicant between 25 October and 29 November 2022 with statutory consultees pursuant to section 42 of the PA 2008 and the local community pursuant to section 47 of the PA 2008, as well as the publicity that was undertaken pursuant to section 48 of the PA 2008 ('2022 Statutory Consultation'). This section explains the steps taken by the Applicant to comply with the notification requirements under section 46 of the PA 2008 and Regulation 8 of the EIA Regulations. It summarises the responses received to the 2022 Statutory Consultation and explains how the Applicant has had regard to those responses. This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix C: Distribution Lists and Sample Letters for 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)**, **Appendix D: Community Organisations Consulted During 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)**, **Appendix E: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)** and **Appendix F: 2022 Statutory Consultation Materials and Consultation Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 6 details the statutory consultation undertaken by the Applicant between 12 June and 17 July 2023 with statutory consultees pursuant to section 42 of the PA 2008 and the local community pursuant to section 47 of the PA 2008, as well as the publicity undertaken that was undertaken pursuant to section 48 of the PA 2008 ('2023 Statutory Consultation'). This section explains the steps taken by the Applicant to comply with the notification requirements under section 46 of the PA 2008 and Regulation 8 of the EIA Regulations. It summarises the responses received to the 2023 Statutory Consultation and explains how the Applicant has had regard to those responses. This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix C: Distribution Lists and Sample Letters for 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)**, **Appendix D: Community Organisations Consulted During 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)**, **Appendix E: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultations (Doc Ref. 6.2)** and **Appendix G: 2023 Statutory Consultation Materials and Consultation Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 7 explains the non-statutory engagement undertaken by the Applicant throughout the pre-application stage. This includes an overview of the Community Liaison Panel group established by the Applicant and a summary of the meetings/briefings with stakeholders. This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix I: Consultation Outside of Statutory Consultation Stages (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 8 describes the targeted consultation undertaken from 13 November to 13 December 2023 ('2023 Targeted Consultation') and from 12 February to 12 March 2024 ('2024 Targeted Consultation') about minor, localised changes to the Project. It summarises the responses received to the targeted consultation and explains how the Applicant has had regard to those responses. This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix J: 2023 Targeted Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)** and **Appendix L: 2024 Targeted Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 9 draws conclusions on the pre-application consultation carried out by the Applicant and confirms that the Applicant has complied with requirements and guidance for consultation.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 This Consultation Report ('Report') relates to the Stonestreet Green Solar project (the 'Project').
- 1.1.2 EPL 001 Limited² (the 'Applicant') has submitted an application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero for the Project (the 'DCO Application'). The Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ('NSIP') as defined in the Planning Act 2008 (the 'PA 2008').
- 1.1.3 In accordance with section 37(3)(c) of the PA 2008, the Applicant has submitted this Report as part of the DCO Application. This Report explains how the Applicant has complied with the consultation requirements set out in the PA 2008, summarises the responses received to the consultation and explains the account taken by the Applicant of those responses in finalising the DCO Application. It also provides information about the non-statutory consultation and engagement undertaken by the Applicant about the Project.

1.2 Consultation Report structure

- 1.2.1 This Report is structured as follows:
- **Section 1 - Introduction:** explains the purpose and structure of this Report, describes the Project and summarises the key pre-application consultation milestones.
 - **Section 2 – 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation:** describes the non-statutory consultation undertaken from 25 March 2022 to 29 April 2022 ('2022 Non-Statutory Consultation'), summarises the responses received to that non-statutory consultation and explains how the Applicant had regard to those responses.
 - **Section 3 - Consultation under EIA Regulations:** provides information about the consultation that was undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate pursuant to the EIA Regulations in relation to the environmental impact assessment ('EIA') for the Project. It notes that the Applicant sought a scoping opinion from the Planning Inspectorate.
 - **Section 4 - Approach to Statutory Consultation:** provides an overview of the statutory consultation, sets out the legal requirements for the statutory consultation and details the preparation and publication of the Statement of Community Consultation ('SoCC'), including how the Applicant consulted on a draft SoCC, details of local authority responses to the draft SoCC and

² EPL 001 Limited of 2nd Floor, Regis House, 45 King William Street, London, United Kingdom, EC4R 9AN (company number 12444050) registered in England and Wales.

how the Applicant had regard to the local authority responses. This Report demonstrates how the Applicant has undertaken the consultation process in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance, as well as relevant advice from the Planning Inspectorate.

- **Section 5 – 2022 Statutory Consultation:** sets out the statutory consultation undertaken by the Applicant between 25 October and 29 November 2022 with statutory consultees pursuant to section 42 of the PA 2008 and the local community pursuant to section 47 of the PA 2008, as well as the publicity that was undertaken pursuant to section 48 of the PA 2008 ('2022 Statutory Consultation'). This section explains the steps taken by the Applicant to comply with the notification requirements under section 46 of the PA 2008 and Regulation 8 of the EIA Regulations. It summarises the responses received to the 2022 Statutory Consultation and explains how the Applicant has had regard to those responses.
- **Section 6: 2023 Statutory Consultation:** details the statutory consultation undertaken by the Applicant between 12 June and 17 July 2023 with statutory consultees pursuant to section 42 of the PA 2008 and the local community pursuant to section 47 of the PA 2008, as well as the publicity undertaken that was undertaken pursuant to section 48 of the PA 2008 ('2023 Statutory Consultation'). This section explains the steps taken by the Applicant to comply with the notification requirements under section 46 of the PA 2008 and Regulation 8 of the EIA Regulations. It summarises the responses received to the 2023 Statutory Consultation and explains how the Applicant has had regard to those responses.
- **Section 7 - Non-Statutory Engagement:** explains the non-statutory engagement undertaken by the Applicant throughout the pre-application stage. This includes an overview of the Community Liaison Panel ('CLP') group established by the Applicant and a summary of the meetings/briefings with stakeholders.
- **Section 8 – 2023 & 2024 Targeted Consultation:** describes the targeted consultation undertaken from 13 November to 13 December 2023 ('2023 Targeted Consultation') and from 12 February to 12 March 2024 ('2024 Targeted Consultation') about minor, localised changes to the Project. It summarises the responses received to the targeted consultation and explains how the Applicant has had regard to those responses.
- **Section 9 – Conclusion:** draws conclusions on the pre-application consultation carried out by the Applicant and confirms that the Applicant has complied with requirements and guidance for consultation.

1.3 The Project

- 1.3.1 The Project comprises the proposed construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of solar photovoltaic ('PV') arrays and energy storage, together with associated infrastructure and an underground cable connection to the existing National Grid Sellindge Substation. The Project will include a generating station (incorporating solar arrays) with a total capacity exceeding 50 megawatts ('MW').

The agreed grid connection for the Project will allow the export and import of up to 99.9 MW of electricity to the grid. The Project will connect to the existing National Grid Sellindge Substation via a new 132 kilovolt ('kV') substation constructed as part of the Project and cable connection under the Network Rail and High Speed 1 ('HS1') railway.

1.3.2 Key components of the Project include:

- a ground mounted solar PV generating station;
- a balance of system and battery energy storage system;
- a Project substation and associated works;
- works to lay high voltage electrical cables and extend Sellindge Substation to facilitate grid connection;
- associated works;
- site access;
- construction and decommissioning works;
- works to create, enhance and maintain green infrastructure, boundary treatments and crossing structures; and
- further site wide associated development in connection with the Project.

1.3.3 A detailed description of the Project is set out in **Environmental Statement ('ES') Volume 2, Chapter 3: Project Description (Doc Ref. 5.2)**.

1.3.4 The site on which the Project is located ('Site') is approximately 192 hectares ('ha') located at Aldington to the south-east of Ashford in Kent. The Project lies within the administrative areas of Kent County Council ('KCC') and Ashford Borough Council ('ABC') local authorities.

1.3.5 **ES Volume 3, Figure 2.1: Field Boundaries and Site Area Plan (Doc Ref. 5.3)** provides a Field Boundaries and Site Area Plan, which numbers individual fields. For ease of reference, the areas of the Site are subsequently referred to as follows:

- South Western Area (Fields 1 to 9);
- Central Area (Fields 10 to 19 and 23 to 25);
- South Eastern Area (Fields 20 to 22);
- Northern Area (Fields 26 to 29);
- Project Substation (location of the Project Substation, in the north western section of Field 26);
- 'Cable Route Corridor' (export of electricity from the Project at 132kV via underground cables (the 'Grid Connection Cable') to the Sellindge Substation);
- 'Cable Route Crossing' (use of an existing cable duct under the HS1 railway or through Horizontal Directional Drilling ('HDD') beneath HS1 for the cable connection);

- Sellindge Substation (location of the existing Sellindge Substation).

1.3.6 Further information about the Site is provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 2: Site and Context (Doc Ref. 5.2)**.

1.4 Summary of consultation milestones

1.4.1 **Table 1** below provides a summary of the key pre-application consultation milestones.

Table 1: Key pre-application consultation milestones

Key pre-application milestone	Timing
2022 Non-Statutory Consultation	25 March to 29 April 2022
2022 Statutory Consultation	25 October to 29 November 2022
2023 Statutory Consultation	12 June to 17 July 2023
2023 Targeted Consultation	13 November to 13 December 2023
2024 Targeted Consultation	12 February to 12 March 2024

2 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The Applicant recognises the importance of early consultation. The Applicant therefore carried out non-statutory consultation on the Project with the local community and key stakeholders between 25 March and 29 April 2022 (known as the '2022 Non-Statutory Consultation').

2.1.2 As part of this 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation, the Applicant sent a Community Information Leaflet (see **Appendix A-2: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Materials (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) on 22 March 2022 to over 2,200 homes and businesses within a 4km radius of the Site comprising the Core Consultation Zone (see **Section 5.4** of this Report for further details). The leaflet introduced the Project and explained how people could find out more about the Project, meet members of the Applicant's Project team and respond to the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation.

2.1.3 Four local information events were held on the following dates and times during which the initial proposals were introduced and attendees were able to ask questions of the Applicant's Project team:

- Sellindge Village Hall - Friday 8 April 2022, 3pm to 7pm;
- Aldington Village Hall - Saturday 9 April 2022, 11am to 3pm;
- Bilsington Village Hall - Tuesday 12 April 2022, 1pm to 5pm;
- Mersham Sports Club - Wednesday 13 April 2022, 2pm to 6pm.

2.1.4 The local information events were publicised through the Statement of Community Consultation 1 ('SoCC 1') made available for inspection on 22 March 2022 and the related local newspaper notice (see **Section 4.3** of this Report for further details), as well as through the Community Information Leaflet (see **Appendix A-2: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Materials (Doc Ref. 6.2)**), the Project's Twitter feed, a press release (see **Appendix A-1: Press Release (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) and on the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/consultation. A total of 90 people attended the local information events.

2.1.5 The exhibition boards for the local information events (see **Appendix A-2: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Materials (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) were made available on the Project website from 6 April 2022.

2.1.6 Emails were sent to nine parish councils on 23 March 2022 (see **Appendix B-5: Samples Email Consulting Community Groups on the Statement of Community Consultation 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). This email confirmed the publication of SoCC 1 and provided a link to SoCC 1 on the Project website. It also confirmed the details of the local information events to be held.

2.2 Responses to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation

- 2.2.1 An online feedback form (see **Appendix A-2: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Materials (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was made available on the Project website during the consultation period for the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation. A hard copy feedback form (see **Appendix A-2: 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Materials (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was available at the local information events, the Deposit Locations (see **Section 4.3.15** of this Report for further information) and via post upon request from the Applicant.
- 2.2.2 Responses to the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation could be provided in the methods set out in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Methods of responding to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation

Method of providing response	Number of consultation responses received
Online feedback form	6
Hard copy feedback form	14
Email	1
Post	0
Telephone	0
TOTAL RESPONSES	21

- 2.2.3 A summary of the topics raised in the responses received to the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation and the regard had to those by the Applicant is provided in **Table 3**. A more detailed summary of the responses received and the regard had to those by the Applicant is in **Appendix A-3: Regard had to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Feedback (Doc Ref. (6.2))**.

Table 3: Summary of responses to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation

Topic raised by consultees	Regard had by the Applicant
Concerns about visual impacts to the villages and character of the area.	<p>The Applicant used the feedback received to inform its package of mitigation measures designed to minimise visual impacts. It proposed additional planting to improve the screening of the Project and removed panels from some areas of the Site. The Applicant undertook proactive engagement with directly impacted residents.</p> <p>The Illustrative Landscape Drawings – Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.7) assist in</p>

Topic raised by consultees	Regard had by the Applicant
	communicating the landscape mitigation strategy.
Consideration of alternatives to the Project.	The suggested alternatives were considered by the Applicant, but they did not meet the Project requirements, as set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2) .
Construction traffic arrangements, including concern there will be an increase to traffic within the local area and further disruptions to journeys from the M20/A20 to the local area.	Management of construction traffic is set out in the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan ('CTMP') (Doc Ref. 7.9) , including specifications of the appropriate routes to the Site.
Concerns regarding food security / loss of agricultural land.	<p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref 5.2) sets out the site selection process for the Site which carefully considered minimising Best and Most Versatile ('BMV') land included in the Order limits. The Applicant's site selection has avoided the use of BMV land where possible.</p> <p>The Applicant has assessed the effects to food security and to the agricultural economy in ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Socio-economics (Doc Ref. 5.2) which found the residual effects would be negligible (not significant).</p>
Biodiversity impacts, including birds.	<p>Biodiversity impacts during construction are assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p> <p>Details of ecological mitigation, enhancement, management and monitoring proposals are described in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan ('CEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.8) and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan ('LEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.10).</p> <p>The Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8) will ensure that best practice construction methods are carried out to minimise impacts to existing sensitive receptors and the environment during the construction phase.</p>

Topic raised by consultees	Regard had by the Applicant
<p>Questions regarding energy storage and concerns about energy storage safety, including potential for fires.</p>	<p>The Outline Battery Safety Management Plan ('BSMP') (Doc Ref. 7.16) provides details of the layout, commitment to safety and fire prevention measures proposed.</p>
<p>Impact on wildlife and local walks.</p>	<p>The Project seeks to protect and enhance wildlife habitat where possible. There will be some impacts to arable-associated species which are addressed ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2) and are subject to detailed mitigation measures. The Biodiversity Net Gain ('BNG') Assessment (Doc Ref. 7.1) confirms that BNG of at least 100% (for habitat units) and above 10% for hedgerow and river units is deliverable can be achieved for the Project and is secured via a Requirement within the Draft DCO (Doc Ref. 3.1).</p> <p>The Illustrative Landscape Drawings – Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.7) have been prepared to assist in communicating the extent and vision of the landscape mitigation strategy.</p>
<p>Community benefit from wind turbines is greater than solar. There is no description of the community fund or the direct benefits to the community. Renewable energy projects should directly benefit the community.</p>	<p>The Applicant commits to deliver a £40,000 per annum (inflation-linked) Community Benefit Fund, details of which are set out in the Planning Statement (Doc Ref. 7.6).</p>
<p>Request for non-statutory consultation responses to be made publicly available on the Project website.</p>	<p>Summaries of responses received to the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation and how the Applicant had regard to those responses are in Consultation Report, Appendix A-3 - Regard had to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Feedback (Doc Ref. 6.2).</p>
<p>Concerns about the scale of the Project and the suitability of the Site.</p>	<p>The need for large-scale solar projects is set out in the Planning Statement (Doc Ref. 7.6) and is established in National Policy Statement EN-1. A significantly reduced scale proposal to the Project is not considered by the Applicant to be a reasonable alternative. Further details on this are set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5:</p>

Topic raised by consultees	Regard had by the Applicant
	Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2).
The Project should be considered alongside other nearby schemes.	The cumulative effects of the Project with nearby projects have been assessed in the relevant chapters and summarised in ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.2).

