

Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report

Appendix I: Consultation Outside of Statutory Consultation Stages

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June 2024

APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)
Planning Act 2008
The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009



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Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report

Appendix I-1: Introductory Leaflet November 2021

Proposed Solar Farm Near Aldington



Introduction

Evolution Power is proposing to develop a solar and energy storage park on a site near Ashford in Kent. The Stonestreet Green Solar Farm would generate renewable energy through photovoltaic (PV) panels, providing clean power to UK businesses, infrastructure and homes.

The 165MW project (with export capacity of 99.9MW) would produce clean, renewable electricity reducing the UK's dependence on fossil fuels and the associated carbon emissions. The project will be complemented by battery storage to allow the energy generated to be stored and supplied to the electricity network as required to manage peaks in energy demand.

Evolution Power has identified a number of potential high demand local customers that could be supplied from the project, with the balance to be exported to the national grid.

The Proposal

Evolution Power's proposal is the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of Stonestreet Green Solar, a solar project that will be able to provide up to 99.9MW of electricity at any time, together with the facility to store electricity using battery storage to manage peaks in energy demand. A grid connection has been secured with the connection at the nearby Sellindge substation.

The proposed development is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP") under the Planning Act 2008 as the generating capacity is in excess of 50MW. As such, the application will be determined by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, as opposed to the local planning authority.

Evolution Power

Evolution Power is a UK based, independent solar developer. The company aims to develop affordable and sustainable renewable energy projects to help the UK meet its legally binding 2050 net zero emissions target.

Evolution Power's two directors, Giles Frampton and Conor McNally have developed, built and financed a wide range of renewable energy projects over the past decade, with a focus on UK solar. Evolution Power's team has vast experience of successfully delivering large scale solar projects having developed and financed more than 1GW of UK Solar, including five of the largest projects built to date.

Evolution Power has identified a team of highly experienced advisors, bringing together experts in their fields with relevant experience and skills. The advisory team members have a proven track record having worked on some of the UK's most prestigious strategic and nationally significant energy projects.

The team for Stonestreet Green Solar comprises:

- **Evolution Power** – Applicant
- **Barton Wilmore** – Planning & Consenting Lead
- **Herbert Smith Freehills** – Legal
- **Wardell Armstrong** - Environmental Impact
- **Quantum Public Relations** - Consultation
- **Lloyd Bore** - Landscape & Ecology



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Site and Proposals

Site Location

The proposed site is located four miles southeast of Ashford, eight miles west of Folkestone, near to the village of Aldington.

The site is owned by a number of parties. The grid reference is: TR 05348 37460

The project would be situated on approximately 160 hectares (400 acres) of land to the North and West of the village of Aldington.

Details of the Proposal

The Development would comprise an array of solar PV modules, energy storage and associated infrastructure.

Grid capacity and point of connection

Evolution Power has secured an offer for a grid connection at the Sellindge substation, TN25 6ED. There is also potential for a private wire supply to local large energy users, which would result in the supply of zero-carbon power to these local parties.



Why this site?

The site has been selected as it meets all the key criteria for a development such as this:

1. Access to a nearby grid connection at Sellindge that has available capacity for a project of this size.
2. No statutory landscape, heritage or ecological designations on the site. Not visible from AONB areas. No significant cultural heritage designations.
3. Topography and existing hedgerows will help to minimise the visual impact of the project from Aldington and other viewpoints.
4. Adjacent to pre-existing infrastructure that provides “anchors” in the landscape, including HS1, the M20, the Sellindge electrical substation and overhead lines.
5. Proximity to local large energy users provides the opportunity for a private wire connection.
6. Predominately lower grade agricultural land. Removal of this land from intensive farming use will reduce nitrate impact on the East Stour River and surrounding waterways.
7. High solar irradiation given its South-East location.
8. Good access, being located close to the M20/A20.
9. Ability to act as a buffer to future housing development, protecting the village of Aldington for the next 40 years.

A Project of National Significance

Planning process

As Stonestreet Green is a nationally significant infrastructure project Evolution Power will apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO). The DCO Process is extremely thorough and is expected to last approximately 2.5 to 3 years from start to determination. It involves working with the local authority and other key stakeholders to develop an acceptable proposal and also requires an extensive community consultation programme. The decision whether to grant the Order will be taken by the Secretary of State of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

A DCO application process comprises six key stages –

1. pre-application
2. acceptance
3. pre-examination
4. examination
5. decision and
6. post-decision.

The initial steps in the pre-application process are outlined below:

Indicative Pre-Application Timeline

Autumn 2021	Project Launch
Spring 2022	Publication of Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC) First Phase Public Consultation Preparation of Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)
Summer 2022	Statutory Consultation
Autumn 2022	Finalise Environmental Statement
Winter 2022	Submission of DCO Application

The process for a DCO under the Planning Act 2008 requires significant evaluation work to be undertaken pre-application. Evolution Power will carry out meaningful and in-depth pre-application consultation to incorporate the views of the local authority, key stakeholders and members of the public, to ensure the final scheme design is optimised and any impacts on the local area are minimised. In short, the Applicant is required to define the project, consult widely, and assess the project impacts prior to a DCO application being submitted.

Environment & climate emergency

The UK is legally bound through the Climate Change Act (2008) to reduce greenhouse gases and carbon emissions to increase electricity consumption from renewable resources.

In October 2021 Boris Johnson confirmed its target to decarbonise the electricity grid by 2035.

Currently approximately 30% of UK emissions are from electricity generation and heating for buildings and approximately 25% of emissions come from transport. In order to reach net zero the UK will need a much more widespread use of renewable electricity generation, the use of electric heat pumps in the home and the use of electric vehicles. The supply of electricity will need significantly more generation and the type of generation will need to change from fossil fuels to renewables. Solar has a key part to play in this transition.

The development of solar as a renewable energy generation is fully supported by national and local energy policy – in addition to the UK Government position both Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council have publicly acknowledged the Climate Emergency and are adjusting their supply chains to achieve net zero.

It is expected that solar generation will increase from the current level of 13.5GW to over 100GW.

Evolution Power believes the UK needs to be ambitious in its goals for renewable energy sources and to improve the UK's energy security. The development of domestic renewable generation will reduce the UK's exposure to global energy markets and its current reliance on importing energy from potentially unstable parts of the world, resulting in more stable and lower energy bills.

Stonestreet Green Solar would make a significant contribution towards meeting these ambitions.