3 Consultation under EIA Regulations

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report⁴ states:

'Applicants may wish to draw attention to consultation responses received under the EIA process, but any reference to that consultation should be addressed separately from the statutory consultation carried out under the provisions of the PA 2008.'

3.2 Scoping

- 3.2.1 The EIA requirement for NSIPs is transposed into law through the EIA Regulations. The EIA Regulations specify which developments are required to undergo EIA and schemes relevant to the NSIP planning process are listed under either 'Schedule 1' or 'Schedule 2'. Those developments listed in Schedule 1 must be subject to EIA, while developments listed in 'Schedule 2' must only be subject to EIA if they are considered 'likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location' (Regulation 3(1) of the EIA Regulations). The selection criteria for Schedule 2 development are set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations.
- 3.2.2 The Project is a 'Schedule 2' development under paragraph 3(a) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations as it constitutes an 'industrial installation for the production of electricity' and is not a project listed in Schedule 1.
- 3.2.3 On 19 April 2022, the Applicant submitted a Scoping Report (see **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.1: Scoping Report (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) in support of a request for a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State pursuant to Regulation 10 of the EIA Regulations.
- 3.2.4 A Scoping Opinion (see **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.2: Scoping Opinion (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) was adopted by the Planning Inspectorate on 30 May 2022. Before adopting the Scoping Opinion, the Planning Inspectorate consulted the 'consultation bodies' listed in Appendix 1 of the Scoping Opinion in accordance with Regulation 10(6) of the EIA Regulations. A list of those consultation bodies who replied within the statutory timeframe (along with copies of their comments) is provided in Appendix 2 of the Scoping Opinion. As confirmed at paragraph 1.05 of the Scoping Opinion, those comments were taken into account in the preparation of the Scoping Opinion.

3.3 Environmental Statement

- 3.3.1 An Environmental Statement for the Project has been submitted with the DCO Application.

- 3.3.2 **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.3: EIA Scoping Opinion Compliance (Doc Ref. 5.4)** provides responses to the following aspects of Scoping Opinion:
- Overarching Comments (Scoping Opinion **Section 2**); and
 - Cumulative Effects (Scoping Opinion **Section 3.10**).
- 3.3.3 Responses to Scoping Opinion comments made in relation to 'Environmental Aspect Comments' (Scoping Opinion **Sections 3.2 – 3.9**) are addressed in the 'Consultation' section of the technical chapters included as **ES Volume 2, Chapters 7 – 15 (Doc Ref. 5.2)**.
- 3.3.4 Responses to Scoping Opinion comments made in relation to 'Topics to be Scoped Out' (Scoping Opinion **Section 3.1**) are provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 16: Other Topics (Doc Ref. 5.2)**.

4 Approach to Statutory Consultation

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Following detailed consideration of the feedback received to the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation outlined in **Section 2** above, together with the results of further technical surveys and analysis, the Applicant undertook:

- Statutory Consultation and publicity between 25 October and 29 November 2022 on the updated proposals for the Project in accordance with sections 42, 47 and 48 of the PA 2008 (known as the '2022 Statutory Consultation'); and
- Statutory Consultation and publicity between 12 June and 17 July 2023 on the further updated proposals for the Project in accordance with sections 42, 47 and 48 of the PA 2008 (known as the '2023 Statutory Consultation').

4.1.2 The Applicant also undertook targeted consultation between 13 November and 13 December 2023 (known as the '2023 Targeted Consultation') and between 12 February and 12 March 2024 (known as the '2024 Targeted Consultation') on minor, localised changes to the Site boundary. Consultation was carried out with persons with an interest in the land that were directly affected by the proposed changes to the Site boundary under section 42(1)(d) of the PA 2008, as well as consultees under section 42(1)(a) and (b) of the PA 2008 who the Applicant considered would be interested in the proposed changes.

4.1.3 The consultation periods for each of the consultations exceeded the minimum period of 28 days of consultation required by the PA 2008.

4.2 Legal requirements for statutory consultation

4.2.1 The statutory pre-application consultation for the Project was designed to comply with the statutory requirements in:

- the PA 2008;
- the APFP Regulations; and
- the EIA Regulations.

4.2.2 The Applicant's approach to consultation has been structured to accord with the applicable legal framework and to provide a high quality and meaningful process of consultation with the local community, statutory consultees and the general public.

4.2.3 **Appendix H: Compliance with Legislation, Guidance and Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)** sets out the statutory requirements (Table 1) and the requirements from the relevant guidance on pre-application consultation (Table 2), explains how the Applicant complied with each requirement and identifies where further information can be found within this Report.

4.3 Statement of Community Consultation

- 4.3.1 As required by section 47(1) of the PA 2008, the Applicant prepared a statement setting out how it proposed to consult, about the proposed application, people living in the vicinity of the land.
- 4.3.2 An initial SoCC ('SoCC 1') was made available for inspection from 22 March 2022 (see **Appendix B-3: Published Statement of Community Consultation 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). SoCC 1 was revised in advance of the commencement of the 2022 Statutory Consultation by a revised SoCC ('SoCC 2') that was made available for inspection from 28 September 2022 (see **Appendix B-8: Published Statement of Community Consultation 2 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). SoCC 2 was revised in advance of the commencement of the 2023 Statutory Consultation by a further revised SoCC ('SoCC 3') that was made available for inspection from 24 May 2023 (see **Appendix B-12: Published Statement of Community Consultation 3 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**).

SoCC 1

- 4.3.3 In accordance with section 47(2) of the PA 2008, before preparing SoCC 1, the Applicant consulted each local authority within section 43(1) of the PA 2008 (i.e. the host authorities) about what was to be in the statement. For this purpose, the Applicant consulted: KCC, ABC and Folkestone & Hythe District Council ('FHDC').
- 4.3.4 An initial draft of SoCC 1 was sent to ABC on 17 December 2021 for informal feedback. ABC provided the following feedback to the initial draft of SoCC 1:
- Request for further information about the Site and layout
 - Clarification about the villages in the Core Consultation Zone
 - Suggestion for a wider engagement plan and wider consultation zones
- 4.3.5 Regard was had to that informal feedback in preparing the next draft of SoCC 1.
- 4.3.6 A revised draft of SoCC 1 was sent to the host authorities (ABC, FHDC and KCC) for formal consultation under section 47(2) of the PA 2008 between 10 January and 7 February 2022 (see **Appendix B-1: Letters Consulting Host Authorities on Statement of Community Consultation 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for the covering letters). A table listing the feedback received and how the Applicant had regard to that feedback in preparing the final version of SoCC 1 is provided at **Appendix B-2: Regard had to Host Authorities' Responses to Statement of Community Consultation 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.
- 4.3.7 SoCC 1 described the Project and the Site, explained the PA 2008 process, identified the Applicant as EPL 001 Limited (a subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited) and provided details of how the local community consultation would be carried out.
- 4.3.8 SoCC 1 was made available for public inspection from 22 March 2022 onwards at:
- Ashford Library, Ashford Gateway Plus, Church Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1AS

- Folkestone Library, 2 Grace Hill, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1HD
- Ashford Borough Council Offices, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23 1PL
- Folkestone & Hythe Council Offices, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone CT20 2QY
- Kent County Council, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ

4.3.9 A notice (see **Appendix B-4: Section 47 Notices for Statement of Community Consultation 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) stating where and when SoCC 1 could be inspected was published in the local newspapers listed in **Table 4** below in accordance with section 47(6)(a) of the PA 2008:

Table 4: Details of newspaper notice about the publication of SoCC 1

Newspaper	Date of advertisement
The Kentish Express (Ashford and District)	24 March 2022
The Folkestone and Hythe Express	23 March 2022

SoCC 2

4.3.10 After carrying out the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation, the Applicant decided to make available an updated SoCC ('SoCC 2') to reflect that the consultation programme had changed from that initially anticipated in order to avoid any confusion within the local community.

4.3.11 In accordance with section 47(2) of the PA 2008, before preparing SoCC 2, the Applicant consulted each of the host authorities about what was to be in the statement.

4.3.12 An initial draft of SoCC 2 was sent to the host authorities on 3 August 2022 for informal feedback. The authorities provided the following feedback to the initial draft of SoCC 1:

- Request for a public presentation about the Project where the Applicant would be available to answer questions from the community
- Provide targeted, sponsored social media advertising to raise awareness of the consultation
- Recommend copies of the SoCC and PEIR are provided at New Romney Library, Lyminge Library and Hythe Library
- Content with the proposed face-to-face consultation events.

4.3.13 Regard was had to that informal feedback in preparing the next draft of SoCC 2.

4.3.14 A revised draft of SoCC 2 was sent to the host authorities for formal consultation under section 47(2) of the PA 2008 between 8 August 2022 and 5 September 2022 (see **Appendix B-6: Emails Consulting Host Authorities on the Statement of**

Community Consultation 2 (Doc Ref. 6.2) for the covering emails). A table listing the feedback received and how the Applicant had regard to that feedback in preparing the final version of SoCC 2 is provided at **Appendix B-7: Regard had to Host Authorities' Responses to Statement of Community Consultation 2 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

4.3.15 SoCC 2 was made available for public inspection from 28 September 2022³ onwards at the following locations ('Deposit Locations'):

- Ashford Library, Ashford Gateway Plus, Church Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1AS;
- Folkestone Library, 2 Grace Hill, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1HD;
- Ashford Borough Council Offices, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23 1PL;
- Folkestone & Hythe Council Offices, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone CT20 2QY;
- Kent County Council, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ;
- New Romney Library, 82 High Street, New Romney, TN28 8AU;
- Lyminge Library, Station Road, Lyminge, CT18 8HS;
- Hythe Library, 1 Stade Street, Hythe, CT21 6BQ.

4.3.16 A notice (see **Appendix B-9: Section 47 Notices for Statement of Community Consultation 2 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) stating where and when SoCC 2 could be inspected was published in the local newspapers listed in **Table 5** below in accordance with section 47(6)(a) of the PA 2008:

Table 5: Details of newspaper notice about the publication of SoCC 2

Newspaper	Date of advertisement
The Kentish Express (Ashford and District)	29 September 2022
The Folkestone and Hythe Express	28 September 2022

4.3.17 Once SoCC 2 was finalised and made available for public inspection, the Applicant carried out the local community consultation as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation in accordance with that statement.

4.3.18 A table listing the material requirements of SoCC 2, and how the Applicant carried out the 2022 Statutory Consultation in accordance with each requirement, is provided in Table 3 of **Appendix H: Compliance with Legislation, Guidance and Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

³ Shortly after making SoCC 2 available for inspection, the Applicant became aware that the opening hours for Ashford Library had changed slightly. The Applicant therefore added a note to the Project website to explain this and to direct readers to KCC's website where details of Ashford Library's opening hours and those of the other libraries could be found.

SoCC 3

- 4.3.19 After carrying out the 2022 Statutory Consultation, the Applicant decided to carry out a further stage of statutory consultation, the 2023 Statutory Consultation. The Applicant therefore decided to revise the SoCC ('SoCC 3') to explain how it intended to carry out that consultation with the local community.
- 4.3.20 In accordance with section 47(2) of the PA 2008, before preparing SoCC 3, the Applicant consulted each of the host authorities about what was to be in the statement.
- 4.3.21 A draft of SoCC 3 was sent to the host authorities for formal consultation under section 47(2) of the PA 2008 between 20 January and 17 February 2023 for ABC and KCC and between 24 January and 21 February 2023 for FHDC⁴ (see **Appendix B-10: Emails and Letters Consulting Host Authorities on the Statement of Community Consultation 3 (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for the covering letters). A table listing the feedback received and how the Applicant had regard to that feedback in preparing the final version of SoCC 3 is provided at **Appendix B-11: Regard had to Host Authorities' Responses to Statement of Community Consultation 3 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.
- 4.3.22 SoCC 3 was made available for public inspection from 24 May 2023 onwards at the Deposit Locations.
- 4.3.23 A notice (see **Appendix B-13: Section 47 Notices for Statement of Community Consultation 3 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) stating where and when SoCC 3 could be inspected was published in the local newspapers listed in **Table 6** below in accordance with section 47(6)(a) of the PA 2008:

Table 6: Details of newspaper notice about the publication of SoCC 3

Newspaper	Date of advertisement
The Kentish Express (Ashford and District)	25 May 2023
The Folkestone and Hythe Express	24 May 2023

- 4.3.24 Once SoCC 3 was finalised and made available for public inspection, the Applicant carried out the local community consultation as part of the 2023 Statutory Consultation in accordance with that statement.
- 4.3.25 A table listing the material requirements of SoCC 3, and how the Applicant carried out the 2023 Statutory Consultation in accordance with each requirement, is provided in Table 4 of **Appendix H: Compliance with Legislation, Guidance and Statement of Community Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

⁴ The Applicant received an email bounce back from the contact at FHDC. The Applicant corrected the email address and re-sent the draft SoCC 3 to FHDC with an extended consultation period.

4.3.26 The 2023 Targeted Consultation and the 2024 Targeted Consultation were carried out with persons with an interest in the land that was directly affected by the proposed changes to the Site boundary under section 42(1)(d) of the PA 2008, as well as consultees under section 42(1)(a) and (b) of the PA 2008 who the Applicant considered would be interested in the proposed changes. Due to the minor, localised nature of the proposed changes, the Applicant did not consider that re-consultation was required pursuant to section 47 or section 48 of the PA 2008.

5 2022 Statutory Consultation

5.1 Consultation material

5.1.1 Information on the Project and preliminary environmental information was published for the 2022 Statutory Consultation in the following documents (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**):

- **Preliminary Environmental Information Report**, setting out the information compiled by the Applicant to enable consultees to develop an informed view of the likely significant environmental effects of the Project, and comprising three volumes: Volume 1 (Non-Technical Summary); Volume 2 (Main Text); and Volume 3 (Appendix).
- **Consultation Booklet**, providing information about the Project, the feedback received from the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation, the local information events and how to respond to the statutory consultation.
- **Exhibition Boards**, being the boards used at the local information events for the 2022 Statutory Consultation to provide information about the Project and the statutory consultation.

5.1.2 Together, these documents described the Project and the Site, identified the Applicant as EPL 001 Limited (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited), explained the consultation process and set out how consultees could respond to the consultation.

5.1.3 These documents, together with SoCC 2, consultation leaflets/newsletters and the notice published under section 48 of the PA 2008, were available for inspection during the consultation period free of charge at the Deposit Locations listed in **Section 4.3.15** of this Report. A check of the Deposit Locations to ensure there were sufficient copies of materials was undertaken on 15 November 2022; no Deposit Locations needed to be replenished.

5.1.4 Electronic copies of the consultation documents were also available to download free of charge during the consultation period on the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk under the tab labelled 'Consultation'.

5.1.5 A copy of the consultation documents were available for inspection at the local information events listed in **Section 2.1.3** of this Report.

5.1.6 The Applicant offered to provide a full set of consultation documents on a USB memory stick upon request free of charge and hard copies could be obtained upon request at a cost of £500 per copy. The Applicant issued three USBs and one hard copy of a consultation document in large font following request from a local resident with poor eyesight.

5.2 Methods by which consultees could respond

5.2.1 All consultees were able to respond to the 2022 Statutory Consultation in the following ways:

- Completing an online feedback form (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) on the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/consultation
- Completing a hard copy feedback form (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) (available at the local information events, the Deposit Locations and by post upon request from the Applicant) and either handing it to the Project team at the local information event or submitting it by post to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
- Submitting comments by:
 - email to info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk;
 - post to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar; or
 - telephone at 08081 698335.

5.3 Part A: Section 42 Consultation

Introduction

5.3.1 The Applicant carried out statutory consultation with statutory consultees pursuant to section 42 of the PA 2008 between 25 October and 29 November 2022, in parallel with the section 47 consultation and section 48 publicity.

Identifying section 42 consultees

5.3.2 There are a number of different categories of consultee under section 42 of the PA 2008. The sections below explain how the Applicant identified the consultees in each category. The consultees were identified using the preferred Order limits used for the consultation. A full list of the section 42 consultees consulted as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation is provided at **Appendix C-1: List of Section 42(1)(a) and (b) Consultees for 2022 Statutory Consultation** and **Appendix C-2: List of Section 42(1)(d) Consultees for Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 42(1)(a): such persons as may be prescribed

5.3.3 The Applicant identified prescribed consultees with careful reference to:

- Schedule 1 of the APFP Regulations. The Infrastructure Planning (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2024⁵ amended the APFP Regulations 2009 by substituting a new table of persons prescribed for the purpose of section 42(1)(a) of the PA 2008. Regulation 4 (the transitional provisions) of the Infrastructure Planning (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2024 states that *'the amendments in regulation 2 do not apply to any proposed application for an order granting development consent where the applicant has started to consult under section 42 of the Act before 30th April 2024.'* As the statutory consultation for the Project was carried out and completed prior to 30th April 2024, the Applicant consulted

the prescribed consultees as listed within the APFP Regulations prior to these amendments.; and

- the list of consultation bodies in Appendix 1 of the EIA Scoping Opinion (see **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.2: Scoping Opinion (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) adopted by the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) pursuant to Regulation 10 of the EIA Regulations dated 30 May 2022.

Section 42(1)(aa): Marine Management Organisation

5.3.4 The Project would not affect, or be likely to affect, any of the areas specified in section 42(2) PA 2008. Therefore, the Applicant did not consult the Marine Management Organisation.

Section 42(1)(b): each local authority that is within section 43

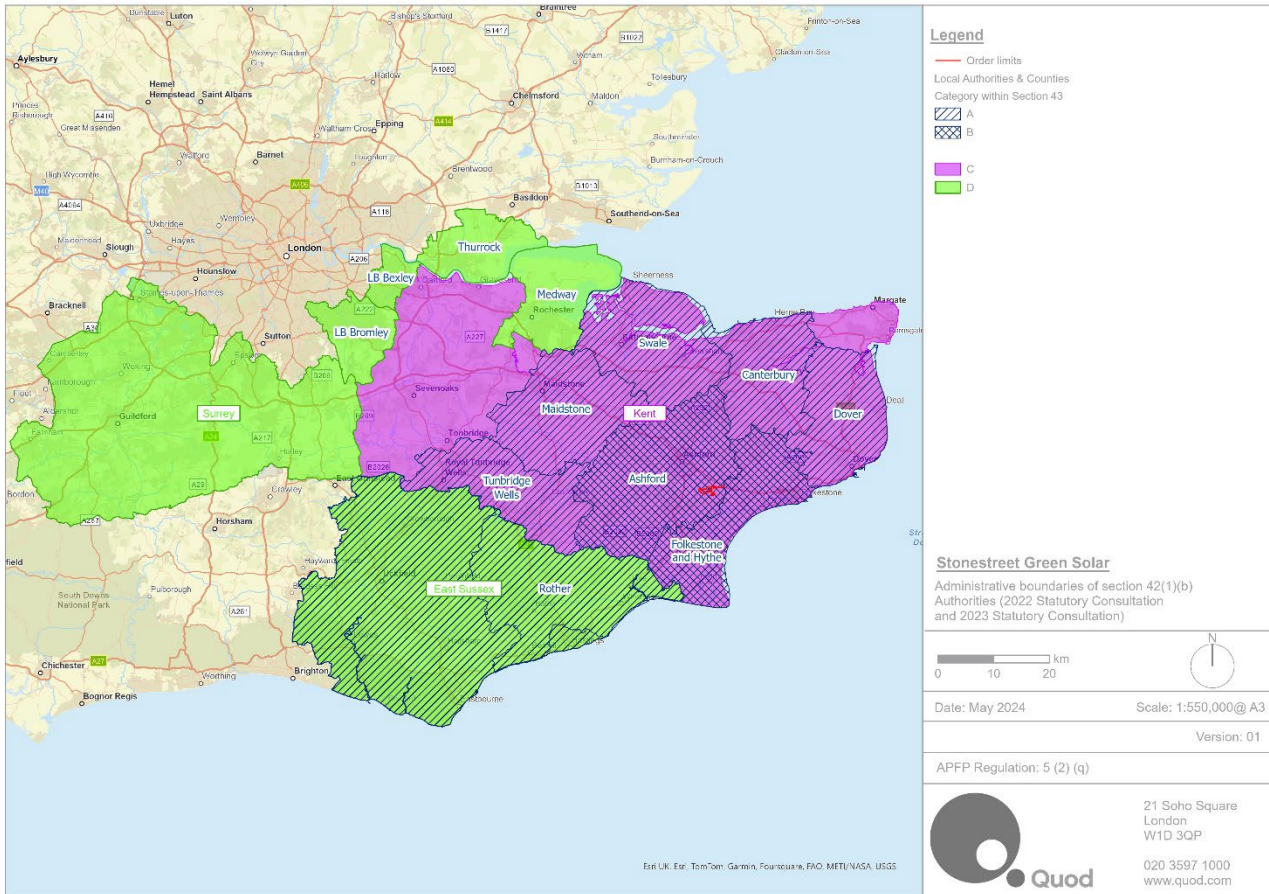
5.3.5 The local authorities within section 42(1)(b) of the PA 2008 for the purposes of the 2022 Statutory Consultation and the 2023 Statutory Consultation are identified in **Table 7**. The administrative boundaries of these authorities for the purposes of the 2022 Statutory Consultation and the 2023 Statutory Consultation are shown in **Figure 1**.

Table 7: Section 42(1)(b) local authorities (2022 Statutory Consultation and 2023 Statutory Consultation)

Local Authority Name	Category within Section 43 of PA 2008
Ashford Borough Council	B
Canterbury City Council	A
Dover District Council	A
East Sussex County Council	D and A
Folkestone and Hythe District Council	B
Kent County Council	C
London Borough of Bexley Council	D
London Borough of Bromley	D
Maidstone Borough Council	A
Medway Council	D
Rother District Council	A
Surrey County Council	D
Swale District Council	A

Thurrock Council	D
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	A

Figure 1: Administrative boundaries of section 42(1)(b) authorities (2022 Statutory Consultation and 2023 Statutory Consultation)



5.3.6 Following a reduction in the Site boundary that took place after the 2023 Statutory Consultation had ended, and which was the subject of the 2023 Targeted Consultation, the land within the Site that fell within FHDC's administrative boundary was removed from the Site, see **Section 8** of this Report for further details. This meant that the category within which FHDC falls changed from local authority (B) to local authority (A), and consequently Dover District Council was no longer a local authority consultee, under section 43 of PA 2008.

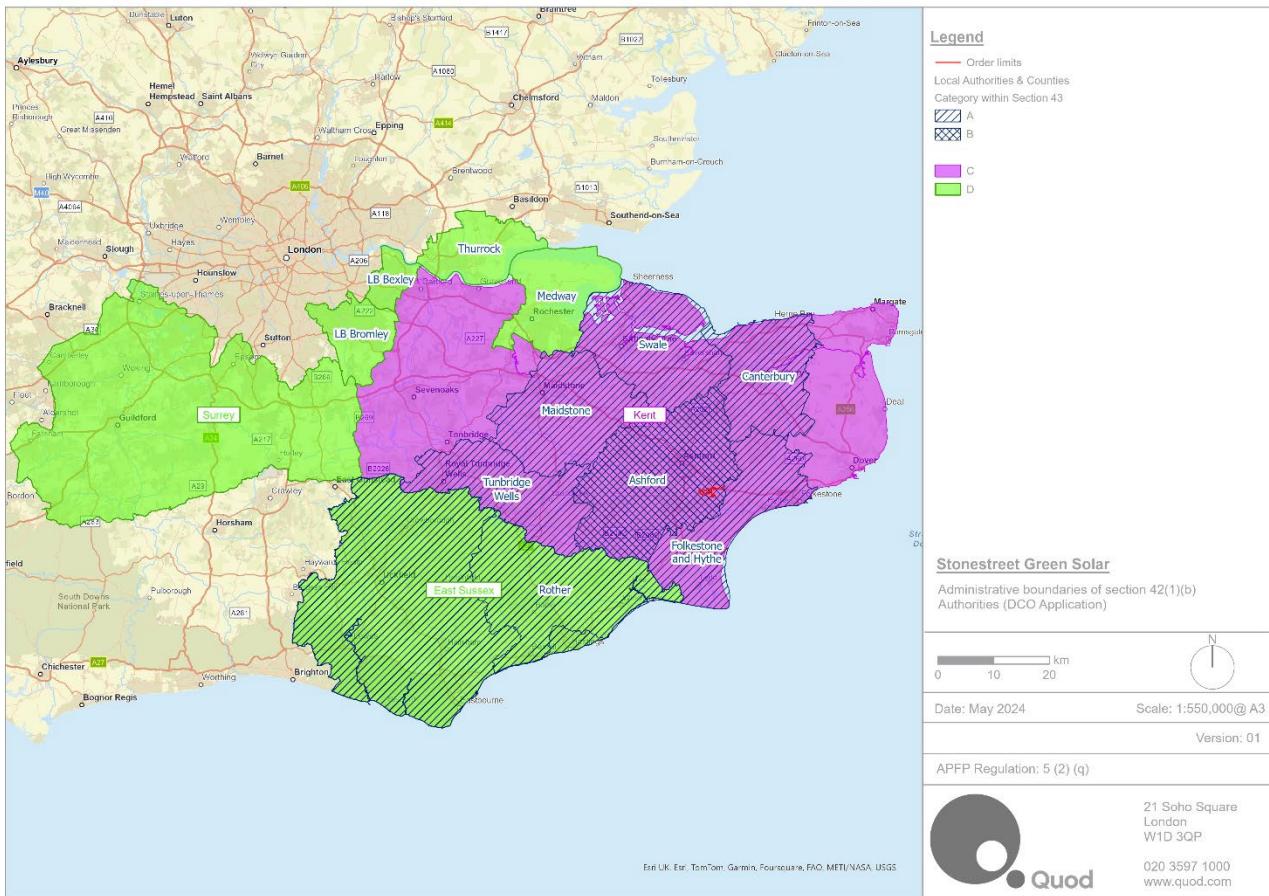
5.3.7 The local authorities within section 42(1)(b) of the PA 2008 for the purposes of the final Project that is the subject of the DCO Application are identified in **Table 8**. The administrative boundaries of these authorities are shown in **Figure 2**.

Table 8: Section 42(1)(b) local authorities (DCO Application)

Local Authority Name	Category within Section 43 of PA 2008
----------------------	---------------------------------------

Ashford Borough Council	B
Canterbury City Council	A
Dover District Council	No longer a consultee under section 42(1)(b)
East Sussex County Council	D and A
Folkestone and Hythe District Council	A
Kent County Council	C
London Borough of Bexley Council	D
London Borough of Bromley	D
Maidstone Borough Council	A
Medway Council	D
Rother District Council	A
Surrey County Council	D
Swale District Council	A
Thurrock Council	D
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	A

Figure 2: Administrative boundaries of section 42(1)(b) authorities (DCO Application)



Section 42(1)(c): Greater London Authority

5.3.8 As the Site is not within Greater London, the Applicant did not consult with the Greater London Authority.

Section 42(1)(d): each person who is within one or more of the categories set out in section 44

5.3.9 Under section 42(1)(d) of the Act, the Applicant must consult each person who is within one or more of the three categories set out in section 44 of the PA 2008. These categories are:

- Category 1: A person is within Category 1 if the Applicant, after making diligent inquiry, knows that the person is an owner, lessee, tenant (whatever the tenancy period) or occupier of the land.
- Category 2: A person is within Category 2 if the Applicant, after making diligent inquiry, knows that the person is interested in the land, or has power to sell and convey the land or to release the land.
- Category 3: A person is within Category 3 if the Applicant thinks that, if the DCO were made and fully implemented, the person would or might be entitled as a result of (a) the implementing of the DCO, (b) the DCO having

been implemented, or (c) use of the land once the DCO has been implemented, to make a 'relevant claim'. There are three types of relevant claim: a claim under section 10 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965⁶; a claim under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973⁷; and a claim under section 152(3) of the PA 2008. A person is within Category 3 only if the person is known to the Applicant after making diligent inquiry. These parties were identified based on the scheme proposals, redline boundaries, construction activities, and environmental information available at the point of statutory consultation.

- 5.3.10 A full list of persons falling within section 44 of the PA 2008 is included within the **Book of Reference (Doc Ref. 4.1)** submitted with the DCO Application.
- 5.3.11 Land referencers were appointed by the Applicant to complete a diligent enquiry process prior to and throughout the pre-application stage to identify relevant persons with an interest in land. The following process was followed:
- Landowners and other interested parties were identified initially through title searches with the Land Registry. These searches were refreshed at regular intervals to ensure the information held was accurate. Previously unregistered areas of land were also periodically checked to ensure the land remained unregistered.
 - Land referencing questionnaires, provided in **Appendix F-2: Sample Letter and Land Interest Questionnaire (Doc Ref. 6.2)**, were issued to all interests identified through Land Registry searches. These forms sought to confirm the contact details of the affected parties and also to ask for details of any other parties who may hold an interest in the land. Where new interested parties were revealed, these parties were also issued with a request for information form to confirm the details provided. This confirmation process has been on going throughout all stages of consultation.
 - Where ownership could not be determined or request for information forms were not returned, further reminder letters were issued and site visits were conducted. The site visits involved identifying and visiting potential landowner residences, neighbours and other properties to try and identify landowners and/or occupiers. Land referencing questionnaires, provided in **Appendix F-2: Sample Letter and Land Interest Questionnaire (Doc Ref. 6.2)**, requesting clarity on land ownership, and details of other persons with an interest in the land, were issued and completed on site where possible.
 - Further information was obtained where possible with follow up site visits, desktop research, letters, emails and telephone calls.

Consultation activities

- 5.3.12 The consultation letters were sent to the section 42 consultees by registered post, with the majority being posted on 19 October 2022 and the remainder being posted on 21 October 2022 (to avoid the Royal Mail strike on 20 October 2022) to arrive by the consultation launch on 25 October 2022 (see **Appendix C-3: Sample Letters**

Sent to Section 42 Consultees for 2022 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2) for the sample letters).

- 5.3.13 A follow up email attaching the letters was sent on 31 October 2022 to all consultees where the email address of the consultee was known.
- 5.3.14 The letters notified consultees about the launch of the consultation on 25 October 2022, identified where consultees could view the consultation material, explained how consultees could respond to the consultation and confirmed the deadline for receipt of consultation responses, being 29 November 2022.
- 5.3.15 The letters provided a link to the Project website where all of the consultation documents could be downloaded and enclosed:
- the section 48 notice;
 - the feedback form; and
 - a Section 42 Plan for Consultation.

5.4 Part B: Section 47 Consultation

Introduction

- 5.4.1 The Applicant carried out statutory consultation with the local community pursuant to section 47 of the PA 2008 between 25 October and 29 November 2022, in parallel with the section 42 consultation and section 48 publicity.