The Ambition



Evolution Power's ambition is to develop innovative, renewable energy projects in the 'right' way. Evolution Power carefully selects sites to minimise local impact and targets sites where there are opportunities to provide energy to local customers to maximise sustainability, environmental, and social outcomes.

Evolution Power applies all the experience the team has

from developing and financing over 50 previous solar projects over the past decade to minimise the local impact whilst contributing to the national requirement for renewable energy. Our aim is to work with local communities, maximising opportunities for community participation creating quality training and jobs and providing meaningful community benefits.

Key Benefits

1. Stonestreet Green Solar will deliver up to 99.9MW of renewable electricity at any one time and over a year will generate enough power for around 48,000 homes, saving around 37,000 tonnes of CO2 a year.
2. The project will generate subsidy-free electricity, without public financial support. As the lowest cost generation type it will also help reduce national power prices.
3. The project will provide an inflation linked community benefit fund for the lifetime of the project to be used locally for social and environmental projects.
4. There is potential to provide low carbon electricity direct to local large energy users.
5. All footpaths and public access to the land will remain and the reduction of intensive farming on the site will encourage new flora and fauna to flourish providing biodiversity enhancement. Evolution Power intends to ensure a significant biodiversity gain is achieved through the introduction of wild flower meadows, bee hives and other habitat enhancements, whilst allowing the land where the panels are situated to continue to be grazed by sheep.

Stonestreet Green Solar is an ambitious project that can play a major role in the transition to a renewable energy system. Evolution Power is committed to developing a best-in class project that provides clear benefits for the local community and broader society in general.





Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report
Appendix I-2: June 2022 Newsletter



STONESTREET GREEN SOLAR Community Newsletter June 2022

Introduction

Evolution Power is intending to develop a renewable energy generating project, together with on-site energy storage, associated infrastructure and an underground cable connection, on land at Aldington, near Ashford in Kent.

Known as Stonestreet Green Solar, the project will generate renewable energy through solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. The project will have an export capacity of up to 99.9MW and will connect to the national grid at Sellindge.

Prior to submitting an application to the Planning Inspectorate for a development consent order (DCO) for the project, Evolution Power will be carrying out pre-application consultation.

A first round of non-statutory consultation was held between 25 March 2022 and 29 April 2022 to provide members of the local community and key stakeholders with the opportunity to view the initial proposals and submit feedback to help shape the proposals for Stonestreet Green Solar.

This Community Newsletter provides a summary of the views expressed in the feedback we've received during the non-statutory consultation period and provides an update on next steps.

Non-statutory local information events held:

Location	Date
Sellindge Village Hall	Friday 8 April
Aldington Village Hall	Saturday 9 April
Bilsington Village Hall	Tuesday 12 April
Mersham Sports Club	Wednesday 13 April

Consultation timeline



90
people attended the information events



21
feedback forms were received

Our information events

Local information events were held at four different venues, in accordance with the Statement of Community Consultation published in March 2022

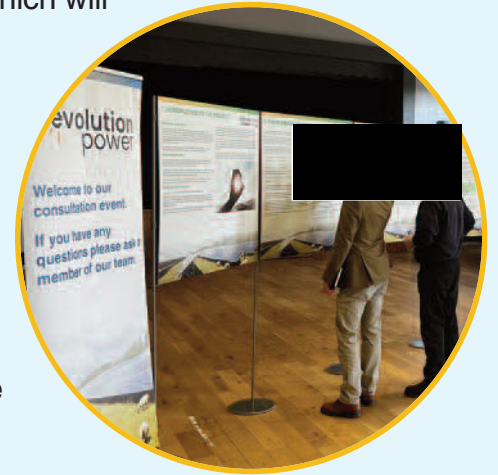
(https://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/files/image/consultation/SoCC_March_2022.pdf)

At the events we presented the initial, outline details of the project, which will evolve as we continue the development of the project design.

This first stage of consultation was undertaken to gather feedback from key stakeholders and the local community that we will use to inform the project design going forward.

At the events the developer and other specialists were on hand to answer questions and explain the current status of the proposals. There were also feedback forms available at the events for visitors to fill in on the day or take away and post back.

The feedback forms were also made available on the project website for the duration of the non-statutory consultation period.

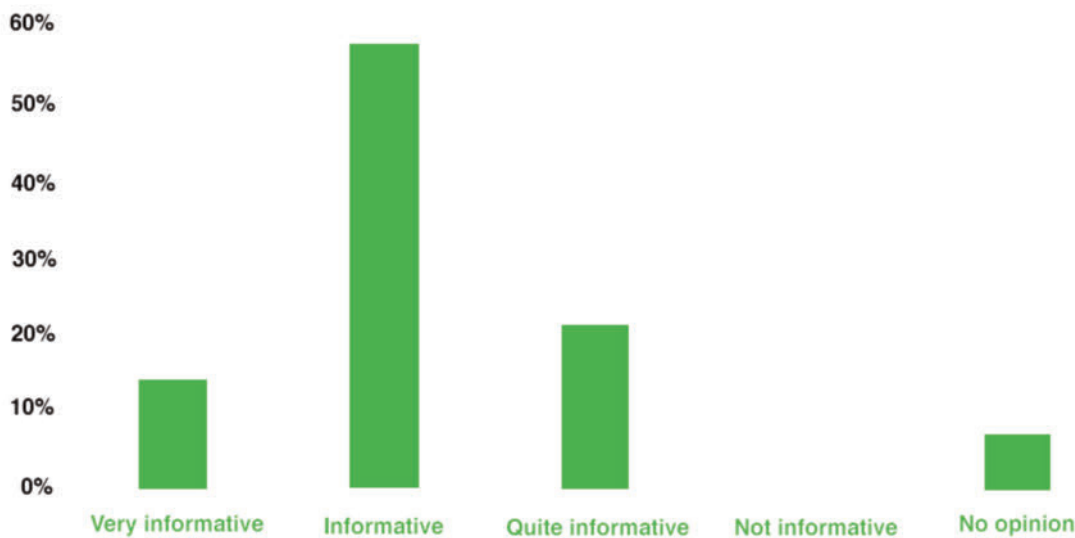


Feedback

The non-statutory consultation was held between 25 March 2022 and 29 April 2022.