Identifying the local community

- 5.4.2 A Core Consultation Zone was set by the Applicant to cover a 4km radius from the centre of the Site (see Figure 2 of SoCC 2 at **Appendix B-8: Published Statement of Community Consultation 2 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). The zone centred on the Site in Aldington and extended outwards to include the nearby surrounding villages of Bilsington, Bonnington, Brabourne Lees, Kingsnorth, Mersham and Smeeth. All elements of the Project are located within this Core Consultation Zone. Residents and businesses within the Core Consultation Zone received the Project leaflets and newsletters directly.
- 5.4.3 In recognition of the expectation that there would be some people outside of the Core Consultation Zone who might be interested in the Project, the Applicant also set a Wider Consultation Zone to cover a 10km radius from the centre of the Site (refer to Figure 3 of SoCC 2 at **Appendix B-8: Published Statement of Community Consultation 2 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). The Applicant used tools including media relations and advertising to notify residents and businesses within the Wider Consultation Zone about the consultation.

5.5 Consultation activities

Face-face events

- 5.5.1 Four local information events were held (open to all members of the public) to provide opportunities to view the consultation documents and speak with members of the Applicant's Project team. These were held at:
- Mersham Village Hall – Friday 4 November 2022, 3pm to 7pm
 - Aldington Village Hall – Saturday 5 November 2022, 11am to 3pm
 - Sellindge Village Hall – Tuesday 8 November 2022, 2pm to 6pm
 - Bilsington Village Hall – Wednesday 9 November 2022, 1pm to 5pm
- 5.5.2 The exhibition boards used at these events (see **Appendix F-4: Exhibition Boards and Screenshots of Website (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) were available to download on the Project website during the consultation period.
- 5.5.3 A public presentation was held on Tuesday 8 November 2022, 8pm to 9.30pm, at Aldington Village Hall. A copy of the presentation, along with written answers to the questions asked, was uploaded to the Project website after the event.
- 5.5.4 These events were publicised through the notice published under section 48 PA 2008, on the Project website and in the consultation leaflet, poster and advert (see below).
- 5.5.5 A total of 138 people attended the local information events and approximately 60 attended the public presentation.

Website

- 5.5.6 The Project website (www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk) was kept up to date for the duration of the 2022 Statutory Consultation.
- 5.5.7 Amongst other things, it contained copies of the consultation material, SoCC 2, the online feedback form and contact details for the Applicant. It continued to host the consultation information after consultation close for reference purposes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Project website with consultation material (2022 Statutory Consultation)

EPL 001 has now completed a statutory consultation on its proposals for the Stonestreet Green Solar project. You can access information about the proposals, including the consultation documents, from the lists below.

Please note, our statutory consultation closed on Tuesday 29 November 2022.

The statutory consultation on the proposals commenced at 9:00am on 25 October 2022 and ran until 11:59:59pm on 29 November 2022.

Statutory Consultation Documents (Autumn 2022):

- Community Leaflet (uploaded 18 October 2022)
- Consultation Booklet (uploaded 24 October 2022)
- Exhibition Boards (uploaded 24 October 2022)
- Site Plan (uploaded 24 October 2022)
- Preliminary Environmental Information Report - Vol.1 - Non-Technical Summary (uploaded 24 October 2022)
- Preliminary Environmental Information Report - Vol.2 - Main Text (uploaded 24 October 2022)
- Preliminary Environmental Information Report - Vol.3 - Appendices (uploaded 24 October 2022)
- Section 48 Notice (uploaded 18 October 2022)
- Statutory Consultation Poster (uploaded 18 October 2022)
- Statutory Consultation Advert (uploaded 18 October 2022)
- Updated Statement of Community Consultation (uploaded 28 September 2022)*
- Updated Notice publicising Statement of Community Consultation (uploaded 28 September 2022)*

* Since the updated SoCC was made available in September 2022, EPL 001 has become aware that the opening hours for Ashford Library have changed slightly. Information on the latest opening hours for Ashford Library and the other Deposit Location libraries can be viewed on Kent County Council's website at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/libraries/visiting-a-library>

Events

A series of local information events were held as follows:

Mersham Village Hall - Friday 4 November, 3pm-7pm
 Aldington Village Hall - Saturday 5 November, 11am-3pm
 Sellindge Village Hall - Tuesday 8 November, 2pm-6pm
 Bilsington Village Hall - Wednesday 9 November, 1pm-5pm

In addition to the local information events, a public presentation was held at Aldington Village Hall on Tuesday 8 November 2022. To download a copy of the presentation, [please click here](#).

Consultation Leaflet

5.5.8 A Community Information Leaflet (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was sent to over 2,200 homes and businesses within the Core Consultation Zone on 14 October 2022. This provided details of the statutory consultation, including where and when the consultation documents could be accessed and how and by what deadline any responses could be submitted.

Consultation Poster

5.5.9 A consultation poster (see **Appendix F-3: Consultation Advert and Poster (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was emailed to relevant local authorities, parish councils, MPs, the Project CLP, community groups and other interested parties on 17 and 18 October 2022 for them to print out and display in their offices. The poster provided a link to the Project website where the consultation documents could be viewed and set out the details of the local information events and public presentation.

Consultation Advert

- 5.5.10 A consultation advert (see **Appendix F-3: Consultation Advert and Poster (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was placed in the Kentish Express (Ashford and District) on 20 October 2022, containing similar information as that set out in the consultation poster described above.

Consultation Notice

- 5.5.11 A copy of the section 48 notice (see Part C: Section 48 Publicity below) was displayed at the Site during the consultation period (see **Appendix E-3: Site Notices for 2022 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**), which provided details of the consultation.

Emails to parish councils and others interested consultees

- 5.5.12 An email (see a sample email in **Appendix D-2: Emails to Community Organisations 2022 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was sent on 17 and 18 October 2022 to the relevant local authorities, ten parish councils, MPs, the Project CLP, community groups and other interested consultees who registered for Project updates on the Project website. Six of the parish councils who received the email are the relevant parish councils under section 42 of the PA 2008.
- 5.5.13 The email notified the parish councils and the interested consultees of the commencement of the 2022 Statutory Consultation and provided information about the local information events and the public presentation, and included a copy of the Community Information Leaflet.

Direct communication lines

- 5.5.14 Consultees were able to contact the Applicant's Project team during the consultation period by:
- Email at info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
 - Telephone at 08081 698335
 - Post at FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
- 5.5.15 Consultees could also visit the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk or follow the Project on Twitter @SGS_solar

Communications outreach

- 5.5.16 A range of online and offline communication methods was used to engage a wide number of people in the consultation process, as explained throughout this section.
- 5.5.17 The Consultation Booklet (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was written in an easy to understand, plain English style. A Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was provided in non-technical language to summarise the findings of the PEIR. The feedback form (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation**

Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2) was designed in an easy to use format that provided structure for consultees whilst ensuring that they had the opportunity to provide any other comments they might have about the Project.

- 5.5.18 A Freephone number, staffed by the Applicant's community relations team, was available throughout the 2022 Statutory Consultation period. The Applicant received one request for a telephone surgery, which took place on 15 November 2022. A Freepost service was also available for people to send feedback by post if desired.
- 5.5.19 Large print, audio or braille versions of the consultation documents were available upon request. One request for a large print copy of a technical report was received by the Applicant, which was sent out on 17 November 2022.

Social Media

- 5.5.20 In advance of and during the consultation period, updates about the consultation were posted on the Project's Twitter feed @SGS_solar
- 5.5.21 The Applicant also advertised the consultation on Twitter and Facebook. Combined data from Twitter and Facebook show over 40,000 people saw the posts about the consultation.

5.6 Part C: Section 48 Publicity

Introduction

- 5.6.1 The Applicant publicised the proposed application pursuant to section 48 of the PA 2008, in parallel with the section 42 and section 47 consultation.

Publication of section 48 notice

- 5.6.2 A copy of the notice published as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation in accordance with section 48 of the PA 2008 is provided in **Appendix E-1: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2022 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**. This notice contained the prescribed information required by Regulation 4(3) of the APFP Regulations.
- 5.6.3 The Applicant published the section 48 notice in the newspapers and on the dates as set out in **Table 9** in accordance with Regulation 4(2) of the APFP Regulations.

Table 9: Details of newspaper publication of section 48 notice

Newspaper	Date of advertisement
The Kentish Express (Ashford and District)	20 October 2022 27 October 2022
The Folkestone and Hythe Express	19 October 2022 26 October 2022
The Guardian	20 October 2022

The London Gazette

20 October 2022

Consultation bodies

- 5.6.4 The Project is EIA development. Therefore, in accordance with Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations, the Applicant enclosed a hard copy of the section 48 notice with the letters sent to all section 42 consultees including the consultation bodies in advance of the consultation commencing on 25 October 2022.

5.7 Part D: Notifications under Section 46 and Regulation 8

Regulation 8

- 5.7.1 In accordance with Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations, the Applicant notified the Secretary of State as part of its Scoping Report (see **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.1: Scoping Report (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) submitted on 19 April 2022 that it proposed to provide an environmental statement in respect of the development.
- 5.7.2 In addition to the notification provided within the Scoping Report, notification was also provided in the section 46 letter sent to the Planning Inspectorate in advance of the 2022 Statutory Consultation.

Section 46

- 5.7.3 In accordance with section 46 of the PA 2008, the Applicant wrote to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) on 24 October 2022 in advance of section 42 consultation commencing on 25 October 2022. A copy of that letter is in and a copy of the Acknowledgment of s46 Notification dated 26 October 2022 is in **Appendix C-4: Section 46 Notification and Acknowledgment for 2022 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.
- 5.7.4 The letter provided details of where the consultation materials could be accessed and enclosed:
- sample covering letters sent to the section 42 consultees;
 - the section 48 notice;
 - the feedback form; and
 - the Section 42 Plan for Consultation.

5.8 Part E: Responses to Consultation

Introduction

- 5.8.1 This section of the Report explains the level and nature of feedback received by the Applicant in response to the 2022 Statutory Consultation.

Number of consultation responses received

5.8.2 The Applicant treated all responses received on or before 29 November 2022 as relevant responses. Responses that were received after that deadline but with a postmark dated prior to that deadline were accepted up to 8 December 2022.

5.8.3 A total of 168 relevant responses were received to the Applicant's 2022 Statutory Consultation.

5.8.4 **Table 10** shows the breakdown of response types received during the consultation:

Table 10: Breakdown of response types received during the consultation

Method of response submission	Total
Online feedback form	48
Hard copy feedback form	24
Email	94
Letter	2
Telephone	0
Total	168

Feedback form

5.8.5 The feedback form (see **Appendix F-1: Consultation Information Pack (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was made up of 11 questions about the Project, one question about the consultation exercise and one box in which consultees could provide any additional comments.

5.8.6 The questions on the feedback form, and the number of responses received to each question, are set out in **Table 11**.

Table 11: Feedback form responses

Question	Number of responses
1. Do you support the use of solar energy to generate electricity in the UK?	
a. Yes / No / Unsure (please circle your answer)	1a. 68
b. Please explain why you support/do not support the use of solar energy as part of the UK energy mix?	1b. 23

<p>2. Are you in favour of the proposals for Stonestreet Green Solar in principle?</p> <p>a. Yes / No / Unsure (please circle your answer)</p> <p>b. Please explain why you support/do not support the proposals in principle?</p>	<p>69</p>
<p>3. Do you have any comments on the proposed siting or layout for the solar generation and energy storage scheme?</p>	<p>67</p>
<p>4. Do you have any comments on the proposals for connecting to the national electricity system via underground cable at Sellindge?</p>	<p>47</p>
<p>5. Do you have any comments on the assessment of any likely environmental impacts of the proposals with regard to landscape and visual impact and the proposed mitigation to address any such impacts?</p>	<p>63</p>
<p>6. Do you have any comments on the assessment of any likely environmental impacts of the proposals with regard to water environment, land contamination, socio-economics, cultural heritage, noise, climate change or cumulative impacts and the mitigation measures proposed to address any such impacts?</p>	<p>54</p>
<p>7. Do you have any comments on the assessment of any likely environmental impacts of the proposals with regard to traffic, transport and construction?</p>	<p>56</p>
<p>8. Do you have any comments on the assessment of any likely environmental impacts of the proposals with regard to ecology, biodiversity and land use and the mitigation measures proposed to address any such impacts?</p>	<p>51</p>
<p>9. Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to footpaths and Public Rights of Way that could potentially be</p>	<p>60</p>

delivered as part of the project, including redirection within fields, connectivity of the 'River Walk' and the proposed off-road cycleway that could become part of a future route between Aldington to Mersham?	
10. Do you have any comments on community benefits that the scheme could contribute to the local community and any suggestions on how a community benefit fund provided by the project could be used within the local area?	56
11. Do you have any further comments about the proposals for Stonestreet Green Solar?	52
Have you found this consultation exercise informative? Yes / No / Unsure (please circle your answer). Please explain your answer	62
Please use the following space to provide any additional comments.	19

5.8.7 There was a technical error in the collection of data from the online feedback form. This meant online responses to Question 1b (a question seeking general views on solar as part of the UK energy mix and not a specific question in relation to the Project) were not received. The number of responses for that question listed above therefore only relates to the hard copy feedback form responses. To correct this, the same question was included again in the feedback form for the 2023 Statutory Consultation, and this issue was identified in the Consultation Booklet and section 48 notice published in support of the 2023 Statutory Consultation (see **Section 6** of this Report).

Consideration of responses

5.8.8 The information contained within the consultation responses was collated into a spreadsheet and categorised by consultee category and theme.

5.8.9 The Applicant then undertook a careful and thorough review of the consultation responses received in accordance with the relevant guidance, with consideration of how regard could be given to the responses.

5.8.10 **Appendix F-5: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses** and **Appendix F-6: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)** include a table for each of the strands of consultation (section 42, section 47 and section 48):

- summarising the responses received by the Applicant, grouped into headline issues;
- explaining how the Applicant had regard to these responses;
- identifying whether changes were made to the Project as a result of the responses; and
- if no changes were made then an explanation of why not.

5.8.11 **Table 12** below provides a high-level summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant.

Table 12: Summary of responses and regard had to those responses

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Questions about the scale and need for the Project in this location	The need for large-scale solar projects is set out in the Planning Statement (Doc Ref. 7.6) and is established in National Policy Statement EN-1. A significantly reduced scale proposal to the Project is not considered further by the Applicant as to be a reasonable alternative. Further details on this are set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2) .
Support the principle of new solar energy generation	Noted.
Questions about the site location, with comments suggesting it is not a suitable location, or there are other more suitable sites	<p>The alternative sites considered for the Project, including the site requirements, are set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p> <p>A description of the Applicant’s process for selecting the Site and the reasons for its choice with regard to these influencing factors is described in ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.2: Site Selection Influencing Factors (Doc Ref. 5.4).</p>
The impact to farmland, the loss of agricultural land, including Grade 2 and 3a land and food security in the UK	<p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref 5.2) sets out the site selection process for the Site which carefully considered minimising BMV land included in the Order limits. The Applicant’s site selection has avoided the use of BMV where possible.</p> <p>The Soils and Agricultural Land Report at ES Volume 4, Appendix 16.1: Soils and Agricultural Land Report (Doc Ref. 5.4) and ES Volume 2, Chapter 16: Other Topics (Doc Ref. 5.2) provides information and assessment of effects to agricultural land and soils.</p> <p>Effects to food security and to the agricultural economy are assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Socio-</p>

	<p>economics (Doc Ref. 5.2) which found the residual effects would be negligible (not significant).</p>
<p>Comments about the potential landscape and visual impacts of the Project, including change of village character, industrialising the area, visual impacts to property and impacts to the AONB</p>	<p>The potential significant effects on the landscape and visual amenity including village character and the Kent Downs National Landscape have been identified and assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2). The Illustrative Landscape Drawings – Not for Approval (Doc Ref. 2.7) have been prepared to assist in communicating the extent and vision of the landscape mitigation strategy.</p>
<p>Questions about the diversions and impacts on the PRowS, noting the footpaths are ancient routes that should be maintained and some of the diversions increase the route length</p>	<p>The Applicant recognises the importance of PRowS and impacts on them have been assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Socio-economics (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p> <p>Additionally, an Outline Rights of Way and Access Strategy ('RoWAS') (Doc Ref. 7.15) has been prepared following engagement with KCC, having regard for feedback from stakeholders (including Kent Ramblers) as well as relevant local and national design guidance to mitigate effects on the PRow network and its users.</p> <p>Where there is an increase in route length due to a diverted route, in most cases this is less than 10%, which is not considered to result in a substantial change to the propensity for use. New and diverted routes have been designed carefully through consultation feedback to consider connectivity, legibility, importance and usage. All routes would be designed to a high quality to make them attractive and accessible.</p>
<p>Concerns that the proposed 10m wide PRow routes would encourage vehicle usage</p>	<p>The PRow pathways are proposed to be approximately 2m wide. The proposed 10m PRow corridor is the total distance between the fence and the relevant landscape feature, as secured by the Design Principles (Doc Ref. 7.5). The Streets, Access and Rights of Way Plans (Doc Ref. 2.5) provide details of the proposed PRow pathways. These proposals were consulted on in the 2023 Statutory Consultation.</p> <p>The Outline RoWAS (Doc Ref. 7.15) sets out the interim descriptions of the proposed PRow closures and diversions across the Site. A Rights of Way Working Group will be established and will be consulted on all PRow implementation plans before they are submitted to KCC under a Requirement of the Draft DCO (Doc Ref. 3.1).</p>
<p>Questions about the potential flood risk from the Project and requests for further information about</p>	<p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 10.2: Flood Risk Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.4) assesses the potential water run-off from hardstanding/access, which is to be managed during the construction phase by the Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8)</p>

<p>how potential impacts will be mitigated and whether solar panels will cause further flooding</p>	<p>and the operational phase by the Outline Operational Surface Water Drainage Strategy ('OSWDS') (Doc Ref. 7.14).</p>
<p>Concern about the impacts to heritage, including the heritage of the Aldington village and nearby heritage assets</p>	<p>The potential effects of the Project on nearby designated and non-designated assets have been assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p>
<p>Concern about the impacts to nearby villages including Aldington, Mersham and Smeeth</p>	<p>Views from Aldington, Mersham and Smeeth have been assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2). Since the 2023 Statutory Consultation the planting proposals for the northern boundary of the Site have been enhanced with further tree planting to assist in reducing visual impacts from Mersham. The Project will not be visible from the core of Aldington Village.</p>
<p>Questions relating to the community benefit and whether it is sufficient, and a perceived lack of community benefit</p>	<p>There is no policy requirement to provide a Community Benefit Fund. The fund proposed therefore goes beyond the requirements needed for the Project. Notwithstanding this, the Applicant has proposed to secure such a fund. Further details of the Community Benefit Fund are set out in the Planning Statement (Doc Ref. 7.6). These were also made available for feedback during the 2023 Statutory Consultation.</p>
<p>Concern about impact on the roads, including some of the roads being too small for the construction vehicles and causing unsafe conditions</p>	<p>The Applicant has undertaken a review of the local highway network to identify suitable construction routes to the Site, informed by traffic accident data (summarised at ES Volume 4, Appendix 13.5: Accident Data and Plots (Doc Ref. 5.4)).</p> <p>Management of construction traffic is set out in the Outline CTMP (Doc Ref. 7.9), including specifications of the appropriate routes to the Site. Detailed CTMP(s) for the Project's phases are secured by a DCO Requirement as set out in the Draft DCO (Doc Ref. 3.1), which will ensure that construction traffic keeps to the identified construction routes, the agreed hours of construction are adhered to, and interaction with PRoW and highway users is managed safely and effectively.</p>
<p>Comments about impact on ecology / protected species within the Site and biodiversity net gain</p>	<p>The potential significant effects on biodiversity during the construction phase have been assessed in the ES (see ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2)). The Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8) and Outline LEMP (Doc Ref. 7.10) include a comprehensive range of measures</p>

	<p>that have been designed to avoid and reduce those effects.</p> <p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2) includes an assessment of the potential impacts on biodiversity, including the proposed beneficial effects.</p>
<p>Comments about the cumulative effects of the Project in conjunction with other nearby projects including the Otterpool Park development, the East Stour Solar Farm and the Sellindge Battery Storage Facility</p>	<p>A full cumulative assessment is set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2) and ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.2) with other committed developments in the vicinity of the Site, including the East Stour Solar Farm development located adjacent the Site.</p>
<p>Concern about potential glint and glare impacts to residents, PRowS users and from certain viewpoints</p>	<p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 16.2: Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (Doc Ref. 5.4) assessed potentially impacted dwellings for glint and glare impacts and identifies mitigation measures to ensure nearby receptors are not adversely impacted by the Project.</p>
<p>Comments suggested there would be impacts to local jobs and the local tourism industry</p>	<p>The Applicant engaged with current landowners and tenants of the land within the Order limits to understand baseline information related to permanent, full-time / part-time and seasonal employment supported by existing uses, total area farmed (by type of farming and product) and yields generated by this land. This information was used to complete an assessment of effects on agricultural land, the agricultural economy and food security. ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Socio-Economics (Doc Ref. 5.2) includes an assessment of the impacts to the local agri-economy.</p>

6 2023 Statutory Consultation

6.1 Consultation material

6.1.1 Information on the Project and further preliminary environmental information was published for the 2023 Statutory Consultation in the following documents (see **Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Parts 1, 2 and 3 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**):

- A **Consultation Booklet** providing information about the updated proposals and the 2023 Statutory Consultation
- A **Book of Plans** showing the Site location and the layout and landscape proposals
- The **PEIR** (originally published as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation)
- The **PEIR Addendum** which updated the PEIR and included an updated non-technical summary
- A **'You said, we did'** document outlining responses to feedback received by that date
- A **consultation leaflet**
- The **exhibition boards** that were used at the local information events listed in **Section 6.5.3** of this Report.

6.1.2 Together, these documents described the updated Project and Site, identified the Applicant as EPL 001 Limited (a subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited), explained the consultation process and set out how consultees could respond to the consultation.

6.1.3 These documents, together with SoCC 3, consultation leaflets/newsletters and the notice published under section 48 of the PA 2008, were available for inspection during the consultation period and until 1 August 2023 free of charge at the Deposit Locations listed in **Section 4.3.15** of this Report. A check was made of the Deposit Locations on 6 July 2023 to ensure there were sufficient copies of materials; no Deposit Locations needed to be replenished.

6.1.4 Electronic copies of the consultation documents were also available to download free of charge during the consultation period on the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk under the tab labelled 'Consultation' then 'Statutory Consultation (Summer 2023)'.

6.1.5 A copy of the consultation documents was available for inspection at the local information events listed in **Section 6.5.3** of this Report.

6.1.6 The Applicant offered to provide a full set of consultation documents on a USB memory stick upon request free of charge and hard copies could be obtained upon

request at a cost of £500 per copy. The Applicant issued three USB copies of the consultation documents.

6.2 Methods by which consultees could respond

6.2.1 All consultees were able to respond to the 2023 Statutory consultation in the following ways:

- Completing an online feedback form (see **Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) on the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/consultation
- Completing a hard copy feedback form (see **Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) (available at the local information events, the Deposit Locations and by post upon request from the Applicant) and either handing it to the Project team at the local information event or submitting it by post to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
- Submitting comments by:
 - email to info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk;
 - post to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar; or
 - telephone at 08081 698335.

6.3 Part A: Section 42 Consultation

Introduction

6.3.1 The Applicant carried out statutory consultation with statutory consultees pursuant to section 42 of the PA 2008 as part of the 2023 Statutory Consultation between 12 June and 17 July 2023, in parallel with the section 47 consultation and section 48 publicity.

Identifying section 42 consultees

6.3.2 The sections below explain how the Applicant identified the consultees in each category under section 42 of the PA 2008. A full list of the section 42 consultees for the 2023 Statutory Consultation is provided at **Appendix C-5: List of Section 42(1)(a) and (b) Consultees for 2023 Statutory Consultation** and **Appendix C-2: List of Section 42(1)(d) Consultees for Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

Section 42(1)(a): such persons as may be prescribed

6.3.3 The Applicant used the same approach as set out in **Section 5.3** for identifying prescribed consultees.

Section 42(1)(aa): Marine Management Organisation

6.3.4 The Project would not affect, or be likely to affect, any of the areas specified in section 42(2) PA 2008. Therefore, the Applicant did not consult the Marine Management Organisation for the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

Section 42(1)(b): each local authority that is within section 43

- 6.3.5 The Applicant consulted the same local authorities within section 42(1)(b) of the PA 2008 for the purposes of the 2023 Statutory Consultation as it did for the 2022 Statutory Consultation as listed in **Section 5.3** of this Report.

Section 42(1)(c): Greater London Authority

- 6.3.6 As the Site is not within Greater London, the Applicant did not consult with the Greater London Authority for the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

Section 42(1)(d): each person who is within one or more of the categories set out in section 44

- 6.3.7 The Applicant used the same approach as set out in **Section 5.3** of this Report for identifying persons falling within the three categories set out in section 44 of the PA 2008.
- 6.3.8 A full list of persons falling within section 44 of the PA 2008 is included within the **Book of Reference (Doc Ref. 4.1)** submitted with the DCO Application.

6.4 Consultation activities

- 6.4.1 The consultation letters were sent to the section 42 consultees by registered post with the majority being posted on 8 June 2023 to arrive by the consultation launch on 12 June 2023. Due to delivery issues, a small number of letters were posted on 22 June 2023. See **Appendix C-6: Sample Letters Sent to Section 42 Consultees for 2023 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for the sample letters. A follow up email attaching the letters was sent on 12 June and 22 June 2023 to consultees where the email address of the consultee was known.
- 6.4.2 The letters notified consultees about the launch of the consultation on 12 June 2023, identified where consultees could view the consultation material, explained how consultees could respond to the consultation and confirmed the deadline for receipt of consultation responses, being 17 July 2023. An extended deadline of 31 July 2023 was provided to those section 42 consultees whose letters were sent on 22 June 2023.
- 6.4.3 The letters provided a link to the Project website where all of the consultation documents for the 2023 Statutory Consultation could be downloaded and enclosed:
- the section 48 notice;
 - the feedback form;
 - a plan showing the site location and preferred Order limits; and
 - (for section 42(1)(d) consultees) a land plan.

6.5 Part B: Section 47 Consultation

Introduction

6.5.1 The Applicant carried out statutory consultation with the local community pursuant to section 47 of the PA 2008 as part of the 2023 Statutory Consultation between 12 June and 17 July 2023, in parallel with the section 42 consultation and section 48 publicity.

Identifying the local community

6.5.2 The same consultation zones (being the Core Consultation Zone and Wider Consultation Zone) as described in **Section 5.4** of this Report were used for the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

Consultation activities

Events

6.5.3 Four local information events were held (open to all members of the public) to provide opportunities to view the consultation documents and speak with members of the Applicant's Project team. These were held at:

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

6.5.4 The exhibition boards used at these events (see **Appendix G-3: 2023 Statutory Consultation Exhibition Boards and Screenshots of Project Website (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) were available to download on the Project website during the consultation period.

6.5.5 These events were publicised through the notice published under section 48 PA 2008 (see **Appendix E-4: Site Notices for 2023 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**), on the Project website and in the consultation leaflet, poster and advert (see **Appendix G-2: 2023 Statutory Consultation Leaflet, Advert and Poster** and **Appendix G-3: 2023 Statutory Consultation Exhibition Boards and Screenshots of Project Website (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) (see below).

6.5.6 A total of 90 people attended the local information events.

Website

6.5.7 The Project website was kept up to date for the duration of the 2023 Statutory Consultation. It continued to host the consultation information after consultation closed for reference purposes (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Screenshot of the Project website with consultation material (2023 Statutory Consultation)

Our statutory consultation has now closed. Thank you for all feedback provided which the applicant is now carefully considering. Unless you have been instructed otherwise by the applicant, no further statutory consultation responses will be accepted.

If you have any questions, please contact the applicant using the details on the [Contact Us](#) page.

Statutory Consultation (Summer 2023) Documents

- ▶ [Book of Plans](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [Community Information Leaflet](#) (uploaded 2 June 2023)
- ▶ [Consultation Booklet](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [Exhibition Boards](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [Feedback Form \(Online Form - live 12 June 2023\)](#)
- ▶ [Feedback Form \(Printable - uploaded 12 June 2023\)](#)
- ▶ [PEIR Addendum - Vol.1 - Non-Technical Summary](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [PEIR Addendum Vol. 2 - Main Text](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [PEIR Addendum - Vol. 3 - Appendices](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [Section 48 Notice](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [Site Location and Preferred Order Limits](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)
- ▶ [You Said, We Did](#) (uploaded 9 June 2023)

Events

A series of local information events were held as follows:

- ▶ [Sellindge Village Hall - Friday 23 June 2023, 2pm-6pm](#)
- ▶ [Mersham Village Hall - Saturday 24 June 2023, 11am-3pm](#)
- ▶ [Aldington Village Hall - Monday 26 June 2023, 3pm-7pm](#)
- ▶ [Bilsington Village Hall - Tuesday 27 June 2023, 1pm-5pm](#)

EPL 001 has published an updated Statement of Community Consultation, please use the links below to download the document.

- ▶ [Updated Statement of Community Consultation](#) (uploaded 24 May 2023)
- ▶ [Updated Notice publicising Statement of Community Consultation](#) (uploaded 24 May 2023)

Information on the latest opening hours for Ashford Library and the other Deposit Location libraries can be viewed on Kent County Council's website at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/libraries/visiting-a-library>

Consultation Leaflet

6.5.8 A consultation leaflet (see **Appendix G-2: 2023 Statutory Consultation Leaflet, Advert and Poster (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was sent to over 2,200 homes and businesses within the Core Consultation Zone on 5 June 2023. This provided details of the 2023 Statutory Consultation, including where and when the consultation documents could be accessed and how and by what deadline any responses could be submitted.

Consultation Poster

6.5.9 A consultation poster (see **Appendix G-2: 2023 Statutory Consultation Leaflet, Advert and Poster (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was emailed to parish councils on 2 June 2023 for them to print out and display in their offices. The poster provided a link to the Project website where the consultation documents could be viewed and set out the details of the local information events.

Consultation Advert

- 6.5.10 A consultation advert (see **Appendix G-2: 2023 Statutory Consultation Leaflet, Advert and Poster (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was placed in the Kentish Express (Ashford and District) on 8 June 2023, containing similar information as that set out in the consultation poster described above.

Consultation Notice

- 6.5.11 A copy of the section 48 notice (see Part C: Section 48 Publicity below) was displayed at the Site during the consultation period (see **Appendix E-4: Site Notices for 2023 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**), which provided details of the consultation.

Emails to parish councils and others interested consultees

- 6.5.12 An email (see a sample email in **Appendix D-5: Emails to Community Organisations Consulted During 2023 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was sent on 2 June 2023 to the relevant local authorities, ten parish councils, MPs, the Project CLP, community groups and other interested consultees who registered for Project updates on the Project website. Six of the parish councils who received the email are the relevant parish councils under section 42 of the PA 2008.
- 6.5.13 The email notified the parish councils and interested consultees of the commencement of the 2023 Statutory Consultation and provided information about the local information events, a link to SoCC 3, and attached copies of the community information leaflet.