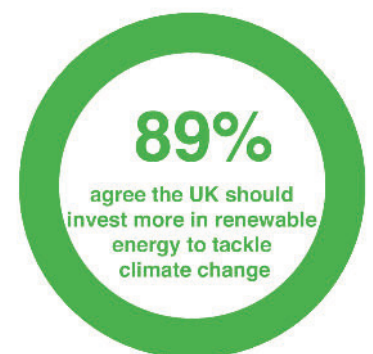
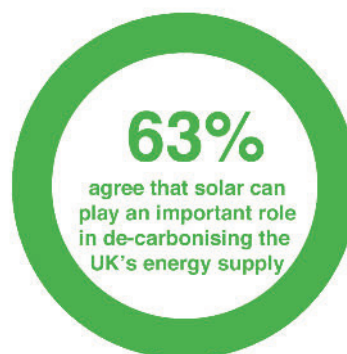
The feedback received during the consultation period included:

How informative did you find the event?



Which aspect of the project is most important to you?

Ranking (1-6)



*Aggregate scores from total feedback showing most important (1) to least important (6)

Emerging themes

From the feedback received, there were a number of key themes that emerged. Many of these will be assessed in full within the Environmental Statement (ES) we will be preparing to accompany our DCO application. The ES will report on the findings of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) undertaken for the project.

The preliminary findings of the EIA will be presented in a document known as the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) (further details provided below), which will be published during the statutory consultation period later this year.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Respondents commented on the potential visual impact of the project and the harm it may cause to the landscape character.

What we are doing: *A Landscape and Visual Impact assessment is being prepared which will include a consideration of the impacts on landscape character and people's views. The results will be presented in our PEIR and ES. More than 30 viewpoints have been agreed with Ashford Borough Council, which will be assessed to identify any potential visual impacts. A selection of photomontages of the proposed development within the landscape will also be prepared.*

Footpaths/Public Access

Respondents sought further detail on the potential impact on local walks and the loss of footpaths.

What we are doing: *We appreciate that there are a number of Public Rights of Way that cross the site which are important assets for the local community. In consultation with Kent County Council, we are reviewing the existing footpath network and will provide a clear strategy for addressing the impacts of the project on Public Rights of Way in the PEIR and ES.*

A number of respondents mentioned the ambition to provide an off-road route between Aldington and Mersham and we are keen to investigate whether this benefit can be delivered as part of this project.

Ecology and bird life

Respondents queried the impact on wildlife and also on bird life.

What we are doing: *Ecological surveys have been undertaken on the site for more than 18 months to*

identify the range of species and numbers of wildlife and birds on the site. These surveys will inform the biodiversity assessment within our PEIR and ES which is currently being prepared.

Fire Risk from energy storage facilities

Respondents raised the potential issue of fire from the energy storage facilities.

What we are doing: *An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan is being prepared which will set out the measures to be implemented to mitigate any potential fire risk. This will be submitted with the DCO application.*

Traffic

Respondents sought clarity on how the project would impact on traffic in the local area and whether it would result in further disruption of journeys from the A20/M20 to the local area.

What we are doing: *Our PEIR and ES will include a chapter assessing the potential impacts of the project on the highway network. Additionally, an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan will be submitted with the DCO application.*

Noise and Light

Respondents queried the potential for noise from the energy storage facilities and whether there would be light spill from the project.

What we are doing: *Potential impacts from both noise and light are being assessed as part of our PEIR and ES.*

Loss of agricultural land/food security

Respondents expressed concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land.

What we are doing: *A detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey has been undertaken to determine the quality of the agricultural land within the project site, and the project has been designed to ensure that the land can still be used for grazing, thus continuing in agricultural use.*

Community benefit

Respondents provided feedback that they were unsure if there would be any benefit for the local community.

What we are doing: *In advance of launching the statutory consultation, we will be firming up details of the community benefit and engaging with key local stakeholders to determine how funding could be used.*

Next steps

Evolution Power is very grateful to those people who took the time to submit feedback to the non-statutory consultation. We have carefully considered that feedback and will use it to inform the evolution of the proposals. The next steps prior to the submission of the DCO application are as follows.

Community Liaison Panel

Membership of the Community Liaison Panel (CLP) has been agreed and the first meeting was held on 9 June 2022. The CLP will be a forum to share information between Evolution Power and the community and will act as an additional channel of communication about the project. Notes from the CLP meetings will be available to view on the project website:

www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

Scheme Design

Evolution Power is continuing to develop the design of the scheme, taking into consideration feedback received from the first round of consultation. The DCO application will show where the solar arrays are proposed to be sited, along with inverters and the energy storage facilities, and will also show proposed changes and enhancements to Public Rights of Way on the site. The preliminary proposals for the design will be included in the consultation material for the forthcoming statutory consultation (see below).

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

The project is EIA development, as defined in the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. We are therefore required to undertake an EIA for Stonestreet Green Solar.

The purpose of the PEIR is to provide an early summary of the known information at the time that will be part of the EIA to allow stakeholders and the local community to develop an informed view of the potential impacts of the development. This

process involves identifying likely significant adverse effects on the environment resulting from the project, and mitigation measures to avoid or minimise those adverse effects where possible, as well as identifying likely significant beneficial effects on the environment.

We have been undertaking environmental surveys for more than 18 months to gather data to inform this process, and in April 2022 we submitted a Scoping Report which set out the approach we propose to take to the EIA of the project. A Scoping Opinion was issued by the Planning Inspectorate in May 2022. Both documents can be accessed on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/stonestreet-green-solar/?ipcsection=docs>

The PEIR will present the preliminary findings of the surveys and assessments that we have been carrying out as part of the EIA process.

The PEIR will include a number of different chapters covering different topics for example: Climate Change, Cultural Heritage, Ecology, Landscape and Visual, Noise, Socio-economics, Transport and Water Environment. The PEIR will be accompanied by a Non-Technical Summary.

The PEIR will be published as part of the statutory consultation and feedback will be sought on it as part of the consultation.

Statutory Consultation

The statutory consultation will be undertaken for at least four weeks during summer/autumn 2022. Residents and businesses within the core consultation zone (as shown in the Statement of Community Consultation) will be sent a further newsletter with details of the consultation dates and events in advance. The consultation details will also be advertised in the local press as well as on the project website. Consultation events will be held in Aldington, Bilsington, Mersham and Sellindge.

Contact details

Anyone with an interest in the project can contact us by:

Emailing: info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

Calling our Freephone information line: 08081 698335

Writing to: FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar

You can also follow us on Twitter: @SGS_solar



Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report
Appendix I-3: November 2023 Newsletter



STONESTREET GREEN SOLAR

Community Newsletter

November 2023

Introduction

EPL 001 Limited¹ ("EPL 001") is intending to develop a renewable energy generating project, including solar photovoltaic ("PV") arrays and on-site energy storage, together with associated infrastructure and an underground cable connection, on land at Aldington, near Ashford in Kent, to be known as Stonestreet Green Solar (the "Project").

Extensive consultation on the Project has been undertaken throughout 2022 and 2023 and EPL 001 is grateful to those people who attended local information events or responded to the consultation.

This newsletter explains the ongoing work that is being undertaken by the Project team and provides an update regarding the timing for submission of the Development Consent Order ("DCO") application for the Project.

The 2023 Statutory Consultation

Following the 2022 Statutory Consultation held between 25 October 2022 and 29 November 2022, EPL 001 conducted the 2023 Statutory Consultation between 12 June 2023 and 17 July 2023.

We welcomed over 100 people to our local information events for the 2023 Statutory Consultation and valued the opportunity to explain the updated proposals for the Project to the local community. During our 2023 Statutory Consultation we received 101 responses from individuals and statutory bodies on our proposals for the Project, of which 76 were from the public/local community and 25 were from statutory consultees.

A summary of the feedback that was received and how EPL 001 has had regard to it will be provided in the Consultation Report that will be submitted with the DCO application.

Ongoing work

Since the 2023 Statutory Consultation ended, we have reviewed all of the feedback received and continued to actively engage with landowners, stakeholders, community groups and individual residents.

A Community Liaison Panel meeting was held on 21 September 2023 with key members of the community including local councillors – this is the fifth meeting of this type. The Community Liaison Panel will continue to meet regularly throughout the remaining stages of the DCO process. Notes from the meetings are available to view on the Project website:

www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/Consultation/Community+Liaison+Panel

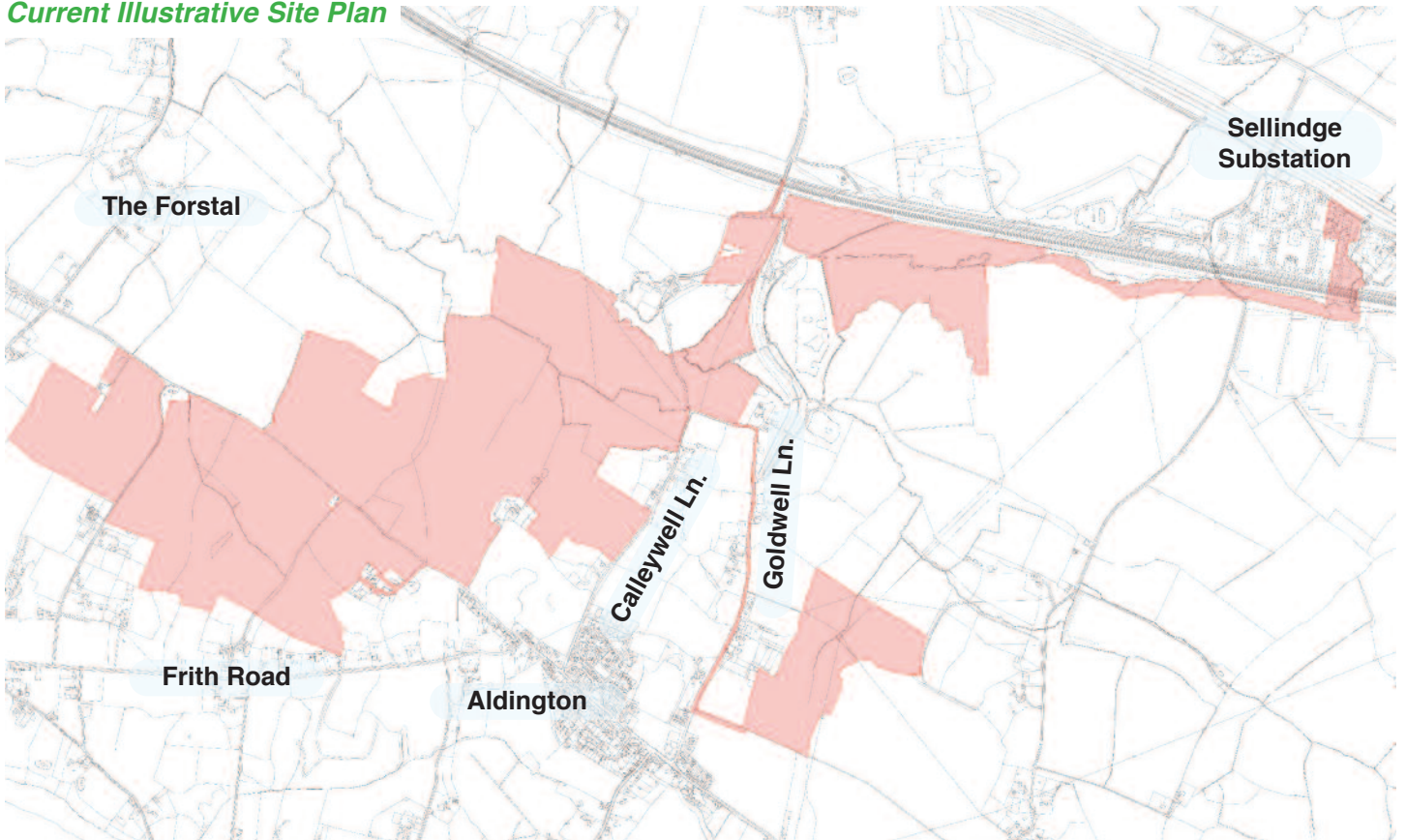
We are continuing to progress the Project in light of the feedback received and ongoing design review.

As a result, EPL 001 is proposing some minor changes to limited areas of the site boundary (Order limits). During November and December 2023 EPL 001 will be conducting a non-statutory targeted consultation with stakeholders and persons with an interest in the land who are directly affected by the proposed changes, which are all minor and localised in nature. The proposed changes include:

- Land containing agricultural buildings to be removed as it is no longer required
- Additional land to be included at Bank Farm to provide site access for the duration of the Project
- The road verge along Goldwell Lane to be included to provide a wider turning circle for construction vehicles, avoiding the need to remove vegetation for access purposes
- Part of the road and the road verge at Station Road to be included to provide space for necessary visibility splays and to ensure the Project is compliant with UK road safety requirements
- The cable corridor route to be widened following engagement with UK Power Networks and to allow for flexibility during installation of the cable
- The majority of the Sellindge Substation site to be removed, and a small extension to be added to the eastern side of the Substation, following consultation with UK Power Networks
- The alternative cable route to be removed because UK Power Networks have confirmed the grid connection for the Project can be directly into the Sellindge Substation. This results in Folkestone and Hythe District Council no longer being a host authority for the Project.