Direct communication lines

- 6.5.14 Consultees were able to contact the Applicant's Project team during the 2023 Statutory Consultation period by:
- Email at info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
 - Telephone at 08081 698335
 - Post at FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
- 6.5.15 Consultees could also visit the Project website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk or follow the Project on Twitter @SGS_solar

Communications outreach

- 6.5.16 Information about the consultation was made available in different formats across a number of online and offline outlets to communicate with hard to reach groups, including a social media advertising campaign (see below).
- 6.5.17 The Consultation Booklet (see **Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was written in an easy to understand, plain English style. A Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR Addendum (see **Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 3 (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) was provided written in non-technical language to summarise the findings of the PEIR as updated by the PEIR Addendum. The feedback form (see **Appendix**

G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)) was designed in an easy to use format that provided structure for consultees whilst ensuring that they had the opportunity to provide any other comments they might have about the Project.

- 6.5.18 Emails were sent to a number of hard to reach groups (agreed with ABC) informing them of the consultation on 17 October 2022, with an invitation to the public presentation and an offer to answer any questions they may have. The groups sent this email included the following: Action with Communities in Rural Kent (subsequently closed), The Sedgwick Godfrey Trust, Kent Community Energy and Kent Community Foundation.
- 6.5.19 Further information about how potential effects on equality of the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project is in the **Equalities Statement (Doc Ref. 7.18)**.
- 6.5.20 A Freephone number, staffed by the Applicant's community relations team, was available throughout the 2023 Statutory Consultation period. The Applicant did not receive any requests for a telephone surgery. A Freepost service was also available for people to send feedback by post if desired.
- 6.5.21 Large print, audio or braille versions of the consultation documents were available upon request. No requests for large print copies of technical reports were received by the Applicant.

Social Media

- 6.5.22 In advance of and during the 2023 Statutory Consultation period, updates about the consultation were posted on the Project's Twitter feed @SGS_solar
- 6.5.23 A social media advertising campaign was run on Twitter and Facebook throughout the five weeks of the consultation. This resulted in over 40,000 views and 1,422 link clicks to the Project website.

6.6 Part C: Section 48 Publicity

Introduction

- 6.6.1 As part of the 2023 Statutory Consultation, the Applicant publicised the proposed application pursuant to section 48 of the PA 2008, in parallel with the section 42 and section 47 consultation.

Publication of section 48 notice

- 6.6.2 A copy of the notice published in accordance with section 48 of the PA 2008 in advance of the 2023 Statutory Consultation is provided in **Appendix E-2: Section 48 Newspaper Notices for 2023 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**. This notice contained the prescribed information required by Regulation 4(3) of the APFP Regulations.

6.6.3 The Applicant published the section 48 notice in the newspapers and on the dates as set out in **Table 13** in accordance with Regulation 4(2) of the APFP Regulations.

Table 13: Details of newspaper publication of section 48 notice

Newspaper	Date of advertisement
The Kentish Express (Ashford and District)	8 June 2023 15 June 2023
London Gazette	8 June 2023
The Guardian	7 June 2023
The Folkestone and Hythe Express	7 June 2023 14 June 2023

6.7 Consultation bodies

6.7.1 The Project is EIA development. Therefore, in accordance with Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations, the Applicant enclosed a hard copy of the section 48 notice with the letters sent to all section 42 consultees including the consultation bodies.

6.8 Part D: Notifications under Section 46 and Regulation 8

Regulation 8

6.8.1 As mentioned in **Section 5.7.1** of this Report, the Applicant notified the Secretary of State as part of its Scoping Report (see **ES Volume 4, Appendix 1.1: Scoping Report (Doc Ref. 5.4)**) submitted on 19 April 2022 that it proposed to provide an environmental statement in respect of the development.

6.8.2 In addition to the notification provided within the Scoping Report, notification was also provided in the section 46 letter sent to the Planning Inspectorate in advance of the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

Section 46

6.8.3 In accordance with section 46 of the PA 2008, the Applicant wrote to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) on 8 June 2023 in advance of section 42 consultation commencing on 12 June 2023. A copy of that letter and a copy of the Acknowledgment of s46 Notification dated 12 June 2023 is in **Appendix C-7: Section 46 Notification and Acknowledgment for 2023 Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

6.8.4 The letter provided details of where the consultation materials could be accessed and enclosed:

- sample covering letters sent to the section 42 consultees;
- the section 48 notice;
- the feedback form;
- a plan showing the site location and preferred Order limits; and
- a sample land plan.

6.9 Part E: Responses to Consultation

Introduction

6.9.1 This section of the report explains the level and nature of feedback received by the Applicant in response to the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

Number of consultation responses received

6.9.2 The Applicant treated responses received on or before 17 July 2023 as relevant responses. Responses that were received after that deadline but with a postmark dated prior to that deadline were accepted up to 31 July 2023.

6.9.3 For the small number of section 42 consultees who were given an extended deadline by exception, responses received on or before 31 July 2023 were treated as relevant responses. Responses that were received after that deadline but with a postmark dated prior to that deadline were accepted up to 14 August 2023. A late response received from Dover District Council on 12 October 2023 was also accepted.

6.9.4 A total of 101 relevant responses were received to the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

6.9.5 **Table 14** shows the breakdown of response types received during the 2023 Statutory Consultation:

Table 14: Breakdown of responses received by response type

Method of response submission	Total
Online feedback form	14
Hard copy feedback form	12
Email	74
Letter	1
Telephone	0
Total	101

6.10 Feedback form

- 6.10.1 The feedback form was made up of nine questions about the Project, one question on whether the consultees had any further comments and the question repeated from the 2022 Statutory Consultation on whether consultees support/do not support the use of solar energy as part of the UK energy mix.
- 6.10.2 The questions on the feedback form, and the number of responses received to each question, are set out in **Table 15**.

Table 15: Feedback form responses

Question	Number of responses
1) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the solar energy generation element of the scheme?	20
2) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the energy storage element of the scheme?	17
3) Do you have any comments on our proposals for connecting to the national electricity system?	16
4) Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during: The construction of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm? The operation of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm? The decommissioning of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?	25
5) Do you have any comments on the contribution that the scheme will make to the local community?	22
6) Do you have any comments on the landscape strategy and the proposed biodiversity enhancements set out in the Consultation Booklet, the PEIR and PEIR Addendum?	21

Question	Number of responses
7) Do you have any comments on the changes made to the Project following the previous statutory consultation in 2022?	16
8) Do you have any comments on the information presented in our Preliminary Environmental Information Report ('PEIR') as updated by our PEIR Addendum?	9
9) Do you have any comments on potential projects that the Community Benefit Fund could contribute towards?	16
10) Do you have any further comments?	22
(Repeated question from 2022 Statutory Consultation) Please explain why you support/do not support the use of solar energy as part of the UK energy mix?	21

6.11 Consideration of responses

6.11.1 The Applicant undertook a careful and thorough review of the consultation responses received in accordance with the relevant guidance.

6.11.2 **Appendix G-4: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses** and **Appendix G-5: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)** include a table for each of the strands of consultation (section 42, section 47 and section 48):

- summarising the responses received by the Applicant, grouped into headline issues;
- explaining how the Applicant had regard to these responses;
- identifying whether changes were made to the Project as a result of the responses; and
- if no changes were made then an explanation of why not.

6.11.3 **Table 16** below provides a high-level summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant.

Table 16: Summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
<p>The location of the Project is inappropriate. Solar panels should be located on roofs of houses and commercial development on motorways and in existing brownfield.</p>	<p>The alternative sites considered for the Project, including the site requirements, are set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p> <p>A description of the Applicant’s process for selecting the Site and the main reasons for its choice with regard to these influencing factors is described in ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.2: Site Selection Influencing Factors (Doc Ref. 5.4).</p>
<p>Feedback from 2022 Statutory Consultation was not adequately addressed.</p>	<p>A summary of how feedback was addressed was in the You Said We Did Booklet published in support of the 2023 Statutory Consultation (see Appendix G-1: 2023 Statutory Consultation Information Pack, Part 1 (Doc Ref. 6.2)). Further detail of how the Applicant had regard to the feedback is in Appendix F-5: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses, Appendix F-6: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses, Appendix G-4: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses and Appendix G-5: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2) of this Report. Further detail on how the design has changed in response to consultation feedback is in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p>
<p>The Applicant has not provided any justification for the size of the scheme or reasons why a reduced scale would make the Project unviable.</p>	<p>The need for large-scale solar projects is set out in the Planning Statement (Doc Ref. 7.6) and is established in National Policy Statement EN-1. A significantly reduced scale proposal to the Project is not considered further by the Applicant as to be a reasonable alternative. Further details on this is set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p>
<p>Concern about the loss of agricultural land and its need for food security.</p>	<p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 5: Alternatives and Design Evolution (Doc Ref 5.2) sets out the site selection process for the Site which carefully considered minimising BMV land included in the Order limits. The Applicant’s site selection has avoided the use of BMV where possible.</p> <p>The Applicant has assessed the effects to food security and to the agricultural economy in ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Socio-economics (Doc Ref. 5.2) which</p>

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
	found the residual effects would be negligible (not significant).
Support the Project due to need for renewable energy generation.	Noted.
Happy to see a number of changes to the PRoWs were made in response to consultation feedback to 2022 Statutory Consultation.	Noted.
The Project will change the character of the village and the surrounding landscape. It will interrupt most views of open countryside from the roads.	The likely effects to the character of the site and the surrounding area have been assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2) . This includes an assessment of both long-range views and the effect of the Project on the wider landscape.
Concern that the Project would cause traffic impacts to village roads and the centre of Aldington village.	The construction traffic impacts of the Project have been assessed and are set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 13: Traffic and Access (Doc Ref. 5.2) . This ES Chapter concludes that there are no predicted significant impacts on the local highway network.
Concern about changes to PRoWs and reduced continuity.	<p>The Applicant recognises the importance of PRoWs and impacts on them have been assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Socio-economics (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p> <p>In most cases, the increased route length for diverted routes is less than 10%, which is not considered to result in a substantial change to the propensity for use. New and diverted routes have been designed carefully through consultation feedback to consider connectivity, legibility, importance and usage. All routes would be designed to a high quality to make them attractive and accessible.</p>
The cumulative size of the Project in addition to nearby projects is 408 football pitches. There will be cumulative impacts during the construction, operation and renewal phases. This would change the rural	A cumulative assessment of the landscape and visual impacts during construction and operational phases is set out at ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2) . ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.2) sets out the cumulative effects with other committed developments in

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
<p>character of the area and surround Aldington Village.</p>	<p>the vicinity of the Site, including the East Stour Solar Farm development located adjacent the Site.</p>
<p>Concern about light pollution and noise impacts. It is unclear whether the assessment takes into consideration different weather conditions.</p>	<p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Noise (Doc Ref. 5.2) includes a noise assessment which considers the effects of different weather conditions that could alter the noise of the Project. Construction noise levels will be controlled through embedded mitigation and the Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8) and Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan ('DEMP') (Doc Ref. 7.12). During the operational stage, the design of the Project has located noise sources away from sensitive receptors.</p> <p>The Design Principles (Doc Ref. 7.5) secure the principles for acoustic fencing.</p> <p>No part of the Project will be continuously lit during operations, with lighting limited to emergency and overnight maintenance lighting only at Inverter Stations, the Project Substation and Sellindge Substation. If required to be used, lighting will be directed within the Site limits away from sensitive receptors and will include features to reduce light spill beyond the areas required to be lit. This is secured by the Design Principles (Doc Ref. 7.5) and the Outline Operational Management Plan ('OMP') (Doc Ref. 7.11). Lighting during the construction and decommissioning phases will be limited in extent and directed within the Order limits, as secured by the Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8) and Outline DEMP (Doc Ref. 7.12).</p>
<p>Concern about visual impacts to property. Site views at the consultation event did not show the autumn view which made it difficult to understand the potential impact to property.</p>	<p>The impact on residential receptors has been considered in ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Views (Doc Ref. 5.2). Updated visualisations and photomontages have been prepared since 2022 and 2023 Statutory Consultation. These include summer and winter views which are considered appropriate to understand the potential impacts of the Project (see ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.10: LVIA Visualisations, ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.5: Representative Views – Winter, ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.6: Representative Views – Summer, ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.7: Night-time Photographs (Doc Ref. 5.4)).</p>
<p>The solar panels would cause run off of water and</p>	<p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 10.2: Flood Risk Assessment (Doc Ref. 5.4) assesses the potential water run-off from hardstanding/access, which is to be</p>

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
increased flooding to low lying land.	managed during the construction phase by the Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8) and the operational phase by the Outline Operational Surface Water Drainage Strategy ('OSWDS') (Doc Ref. 7.14) .
Concern about construction impacts to ground nesting species, including the brown hare.	<p>The disturbance impacts to wildlife, including nesting species and the brown hare, during construction is assessed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Biodiversity (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p> <p>The Outline CEMP (Doc Ref. 7.8) will ensure that best practice construction methods are carried out to minimise impacts to existing sensitive receptors and the environment during the construction phase.</p>
The Project provides minimal/no benefits to the community. The community benefit fund is insufficient to compensate for the Project impacts.	There is no policy requirement to provide a Community Benefit Fund. The fund proposed therefore goes beyond the requirements needed for the Project. Notwithstanding this, the Applicant has proposed to secure such a fund. Further details of the Community Benefit Fund are set out in the Planning Statement (Doc Ref. 7.6) . These were also made available for feedback during the 2023 Statutory Consultation.

6.12 Part F: Changes to land interests and prescribed consultees

Introduction

6.12.1 This section of the report explains the consultation undertaken by the Applicant to address the identification of new land interests and prescribed consultees after the 2023 Statutory Consultation ended.

Guidance and advice

6.12.2 Paragraph 24 of the Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' guidance (April 2024)⁸ states that: *'land interests can change over time and new or additional interests may emerge after an applicant has concluded statutory consultation but just before an application is submitted. In such a situation, the applicant should provide a proportionate opportunity to any new person identified with a land interest to make their views known on the application.'*

6.12.3 Paragraph 3.13 of the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note 'Fourteen: Compiling the Consultation Report' (February 2021) states: *'If additional persons with an interest in land were added and consulted following changes to the project boundary during the Pre-application stage, it is useful to describe:*

How many additional persons with an interest in land were consulted;

when they were consulted;

how they were consulted; and

what information they were consulted with.'

New land interests

- 6.12.4 New persons with an interest in land within the Site boundary were identified by the Applicant after the 2023 Statutory Consultation ended. In accordance with the guidance, the Applicant therefore sent those persons (see **Appendix K-1: List of Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for a list of the consultees) letters inviting them to comment on the Project (see **Appendix K-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to New Land Interests and Prescribed Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for a sample letter). The letters provided details about the Project, explained where copies of the previous consultation materials could be located and gave those consultees the opportunity to submit comments to the Applicant by a deadline that was at least 28 days beginning with the day after the day on which the consultees received the consultation documents.
- 6.12.5 Comments could be submitted by:
- email to info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
 - post (free of charge; no stamp required) to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
 - telephone (free of charge) at 08081 698335

Canal and River Trust

- 6.12.6 The Applicant did not consult the Canal and River Trust as part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation or 2023 Statutory Consultation on the basis that the Project was thought not likely to impact an inland waterway or land adjacent to an inland waterway, as the absence of a right to navigation over the part of the East Stour River that runs through and adjacent to the Site means that it cannot be used as a waterway for river transport.
- 6.12.7 However, after the 2023 Statutory Consultation ended the Applicant decided, adopting a highly precautionary approach, to consult the Canal and River Trust on the Project. Therefore, on 20 February 2024, the Applicant sent a letter to the Canal and River Trust inviting them to comment on the Project (see **Appendix K-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to New Land Interests and Prescribed Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for a copy of the letter). On the same date, the Canal and River Trust responded to the Applicant by email to confirm that *'the Trust do not own or manage and land or waterspace in the vicinity of this project, so have no comments to make.'*

NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board

- 6.12.8 As part of the section 42 consultation undertaken during the 2022 Statutory Consultation and 2023 Statutory Consultation, the Applicant consulted NHS Kent

and Medway as the relevant integrated care board. However, after the consultation ended, the Applicant double checked its records and noted that it had consulted NHS Kent and Medway using its previous name – the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group.