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

Current Illustrative Site Plan



The Development Consent Order (DCO) Application process

EPL 001 is expecting to submit its DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate in early 2024. The Community Liaison Panel will be kept informed of progress.

The full application will be uploaded to the Planning Inspectorate website (<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>) if the application is accepted for examination.

The Planning Inspectorate must decide whether to accept the application within 28 days of receipt.

If the application is accepted, we will publicise the accepted application and issue a newsletter to provide details of how people can register their interest in and comment on the application. At that stage we will also include details of the examination process and how you can take part in it.



Contact details

Anyone with an interest in the project can contact us by:

Emailing: info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

Calling our Freephone information line: 08081 698335

Writing to: FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar

You can also follow us on X (Twitter): @SGS_solar



Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report
Appendix I-4: Community Liaison Panel
Terms of Reference and Meeting Minutes



Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report

Appendix I-4: Community Liaison Panel Terms of
Reference and Meeting Minutes

1. Community Liaison Panel Terms of Reference

STONESTREET GREEN SOLAR COMMUNITY LIAISON PANEL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document has been prepared by Evolution Power Limited¹ (the Developer) as a statement of its intention to establish a Community Liaison Panel (CLP) for Stonestreet Green Solar (SGS). The Developer is proposing to apply for a development consent order (DCO) for SGS pursuant to the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.2. This document sets out the purpose and objectives of the CLP and general matters of the membership, operation and communications of the CLP.

2. PURPOSE OF THE CLP

- 2.1. The main purpose of the CLP is to facilitate communication, share information and engage in balanced discussions about the application and subsequent examination of SGS and keep the local community informed about all pertinent aspects of the development.
- 2.2. All discussions of the CLP will be undertaken without prejudice to peoples' positions with respect to the proposed development.
- 2.3. The CLP's remit will include discussions regarding project benefits and impacts, construction activities, screening, biodiversity improvements, footpaths and the potential funding and uses of the community benefit fund.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CLP

- 3.1. The CLP will be established to provide a communication channel between the Developer and local stakeholders during the planning phase of SGS, and through subsequent construction and operation. The Developer or its appointed representative will inform members of the CLP of the various stages and elements of the project.

¹ The applicant will be EPL 001 Limited (company number 12444050), which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited.

3.2. The objectives of the CLP are to provide:

- a forum for the Developer to inform representatives of the local community of the benefits, impacts, timescales and progress of the project;
- a forum for local residents to discuss any aspects of the project;
- an opportunity to inform interested parties of any changes to the project during the pre-application phase;
- an opportunity for CLP members to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the technology, construction and operation of the project; and
- a better understanding for the Developer of local concerns to allow it to consider how these could be potentially mitigated.

3.3. It is hoped that members of the group will become knowledgeable about the project and will report back as appropriate to the people they represent.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CLP

4.1. It is proposed that the CLP will comprise a panel of representatives from each of the following organisations/bodies:

- the Developer;
- four local residents;
- two representatives from Aldington Parish Council;
- five local Borough Councillors (three from Ashford Borough Council and two from Folkestone & Hythe District Council);
- the two local Kent County Councillors; and
- two representatives from local community groups (including one from Save Aldington Campaign).

4.2. The Developer may revise the composition of the panel from time to time if considered necessary.

4.3. The Developer will formally invite the elected representatives. Members of the local community will be invited to apply to join the CLP as part of the Developer's communications, and four residents will be selected by the Developer to join the CLP. Where any of the invited individuals are unable to attend a meeting of the CLP, the Developer will seek to temporarily co-opt into the group another suitable individual as nominated by the absentee.

4.4. Invitations to members will be made by the Developer at least four weeks before the first meeting.

4.5. From time to time the CLP may invite other specialist individuals to attend meetings of the CLP including the Environment Agency.

5. OPERATION AND CONDUCT OF THE CLP

- 5.1. **Frequency of meetings:** It is proposed that the CLP will meet on a regular basis to coincide with key stages of the DCO application, for example following the end of the non-statutory public consultation period; prior to the start of the statutory consultation period; prior to the DCO application being submitted; during the acceptance and pre-examination stages, and prior to and post the examination stage. Further meetings of the CLP can be agreed upon as appropriate following the end of the decision stage.
- 5.2. **Venue and timings:** It is proposed that the 'in person' meetings of the CLP will be held at a local venue to be determined by the Developer. Meetings will be held on a weekday, between 6pm and 8pm.
- 5.3. **Chairperson:** The meetings will be independently facilitated by a Chairperson nominated by the Developer. The Chairperson will plan the way that the meetings are run and suggest an agenda based on their understanding of what the group has requested and what is feasible to cover in the agreed time.
- 5.4. **Cost and responsibility:** The cost and responsibility of administration of the CLP, the preparation and distribution of agendas and minutes, and venue hire for meetings will be the responsibility of the Developer. CLP members will be expected to provide their time free of charge.
- 5.5. **Topics:** The topics discussed at meetings will as a minimum include:
- approval of the minutes of the previous meeting;
 - new matters arising since the previous meeting;
 - an update on progress on the DCO application;
 - anything else of notable interest which the Developer wishes to raise;
 - any matters tabled by CLP members in advance; and
 - a general discussion about SGS by all members.
- Only matters relating directly to the SGS project shall be discussed at the meetings.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1. **Agendas:** Agendas will be circulated in advance of each meeting to the CLP panel. Members of the CLP may submit comments and questions to be raised during the meeting by contacting the Developer (via the freephone information line **08081 698335** or emailing info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk or the Chairperson when appointed.
- 6.2. **Minutes:** Minutes will be circulated to members within four weeks of the date of a liaison meeting having taken place. Local administration and recording and distribution of the minutes is to be undertaken by the Developer who will make the necessary logistical arrangements for the CLP.

- 6.3. **Behaviour at meetings:** For the CLP to be successful members must conduct themselves with mutual respect. Rules of behaviour include as a minimum:
- mobiles off when in the meeting;
 - No recordings of the meeting;
 - one person speaks at a time in the meeting;
 - constructive engagement by all parties, respecting alternate viewpoints; and
 - during the presentations, make a note of your questions and ask at the end.
- 6.4. **Public access:** The meetings will not be open to the press, public or additional representatives from the group representatives. The only communications to be issued to the press by CLP members will be the CLP agenda and minutes and only as directed by the Chairperson. Agendas and minutes will be placed on the Developer's website (www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk) for public viewing.
- 6.5. **Dissemination of information:** Members are expected to discuss the issues raised at the meetings with others and bring their views to the meetings. This is part of their responsibility as representatives of other people in the community.



Stonestreet Green Solar

Consultation Report

Appendix I-4: Community Liaison Panel Terms of
Reference and Meeting Minutes

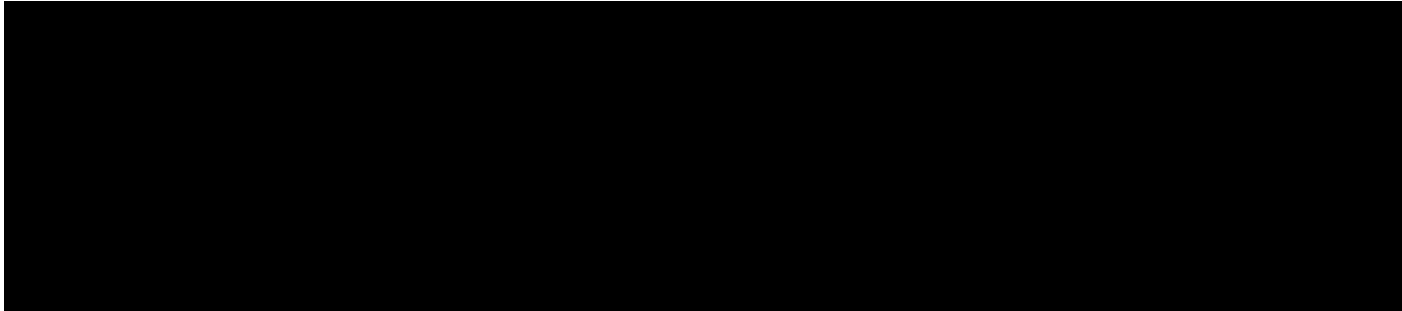
2. CLP Meeting Minutes



Stonestreet Green Solar – Community Liaison Panel

Meeting: Fraser Room, Aldington Village Hall, 6pm-8pm, Thursday 9 June 2022

MEETING NOTES



1. Introduction by the Chair

Robin Treacher welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself and briefly commented on the role of the CLP

2. CLP Member introductions

CLP members introduced themselves and who they were representing.

3. Meeting protocols – Chair

The Chair explained that the CLP meetings would be run under the same protocols as Parish Council meetings.

4. Presentation by Planning Consultant Barton Willmore

Ben Lewis from Planning Consultancy Barton Willmore gave a presentation on the Development Consent Planning Process and provided an explanation of current reports and surveys being undertaken.

PB stated that the Scoping Report had stated that Evolution Power had consulted with Parish Councils, and he didn't think this was accurate.

CMcN responded that the Scoping Report actually stated that Evolution Power had engaged with the Parish Council.

PB requested that Smeeth Parish Council was included in the consultation.

The Chair confirmed that the presentation slides would be circulated with the meeting notes.

5. Statutory Consultation Update by Quantum PR

Charlie Vavasour from Quantum PR provided an update on the proposed timings for the Statutory Consultation, which at this stage is likely to be during August and September 2022.

PB asked that a letter drop be included in the communications for the consultation.

CV confirmed that a leaflet drop would be conducted to all homes and businesses in the Core Consultation Zone.

LH inquired why an event would be held in Sellindge.

CV responded that part of Sellindge was in the Core Consultation Zone and that Evolution Power wanted to hold an event to the east of the site and Sellindge seemed the most appropriate venue. CV also confirmed that the venues had been agreed in consultation with ABC, FHDC and KCC as part of the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC).

JH said it would be appropriate for Evolution Power to liaise with Otterpool Park.

PB said that Evolution Power should liaise with ABC to help promote the Consultation.

LH confirmed that ABPC had promoted the non-statutory consultation through the Parish Council website and through the Community Group.

DM said that if Evolution Power sent him an email he could arrange for details of the consultation to be put in the weekly school newsletter.

6. Community Benefit

Conor McNally and Giles Frampton discussed the Community Benefit fund that would come from the project and the type of projects that it could support, but made the point that it would be up to the local community how it was used, subject to some broad principles.

PB stated that the community benefit fund that came from the Inland Border Facility was used to develop two miles of new bridleways, along with repair work for the Church. The improvements to Public Rights of Way made the biggest difference to the community.

LH said that the Parish Plan included a number of highly ambitious plans.

DM stated that the connection of Public Rights of Way between Aldington and Mersham to urban Ashford for people to walk and cycle would be beneficial.

JH said that bridleways could go east from the site as well.

GF confirmed that Public Rights of Way would form part of the consultation.

DM commented that the school has a long list of things it wants to do.

7. Any other business

DM said he was surprised that more members had not attended the meeting.

LH stated that Derek Burles and Jonathan Tennant had terminated their relationship with the Save Aldington campaign.

LH commented that she had not received a reminder email about the meeting.

8. Items for the next meeting agenda

The following items were suggested to go on the agenda for the next meeting:

- Biodiversity gain
- Solar panel technology
- Planning status of solar farms
- Public Rights of Way

The Chair to add these items to the next agenda.

9. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held in early August, prior to the Statutory Consultation starting. The preferred evening of the week is Tuesday.

The Chair to circulate the date of next meeting.