6.12.9 On 20 February 2024, the Applicant therefore reissued NHS Kent and Medway with a corrected letter which referred to the Integrated Care Board ('ICB') (see **Appendix K-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to New Land Interests and Prescribed Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for a copy of the letter). On the same date, NHS Kent and Medway responded to the Applicant by email to '*confirm that NHS Kent and Medway has no objections to the proposed development*'.

Responses

6.12.10 In addition to the responses above received from the Canal and River Trust and NHS Kent and Medway ICB, two responses were received from the new persons with an interest in the land. This included one response returning a land interest questionnaire form and one response querying the land of interest and where access would be required. **Table 17** shows the breakdown of response types received:

Table 17: Breakdown of responses received by response type

Method of response submission	Total
Email	4
Letter	0
Telephone	0
Total	4

6.12.11 The Applicant had regard to these four responses above in the following way:

- Canal and River Trust – The Applicant noted the response from the Canal and River Trust and noted that they do not own or manage any land or waterspace in the vicinity of this Project;
- NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board – The Applicant noted that this Care Board do have not have any objections to the Project;
- Person with an interest in the land who returned land interest questionnaire form – The Applicant recorded these details in the Project's land referencing database; and
- Person with an interest in the land with a query about the land of interest and where access is required – The Applicant confirmed with the consultee

the affected land and the proposed access arrangements. The consultee did not respond further.

7 Non-Statutory Engagement

7.1 Overview of non-statutory engagement

7.1.1 In addition to the stages of non-statutory and statutory consultation set out above, the Applicant also undertook non-statutory engagement through newsletters, CLP meetings and meetings/briefings with stakeholders.

7.2 Newsletters

7.2.1 The Applicant sent a newsletter on 22 June 2022 to homes and businesses in the Core Consultation Zone along with consultees who had registered for Project updates (see **Appendix I-2: June 2022 Newsletter (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). The newsletter contained an overview of the feedback from the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation and an update on the Project.

7.2.2 The Applicant also sent a newsletter during the week beginning 20 November 2023 to homes and businesses in the Core Consultation Zone along with consultees who had registered for project updates (**Appendix I-3: November 2023 Newsletter (Doc Ref. 6.2)**). The newsletter contained an overview of the feedback from the 2023 Statutory Consultation and information on the next steps leading up to submission of the DCO Application.

7.3 Community Liaison Panel meetings

7.3.1 A CLP for the Project was set up in March 2022 and the first meeting took place in June 2022. As explained in the Terms of Reference for the CLP (see **Appendix I-4: Community Liaison Panel Terms of Reference and Meeting Minutes (Doc Ref. 6.2)**), the purpose of the CLP is to facilitate communication, share information and engage in balanced discussions about the DCO Application and its subsequent examination and to keep the local community informed about all pertinent aspects of the Project.

7.3.2 The CLP is Chaired by an Independent Chair and comprises representatives from each of:

- the Applicant;
- four local residents;
- two representatives from Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council;
- five local Borough Councillors (three from ABC and two from FHDC);
- two local KCC Councillors; and
- two representatives from local community groups.

7.3.3 To date, the meetings of the CLP have taken place on 9 June 2022, 11 August 2022, 7 February 2023, 15 June 2023 and 21 September 2023.

7.3.4 Key topics discussed at the meetings has included:

- Clarification about the consultation process and relevant consultees
- Questions and discussion about the proposed community benefit fund
- Project updates by the Applicant
- Discussion on biodiversity net gain
- Questions about solar panel technology
- Changes to the PRowS
- Traffic impacts
- Visual impacts.

7.3.5 At the 21 September 2023 meeting it was agreed the next CLP meeting would be held post submission of the Application. CLP members have been updated regularly on EPL 001's progress with updates provided on 22 November 2023, 16 February 2024, 25 March 2024 and 22 April 2024.

7.3.6 CLP meeting minutes and attendees are in **Appendix I-4: Community Liaison Panel Terms of Reference and Meeting Minutes (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

7.4 Meetings/briefings with stakeholders

7.4.1 Throughout the pre-application stage, the Applicant has engaged with key stakeholders.

7.4.2 In advance of the launch of the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation, the Applicant held a number of briefings to introduce the community and local stakeholders to the Project. A briefing pack was sent by email on 4 November 2021 containing an introductory leaflet, details of the Project and a link to the Project website. Elected members were emailed again on 23 March 2022 with details of the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation.

7.4.3 **Table 18** summarises the non-statutory engagement undertaken before the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation.

Table 18: Summary of non-statutory engagement before 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Otterpool Park	The Applicant met with Otterpool Park to discuss the emerging proposals for the respective schemes.	14 December 2020

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Otterpool Park	The Applicant met with Otterpool Park to discuss the emerging proposals for the respective schemes.	18 January 2021
UK Power Networks ('UKPN')	To discuss the curtailment at Bank Farm.	23 March 2021
UKPN	To discuss cable routes including underground ducting and tower compound for the alternative cable route, and grid connection offers.	22 April 2021
UKPN	To discuss cable routes including underground ducting and tower compound for the alternative cable route, and grid connection offers.	11 June 2021
EDF Renewables	To discuss EDF Renewable's proposed solar park project.	6 September 2021
UKPN	To discuss cable routes including underground ducting and tower compound for the alternative cable route, and grid connection offers.	3 November 2021
Planning Inspectorate	Stonestreet Green Solar Project inception meeting.	16 November 2021
Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council and residents	<p>Public meeting held at Aldington Village Hall attended by 50 members of the local community.</p> <p>This was an initial introduction to the Project held at the request of Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council. The Applicant provided an overview of the Project and answered questions from the attendees. Questions focused on need, size, community benefit and cumulative impact. This meeting helped to establish a structure for subsequent stakeholder briefings. A copy of the briefing material is in Appendix A-5: Briefing Presentation (Doc Ref. 6.2).</p>	29 November 2021
Damian Green MP	The Applicant introduced the Project. The MP asked to be kept informed as the Project develops, which the Applicant has done.	19 January 2022
Nearby landowner	Requested an in person briefing to discuss the Project. Main concerns raised include traffic, view,	26 January 2022

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
	noise, privacy, community benefit, and distance from property.	
Otterpool Park	The Applicant met with Otterpool to discuss the emerging proposals for the respective schemes.	24 February 2022
Ashford Borough Council ('ABC') and Kent County Council ('KCC')	Site visit to Sellindge Solar Farm with ABC.	11 March 2022
EDF Renewables	Discussion about EDF Renewables' proposed solar park project.	17 March 2022

7.4.4 **Table 19** summarises the non-statutory engagement undertaken during the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation.

Table 19: Summary of non-statutory engagement during 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Nearby landowner	Requested an in person briefing to discuss the Project. Main concerns raised include traffic, view, noise, privacy, community benefit, and distance from nearby property.	8 April 2022
Save Aldington Campaign	The Applicant provided a Project briefing to Save Aldington Campaign at Bank Farm to answer questions. The main topics discussed were the size of the Project and the plans for energy storage.	8 April 2022
EDF Renewables	Discussion about EDF Renewables' proposed solar park project.	21 April 2022

7.4.5 **Table 20** summarises the non-statutory engagement undertaken after the 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation ended and before the 2022 Statutory Consultation began.

Table 20: Summary of non-statutory engagement after 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation ended and before 2022 Statutory Consultation began

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Nearby landowner	The Applicant met with a nearby landowner to discuss the Project design and potential impacts to Backhouse Woods.	5 May 2022
EDF Renewables	Meeting to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park project.	5 May 2022
Nearby landowner	The Applicant met with a nearby landowner to discuss potential impact to the property and opportunities for design mitigation.	5 May 2022
High Speed 1	The Applicant met with the stakeholder to discuss connection to Sellindge Substation via ducts under the railway line and potential works required.	17 May 2022
Meeting with ABC and KCC	Meeting to discuss and provide an update on the PPA.	7 June 2022
CLP meeting #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overview of the development consent process ▪ An update on the 2022 Statutory Consultation and timings ▪ Community benefits 	9 June 2022
Otterpool Park	The Applicant met with Otterpool Park to discuss the emerging proposals for the respective schemes.	9 June 2022

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Meeting with ABC and KCC	Meeting to discuss the KCC PRow strategy and key challenges in the local area, as well as KCC's response to the Scoping Report.	13 June 2022
Meeting with ABC and KCC	Meeting to discuss KCC's response to the Scoping Report related to archaeological matters raised.	17 June 2022
Meeting with ABC and KCC	The Applicant provided a Project update and discussed the PPA with the councils.	21 June 2022
High Speed 1	Introduction to project proposals.	23 June 2022
Otterpool Park	The Applicant met with Otterpool Park to discuss the emerging proposals for the respective schemes.	11 July 2022
Meeting with ABC and KCC	Meeting to discuss the PPA and the SoCC.	19 July 2022
Meeting with ABC and KCC	The Applicant provided a Project update and discussed the PPA with the councils.	2 August 2022
UKPN	Discussion about planning requirements for the Project.	3 August 2023
CLP meeting #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project update ▪ Biodiversity net gain approach and calculations ▪ Proposed solar panel technology to be used ▪ Rationale of proposed new river walk and other PRow changes ▪ Concerns about impact to highways and lorry 	11 August 2022

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
	movements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed viewpoints 	
Meeting with ABC and KCC	The Applicant provided a Project update and discussed the PPA with the councils.	30 August 2022
UKPN	Discussion about planning requirements for the Project.	31 August 2022
UKPN	Discussion about the cable route civils.	31 August 2022
UKPN	The Applicant met with UKPN to walk the proposed Project cable route.	28 September 2022
Nearby landowner	The Applicant organised a follow up meeting to provide an overview of proposed changes to mitigate impacts to the nearby property.	29 September 2022
KCC and ABC officers	The Applicant provided an overview of proposed changes to PRowS and footpaths.	29 September 2022
ABC officers	The Applicant hosted a Site visit with ABC officers to explain the proposals in relation to the Site context.	3 October 2022
Church Commissioners – adjoining landowners	Online call to introduce proposals and discuss potential for off-road cycle route crossing the Church Commissioners’ land.	4 November 2022
ABC, FHDC, KCC Members Briefing	The Applicant provided an online Project briefing to members. 18 officers and members attended.	10 October 2022
UKPN	The Applicant met with UKPN to discuss cable routes including	13 October 2022

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
	underground ducting and tower compound for the alternative cable route, and grid connection offers.	
Kent Ramblers	The Applicant provided an in-person briefing on changes to PRowS.	19 October 2022

7.4.6 The Applicant undertook non-statutory engagement during the 2022 Statutory Consultation period. **Table 21** lists the stakeholders engaged with, a summary of the matters discussed and the engagement date.

Table 21: Summary of non-statutory engagement during 2022 Statutory Consultation

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park.	31 October 2022
KCC	The Applicant met with KCC to discuss potential PRow impacts.	2 November 2022
Church Commissioners	The Applicant provided an overview of the Project.	4 November 2022
Nearby landowner	The Applicant provided an overview of the Project. Main concerns raised by the consultee included traffic, view, noise, privacy, community benefit, distance from property.	8 November 2022
Nearby landowner	The Applicant provided an in-person briefing to discuss screening options to the nearby property.	8 November 2022
Nearby landowner	The Applicant provided an in-person briefing to discuss potential impacts and mitigation opportunities.	9 November 2022

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Nearby landowner	The Applicant explained the proposed scheme changes.	17 November 2022
Otterpool Park, ABC, EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with the stakeholders to discuss the local area's strategic PRow network and opportunities.	17 November 2022
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce / Ashford Economic Development Group	The Applicant provided an in-person Project briefing at Chamber offices.	17 November 2022
Nearby landowner	The Applicant explained the proposed landscaping changes in the vicinity of the nearby property and impacts on views.	18 November 2022
Nearby landowner	Discussion about potential impacts on views.	23 November 2022
Nearby landowner I	The Applicant visited nearby property to discuss potential impacts on views.	24 November 2022

7.4.7 **Table 22** provides a summary of non-statutory engagement undertaken by the Applicant after the 2022 Statutory Consultation ended and before the 2023 Statutory Consultation began.

Table 22: Summary of non-statutory engagement after 2022 Statutory Consultation ended and before 2023 Statutory Consultation began

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park.	19 December 2022
Save Aldington Group Limited	The Applicant provided an in-person Project briefing.	21 December 2022
Damian Collins MP	The Applicant provided an in-person Project briefing.	6 January 2023
CLP Meeting #3	Key points discussed at the meeting were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project update, including 	7 February 2023

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
	overview of the 2022 Statutory Consultation feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community benefit fund and how it should apply ▪ Confirmation that the Applicant had consulted with Natural England 	
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park.	8 February 2023
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park.	22 February 2023
ABC and KCC meeting	The Applicant provided a Project and programme update and advised that further statutory consultation would be undertaken in spring/summer 2023.	1 March 2023
ABC and KCC meeting	The Applicant provided an update on programme, landscape and visual, heritage and archaeology, PRoWs, cumulative impacts and an overview of SoCC 3.	20 March 2023
KCC meeting	The Applicant explained its approach to responding to KCC archaeology officer's comments to the 2022 Statutory Consultation in relation to archaeology and heritage matters.	29 March 2023
Kent Wildlife Trust	The Applicant provided an overview of the Project, and gave a detailed presentation on the biodiversity investigations and proposed enhancements.	30 March 2023
ABC, FHDC and KCC planning officers	The parties discussed the 2022 Statutory Consultation comments in relation to landscape and visual impacts.	3 April 2023

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Network Rail / HS1	The Applicant met the stakeholder to discuss connection to Sellindge Substation via ducts under the railway line and potential works required.	17 April 2023
UKPN	The Applicant met UKPN to discuss cable routes including underground ducting and tower compound for the alternative cable route, and grid connection offers	19 April 2023
KCC ecology officers	The Applicant provided an overview of the ecology proposals, including changes in response to the 2022 Statutory Consultation feedback.	19 April 2023
KCC archaeology officer	The Applicant proposed the pre and post consent archaeology strategy for feedback.	24 April 2023
ABC, FHDC and KCC planning officers	The Applicant provided an update on scheme development, engagement with stakeholders, cumulative schemes and alternatives and the upcoming 2023 Statutory Consultation.	25 April 2023
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park.	28 April 2023
Kent Wildlife Trust	The Applicant and stakeholder discussed biodiversity opportunities for the Project, including management approaches.	2 May 2023
KCC	The Applicant updated the KCC PRow officer on the proposed PRow strategy.	4 May 2023
Network Rail / HS1	The Applicant met the stakeholder to discuss the connection to Sellindge Substation via ducts under the railway line and potential works required.	4 May 2023

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Aldington Primary School	The Applicant explained the benefits that the Project could deliver to the school to help lower its energy cost, reduce its carbon footprint and provide learning opportunities for children.	4 May 2023
Environment Agency planning and flood teams	The parties discussed comments received to the 2022 Statutory Consultation and the Applicant sought input on relevant flood data and modelling information.	10 May 2023
UKPN	The Applicant met the stakeholder to discuss cable routes including underground ducting and tower compound for the alternative cable route, and grid connection offers.	25 May 2023
Planning Inspectorate	To provide a project update.	26 May 2023
ABC, FHDC and KCC planning officers	The Applicant provided an overview of the Project, including draft site layout and landscape strategy plans, an update on recent engagement with stakeholders, the approach to the PEIR Addendum and an update on the upcoming 2023 Statutory Consultation.	5 June 2023
Network Rail / HS1	The Applicant met with the stakeholder to discuss connection to Sellindge Substation via ducts under the railway line and potential works required.	30 June 2023

7.4.8 The Applicant undertook non-statutory engagement during the 2023 Statutory Consultation period. **Table 23** lists the stakeholders engaged with, a summary of the matters discussed and the engagement date.

Table 23: Summary of non-statutory engagement during 2023 Statutory Consultation

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
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Elected members	The Applicant sent a members Briefing Pack to local authority officers to provide to their elected members.	12 June 2023
CLP Meeting #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project update, including consultation timeline, consultation material and plans and key changes to the Project ▪ Overview of the Project programme ▪ Next steps 	15 June 2023
Aldington Primary School	The Applicant and stakeholder met in person to discuss the benefits the Project could deliver to the school to help lower its energy cost, reduce its carbon footprint and provide learning opportunities for children.	27 June 2023
ABC and KCC planning officers	The Applicant met with ABC and KCC to discuss the proposed approach to address ABC's comments to the 2022 Statutory Consultation in relation to heritage matters.	30 June 2023
Network Rail / HS1	The Applicant met online with the stakeholder to discuss the Project interaction with their assets. They requested further information and future procedures to be put in place.	30 June 2023

7.4.9 **Table 24** provides a summary of non-statutory engagement undertaken by the Applicant after the 2023 Statutory consultation ended and before the DCO Application was submitted.

Table 24: Summary of non-statutory engagement after 2023 Statutory consultation ended and before DCO Application was submitted

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss EDF Renewables' proposed solar park.	21 July 2023
National Grid Utilities Service Provider	The Applicant met with National Grid to discuss access rights to the National Grid-owned areas of the substation and the works proposed.	25 July 2023
Environment Agency	The Applicant met with the Environment Agency to discuss the approach to the water environment.	2 August 2023
ABC	The Applicant met with ABC to discuss ABC's response to the 2023 Statutory Consultation.	4 September 2023
CLP meeting	The Applicant provided an overview of key consultation feedback and key themes from 2023 Statutory Consultation, an update of the Project including proposed changes to the design, programme for DCO submission and post acceptance arrangements.	21 September 2023
EDF Renewables	The Applicant met with EDF Renewables to discuss the interface between the Project and EDF Renewables' nearby project.	3 October 2023
UKPN	The Applicant met with UKPN to discuss the proposed changes to the Order limits.	4 October 2023

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Natural England	The Applicant met with Natural England to discuss the Letters of No Impediment.	12 October 2023
ABC	The Applicant met with ABC to discuss comments related to Project design and evolution.	7 December 2023
KCC	The Applicant met with KCC to discuss KCC's 2023 Statutory Consultation feedback.	7 December 2023
Historic England	The Applicant met with Historic England to discuss Historic England's 2023 Statutory Consultation feedback.	8 December 2023
National Grid Ventures (responding on behalf of Interconnectors Limited ('NGIL'))	Meeting to discuss Project and interaction with NGIL assets.	21 December 2023
Environment Agency	Meeting to discuss the construction methods to water courses, hydraulics modelling and protective provisions.	8 February 2024
UKPN	The parties discussed the proposed protective provisions to UKPN assets.	15 March 2024
Planning Inspectorate	Programme update.	18 March 2024
ABC and KCC	Project meeting update.	21 March 2024
UKPN	Phone call to discuss the Project's interface with National Grid ducts and UKPN's technical review.	26 March 2024

Stakeholder	Summary of matters discussed	Date
Southern Water	Meeting to discuss project interface with Southern Water assets	28 March 2024

7.5 Consultation responses received outside of statutory consultation

- 7.5.1 On 31 January 2024, the Applicant received an Adequacy of Consultation Representation to the Secretary of State Report prepared by Aldington and Mersham Support Group. In the following weeks a further 15 responses were received from members of the public confirming their support of the report.
- 7.5.2 The Applicant also received a letter from Ashford Borough Council on 11 April 2024 which referenced a number of the points raised by the Aldington and Mersham Support Group.
- 7.5.3 Although these responses were received outside of statutory consultation, the Applicant had regard to the responses which is set out in **Appendix M: Regard had to Consultation Responses Received Outside of Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2)**.

8 Targeted Consultation

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Following the end of the 2023 Statutory Consultation, the Applicant made a number of minor, localised amendments to the Site boundary as a result of feedback received from the consultation, ongoing design development and discussions with stakeholders. Targeted consultation was carried out in respect of these amendments.

8.1.2 The amendments that were the subject of the 2023 Targeted Consultation were:

- **Removal of the alternative Grid connection route:** The 2023 Statutory Consultation scheme included a preferred grid connection route and an alternative grid connection route as alternative options for how the Project could connect to the existing Sellindge Substation. UKPN formally confirmed on 1 September 2023 that the grid connection for the Project could be directly into Sellindge Substation. As a result, the Applicant removed the alternative grid connection from the Site. This means that the Site no longer includes land within FHDC's boundary and so FHDC is no longer a host local authority.
- **Removal of land from the Order limits:**
 - Land in the western part of the Site containing agricultural buildings was removed from the Order limits as this land was no longer required for the Project; and
 - The majority of the Sellindge Substation site was removed from the Order limits, and a small extension was added to the Order limits to the eastern side of the Substation, following further consultation with UKPN who confirmed the area required to allow the connection into Sellindge Substation.
- **Addition of land to the Order limits:**
 - The cable corridor route was widened following further input with UKPN regarding installation requirements.
 - Additional land was added at Bank Farm to provide site access for the duration of the Project;
 - The road verge along Goldwell Lane was included in the Order limits to provide a wider turning circle for construction vehicles, avoiding the need to remove vegetation for access purposes; and
 - Part of the road and the road verge at Station Road was included in the Order limits to provide space for necessary visibility splays and to ensure the Project is compliant with UK road safety requirements.

- 8.1.3 The only amendment included in the 2024 Targeted Consultation was the additional of a small circa 7m² parcel of land to enable the proposed diversion of PRow AE 454 to connect to the existing PRow AE 474.

8.2 Relevant guidance

- 8.2.1 Paragraph 20 of the 'Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' guidance (April 2024) states that:

'Once applicants have completed the consultation process set out in their SoCC, where a proposed application is amended in the light of responses to consultation then, unless those amendments materially and substantially change the proposed application or materially changes its effects as a whole, the amendments themselves should not trigger a need for further consultation. The amendments can be reported as part of the consultation report submitted with the application.'

Only where the project taken as a whole changes very significantly, and to such a large degree that what is being taken forward is fundamentally different from what was previously consulted on, should re-consultation on the proposed application as a whole be considered.

For any material change to a part of the proposed application where the project as a whole is not fundamentally changed, for example in the case of linear aspects where new information leads to a new alignment for a particular section of the proposal, a bespoke and targeted approach to further consultation can be adopted, which can address the specific consultation obligations arising proportionately.'

- 8.2.2 Page 13 of SoCC 3 states that *'...we may also decide to hold further rounds of statutory or non-statutory consultation, including targeted consultation with specific groups, where appropriate'*.

8.3 Targeted consultation

- 8.3.1 In accordance with this guidance and SoCC 3, the Applicant undertook the 2023 Targeted Consultation between 13 November and 13 December 2023 and the 2024 Targeted Consultation between 12 February and 12 March 2024 under section 42 of the PA 2008. A targeted approach, rather than a full re-consultation, was considered to be appropriate given the minor, localised nature of the proposed changes.
- 8.3.2 Consultation was carried out with persons with an interest in the land that was directly affected by the proposed changes to the Order limits under section 42(1)(d) of the PA 2008. Diligent enquiry was undertaken in order to identify those persons with an interest in the land affected. The Applicant also consulted with section 42(1)(a) and (b) consultees who the Applicant considered would be interested in the proposed changes.

2023 Targeted Consultation

- 8.3.3 A full list of the consultees for the 2023 Targeted Consultation is provided in **Appendix J-1: List of Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)**. All of these consultees had previously been consulted about the Project and no new interests were identified as a result of the proposed changes.
- 8.3.4 Letters were sent to the above consultees on 10 November 2023 by email (where known) and hard copy, with the hard copy to arrive by the consultation launch on 13 November 2023 (see **Appendix J-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for sample letters). The letters provided details of the proposed changes to the Order limits, by reference to the enclosed 'Proposed Project Changes – Summary Note' (**Appendix J-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)**) and explained how the consultees could submit responses to the consultation to the Applicant by the deadline of 13 December 2023. For those persons with an interest in the affected land, a land plan identifying their interest was also enclosed.
- 8.3.5 At the end of the consultation, the Applicant received a 'return to sender' of the hard copy letter that had been sent to Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council. However, the letter had been emailed to Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council on 10 November 2023 and a consultation response had been received from the council before the end of the consultation period.
- 8.3.6 In February 2024, it was identified that the hard copy letter sent to the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board ('IDB') on 10 November 2023 was sent to an incorrect address. The Applicant therefore provided a hard copy letter to the correct address of the IDB in March 2024 informing them of the consultation and requesting a response. The IDB confirmed by email on 27 March 2024 that it had no further comments to make at this stage and that its previously comments can be dealt with at the detail design stage.
- 8.3.7 Comments could be submitted by:
 - email to info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
 - post (free of charge; no stamp required) to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
 - telephone (free of charge) at 08081 698335
- 8.3.8 12 responses were received to the 2023 Targeted Consultation.
- 8.3.9 **Table 25** shows the breakdown of response types received:

Table 25: Breakdown of responses received by response type (2023 Targeted Consultation)

Method of response submission	Total
Email	12

Letter	0
Telephone	0
Total	12

8.3.10 **Appendix J-3: Regard had to 2023 Targeted Consultation Consultee Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2)** includes a table:

- summarising the responses received by the Applicant, grouped into headline issues;
- explaining how the Applicant had regard to these responses;
- identifying whether changes were made to the Project as a result of the responses; and
- if no changes were made then an explanation of why not.

8.3.11 **Table 26** below provides a high-level summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant.

Table 26: Summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant (2023 Targeted Consultation)

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
No comments on the proposed changes	Noted.
Further information about the Bank Farm access route and road safety	The Proposed Changes Summary shared with consultees which accompanied the non-statutory targeted consultation letter (see Appendix J-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)) provided an overview of the proposed changes. Road safety and access to Bank Farm is addressed and will be managed in accordance with the Outline CTMP (Doc Ref. 7.9) . The Applicant responded to any questions or requests for further information including access road safety queries.
Impacts to Bank Farm businesses	The construction traffic impacts of the Project have been assessed and are set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 13: Traffic and Access (Doc Ref. 5.2) . This ES Chapter
Damage to the verge	

<p>Construction traffic impacts to Goldwell Lane and Station Road</p>	<p>concludes that there are no predicted significant impacts on the local highway network.</p>
<p>Impacts to PRow route AE 474</p>	<p>The Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan ('CTMP') (Doc Ref. 7.9) includes measures that will reduce conflict between users during construction activity.</p> <p>Management of construction traffic is set out in the Outline CTMP (Doc Ref. 7.9), including specifications of the appropriate routes to the Site. Detailed CTMP(s) for the Project's phases are secured by a DCO Requirement as set out in the Draft DCO (Doc Ref. 3.1), which will ensure that construction traffic keeps to the identified construction routes, the agreed hours of construction are adhered to, and interaction with PRow and highway users is managed safely and effectively.</p>
<p>Impacts to PRow users</p>	<p>The effects to the PRow's have been assessed and are set out within ES Volume 2, Chapters 8: Landscape and Views, 12: Socio-Economics and 13: Traffic and Access (Doc Ref. 5.2).</p>

2024 Targeted Consultation

- 8.3.12 A full list of the consultees for the 2024 Targeted Consultation is provided in **Appendix L-1: List of Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)**. All of these consultees had previously been consulted about the Project and no new interests were identified as a result of the proposed changes.
- 8.3.13 Letters were sent to the above consultees on 9 February 2024 by email (where known) and hard copy, with the hard copy to arrive by the consultation launch on 12 February 2024 (see **Appendix L-2: Sample Letter and Enclosures to Consultees (Doc Ref. 6.2)** for sample letters). The letters provided details of the proposed changes to the Order limits, by reference to an enclosed plan, and explained how the consultees could submit responses to the consultation to the Applicant by the deadline of 12 March 2024. For those persons with an interest in the affected land, a land plan identifying their interest was also enclosed.
- 8.3.14 Comments could be submitted by:
- email to info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
 - post (free of charge; no stamp required) to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
 - telephone (free of charge) at 08081 698335
- 8.3.15 3 responses were received to the 2024 Targeted Consultation. **Table 27** shows the breakdown of response types received:

Table 27: Breakdown of responses received by response type (2024 Targeted Consultation)

Method of response submission	Total
Email	3
Letter	0
Telephone	0
Total	3

8.3.16 Appendix L-3: Regard had to 2024 Targeted Consultation Consultee Responses (Doc Ref. 6.2) includes a table:

- summarising the responses received by the Applicant, grouped into headline issues;
- explaining how the Applicant had regard to these responses;
- identifying whether changes were made to the Project as a result of the responses; and
- if no changes were made then an explanation of why not.

8.3.17 Table 28 below provides a high-level summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant.

Table 28: Summary of the key issues raised and the regard had by the Applicant (2024 Targeted Consultation)

Matter raised	Regard had to comment by the Applicant
Opposed to the proposed development and every minor change adds significance and demonstrable harm	The Applicant does not propose any changes to the built infrastructure in this area as part of 2024 Targeted Consultation. The minor change is solely related to changing the Order limits to allow for the diverted PRow AE 454 to properly connect to the existing PRow AE474 and therefore do not result in environmental harm.
No objection to the proposed change to ensure PRow connectivity across the Site	Noted.
Installations in this area will adversely impacts the Grade I listed Church	The Applicant assessed the potential effects of the Project to the Church of St Martin in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage (Doc Ref. 5.2) .

The change is adjacent to PRow AE474 and AE475 which have cultural heritage value

The change is not adjacent to the AE475. An **Outline Rights of Way and Access Strategy ('RoWAS') (Doc Ref. 7.15)** has been prepared following engagement with KCC, having regard for feedback from stakeholders (including Kent Ramblers) as well as relevant local and national design guidance to mitigate effects on the PRow network and its users.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1.1 As explained throughout this Report, the Applicant carried out comprehensive pre-application consultation on its proposals prior to submitting the DCO Application, including a five-week non-statutory consultation, two five-week statutory consultations and two four-week targeted consultations. The pre-application statutory consultation accorded with the requirements of the PA 2008, the APFP Regulations and the EIA Regulations and had regard to guidance issued under section 50(3) of the PA 2008. In addition, the Applicant undertook non-statutory engagement throughout the pre-application stage.
- 9.1.2 The Applicant consulted in a variety of ways to maximise consultee participation. A large number of consultees provided feedback and the Applicant is grateful to all those who took the time to engage in the consultation process.
- 9.1.3 The Applicant had careful regard to the consultation responses received as it has finalised this application for the Project, as explained in detail in this report and **Appendix A-3: Regard had to 2022 Non-Statutory Consultation Feedback, Appendix F-5: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses, Appendix F-6: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses, Appendix G-4: Regard had to Section 42 Consultee Responses, Appendix G-5: Regard had to Section 47 and 48 Responses, Appendix J-3: Regard had to 2023 Targeted Consultation Consultee Responses, Appendix L-3: Regard had to 2024 Targeted Consultation Consultee Responses and Appendix M: Regard had to Consultation Responses Received Outside of Statutory Consultation (Doc Ref. 6.2).**

References

- 1 HMSO (2008) The Planning Act 2008 (Online). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents> (Accessed on 15th November 2023).
- 2 HSMO (2009) Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (Online). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/2264/contents/made> (Accessed on 15th November 2023).
- 3 HMSO (2017) The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Online). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/572/contents/made> (Accessed on 15th November 2023).
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