-Ends-

Acronyms:

CLP – Community Liaison Panel

ABC – Ashford Borough Council

ABPC – Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council

FHDC – Folkestone and Hythe District Council

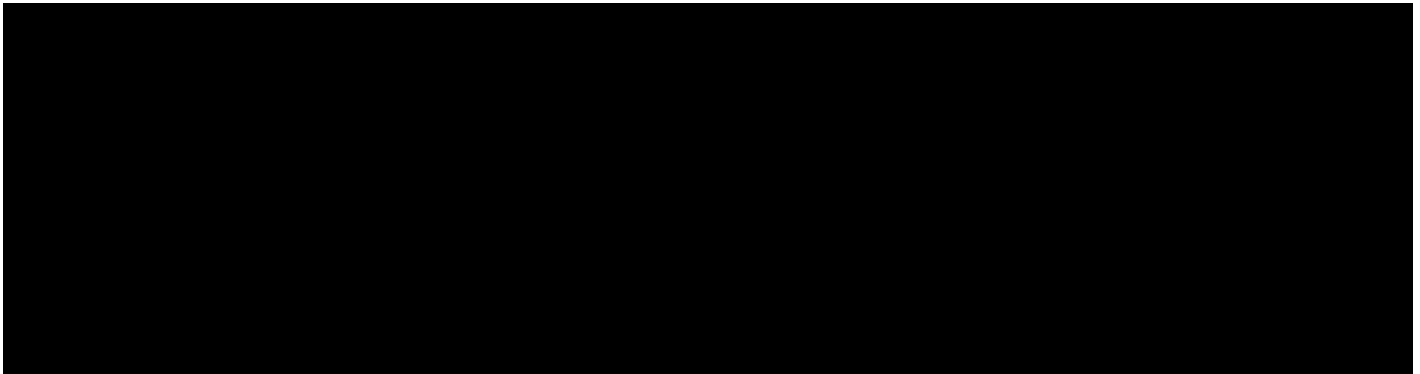
KCC – Kent County Council



Stonestreet Green Solar – Community Liaison Panel

Meeting: Fraser Room, Aldington Village Hall, 6.30pm-8.30pm, Thursday 11 August 2022

MEETING NOTES



1. Introduction by the Chair

CV opened the meeting by explaining that due to ill health Robin Treacher has had to resign as CLP Chair. The Group sent its best wishes to Robin.

Karen Byrne was introduced as the new Chair. KB welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself.

2. Confirm notes of previous meeting

CLP members approved the notes of the previous meeting.

3. Project Update from Evolution Power

CMcN provided an update on the project since the last meeting. Surveys, such as traffic and ecology, are still being undertaken. CMcN confirmed that the timetable for the Statutory Consultation is now scheduled to begin at the start of October and run for six weeks to mid-November. The delay allows the majority of remaining surveys to be completed prior to consultation and ensures that the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), to be produced before the consultation, is as thorough as possible. There is also a preference to not undertake Statutory Consultation during school holidays.

As a result of the delay, the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC), which originally stated Consultation during the Summer, has been revised and is out for consultation with the Local Authorities.

PB suggested that it would be a good idea to hold a public event as part of the Consultation. CMcN suggested PB feedback his views to KCC as part of the SoCC consultation.

4. Biodiversity Gain

Further to a question brought up at the previous meeting, CMcM outlined the project's approach to biodiversity gain. It was explained that any calculation would be based on the established DEFRA methodology, which looks at the current diversity on the site and then assesses the potential impact of the development. The KCC target is to achieve 20% biodiversity gain on projects. Stonestreet Green Solar should be comfortably above 100% gain, five times the KCC target.

PB asked if SGS can work together with the EDF project to enhance biodiversity gain. CMcN said he would ask the ecology consultant if this approach would make sense.

LH stated that the cumulative effect will be very significant, and one way to limit this is to have a joint approach to things like footpaths and biodiversity. CMcN again confirmed that he would raise the biodiversity approach with the ecologist but on footpaths, given each project has no impact on the other, there is unlikely to be any cross-project impacts.

5. Solar Panel Technology

CMcN explained to the panel the difference between fixed tilt and tracker panels, noting that trackers are often used in areas of high irradiation such as Spain or Italy, but are much less common in the UK. CMcN confirmed the proposed design at SGS would utilise fixed tilt panels.

AS asked how the panels can face south when some of the site is north-facing. CMcN responded that the panels will still face south, but the spacing between panel rows will be increased to take account of additional shading.

6. Planning Status of Solar Farms

CMcN confirmed that the definition of brownfield land is land that is, or was, occupied by a permanent structure. SGS would be time-limited temporary consent and a decommissioning plan will be agreed as part of the Development Consent Order to return the project site to agriculture.

AS pointed out that some of the site is behind the flood retention barrier and asked if this meant the panels need to be different to deal with flooding. DM stated that when that area floods it is not as deep as it appears. CMcN stated that the project design will include an appropriate approach to mitigate any flood concerns.

LH asked if the footprint of the panels would be part of the consultation. CMcN confirmed that this would be included.

7. Public Rights of Way (PROW)

CMcN explained the rationale to develop a river walk and increase PROW connectivity in the north-east of the project site. CMcN also explained that, following a number of responses on the matter as part of the non-statutory consultation process held in April 2022, SGS is seeking to progress the potential for an Aldington to Mersham cycle path but that this will need KCC to liaise with third party landowners. CMcN noted the approach to other PROWs within the project site is being discussed with KCC.

NS suggested it would be an idea to have a small working group to review the PROWs. AS confirmed there are 16 PROWs on the site and that each one needs to be looked at in detail. CMcN confirmed that once Evolution Power has had the conversation with KCC, he would be happy to sit down with NS and AS.

LH asked why discussions were with KCC at the moment and not residents. CMcN replied that the statutory consultation is part of the process that allows residents to provide their comments.

CMcN explained that the Aldington to Mersham cycle link would rely on agreement with the Church Commissioners who owned the adjoining land. CMcN suggested that the Parish Councils or ABC/KCC should approach the Church Commissioners. If agreement reached then SGS would provide the funding required to construct the cycle link as a requirement of its planning permission and would be happy to provide a letter of support confirming this if helpful for the discussions with the Church Commissioners.

DM stated that he thought the proposed route looked sensible.

LH asked PB if it would be possible to convene a meeting with KCC officers and the Parish Councils – PB confirmed it would be.

AS welcomed the offer being made and pointed out that footpaths already go to Mersham. CMcN noted that whilst there were already footpaths to Mersham these were not suitable for bicycles and that the proposal responded to a key request raised by the community to provide an off-road, safe route for transit between the two villages.

8. CLP Terms of Reference

LH stated that she was surprised that the Terms of Reference (ToRs) were not discussed at the previous meeting.

KB pointed out that the TORs were sent to each panel member when they were invited to join the panel and were on the project website.

KB agreed to re-send the TORs to members, and members can make any comments back to the Chair.

9. Highways

LH said that highways are a major concern. Can we be kept up to date on discussions. LH noted that the EDF proposal had to have an off-loading site as large lorries cannot go under the bridge. LH further noted that during construction of the Church Lane solar farm it was a nightmare with traffic going through the village.

CMcN noted that he was unable to comment on the EDF application but that there are no low bridges on the proposed access route for SGS. CMcN confirmed Evolution Power is talking to KCC Highways. The plan would be to offload at the north of the site and then move material within the site where possible.

WH pointed out that Smeeth Crossroads is the number one concern for Smeeth residents and asked how many lorry movements are anticipated. CMcN referred WH to the Scoping Report that stated that vehicle movements will probably be about 25 lorries a day during construction.

NS asked how materials will be delivered to the Goldwell Lane fields. CMcN confirmed that the route would be via Goldwell Lane (as outlined in the Scoping Report) and is being discussed with KCC Highways.

There was some concern raised regarding the potential for mis-direction of deliveries. PB suggested that leaflets should be printed for lorry drivers showing them the route to follow. LH suggested that any contract with haulage firms should insist lorries have up to date commercial sat navs.

AS confirmed that traffic is a serious issue for the village. LH stated that during Operation Stack over 4,000 cars go through Aldington, compared to an average of 800. CMcN confirmed that lorries would not be accessing the site through the village and instead would follow the northern access route via the M20/A20 outlined in the Scoping Report

10. Visual Impact Assessment

LH asked whether Evolution Power was doing any computer-generated modelling as part of the consultation. CMcN confirmed that the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will include photo montages.

LH asked whether residents could suggest viewpoints. CMcN stated that this was not practical and that the viewpoints had already been agreed with Ashford Borough Council. ABC had added some additional viewpoints to those originally proposed, and all the viewpoints had been detailed in the Scoping Report that had been reviewed and opined on by the Planning Inspectorate.

DM asked whether changes suggested during the consultation will be implemented. CMcN stated that all feedback would be considered and changes made where possible/practical.

11. Battery Storage

LH noted that Pivot Power owns the rights to a battery storage site close to the Sellindge substation and asked if there was a way for SGS to locate its batteries at the Pivot Power site or to extend the Pivot Power site to allow this.

CMcN confirmed that the SGS technical design requires batteries to be located within the project site so locating them at the Pivot Power site would not be possible.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was provisionally scheduled for Thursday 8th December.

WH noted that if it were not possible for SGS to complete its review of the statutory consultation responses by 8th December then it may be sensible to postpone the next meeting until early January. CMcN confirmed that SGS would update the committee on approach once the consultation was completed.

-Ends-

Acronyms:

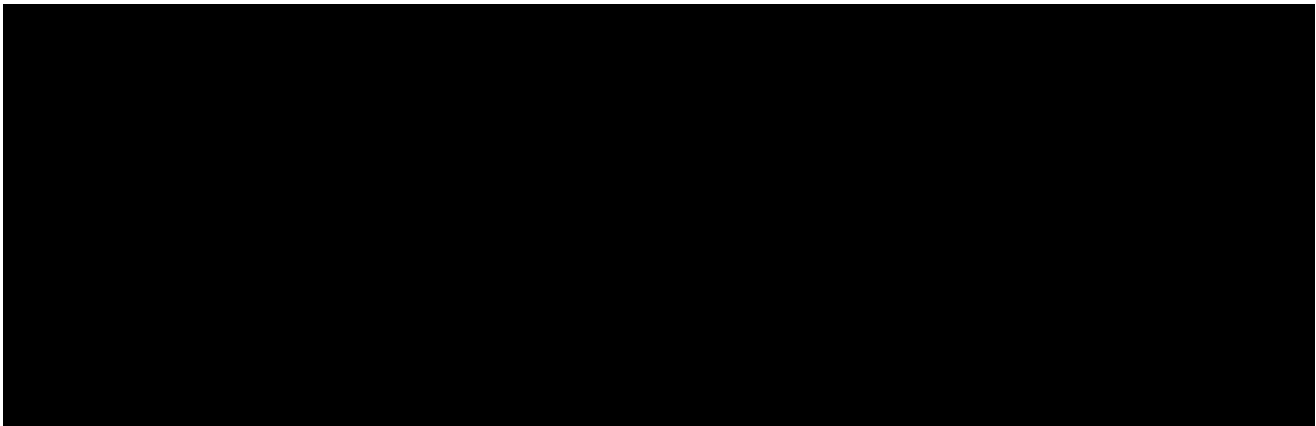
CLP – Community Liaison Panel
ABC – Ashford Borough Council
ABPC – Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council
FHDC – Folkestone and Hythe District Council
KCC – Kent County Council
SGS – Stonestreet Green Solar



Stonestreet Green Solar – Community Liaison Panel

Meeting: Fraser Room, Aldington Village Hall, 6.30pm-8.30pm, Tuesday 7 February 2023

MEETING NOTES



Observer: Colleen Loader (SSSS)

1. Introduction by the Chair

Karen Byrne welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Confirm notes of previous meeting

CLP members approved the notes of the previous meeting (held 11/08/22). No matters arising.

DB enquired why it has been six months since the last meeting. KB explained that the timing of the meeting following the Statutory Consultation was discussed at the last CLP meeting and it was agreed it would be best to schedule this after the Christmas holidays. The intention was to hold this meeting in January but there were issues regarding room availability.

3. Project Update from Evolution Power

CMcN provided an update on the project since the last meeting. The Statutory Consultation was held, including public events and the public presentation. A number of meetings have also been held with individual residents.

The main themes emerging through the feedback from the consultation include landscape and visual impact, use of farmland for renewable energy production, biodiversity impact, flood risk, PROWs and the community benefit fund.

CMcN noted that the main themes of ABC's response included comments on heritage assets, landscape/visual impact, tree planting/landscaping, PROWs, cumulative impact and the proposed cycle route, along with a request to run a second consultation.

PB commented that ABC also responded on CCTV and the impact on the agri-economy.

LH reiterated that ABPC's response made the point that Goldwell Lane is very much part of the village and would like this addressed. CMcN acknowledged this.

LH stated that she would want to see an event in the village hall as part of the next consultation.

CMcN continued that FHDC and KCC responses highlighted traffic, PROWs, flood risk, archaeology and biodiversity as issues.

LH asked whether the geophysical survey went down 3 metres – CMcN stated that he believed it did, but would check and confirm.

CL asked if all reports were public – CMcN confirmed they were all on the project website.

LH stated that on the Soil Assessment Report there are three pages where data is missing and the tables are blank. CMcN said he would look into this and respond.

SE asked if all the feedback comments would be made public. CV explained that the comments would not be reported verbatim, but that the Planning Inspectorate could ask for evidence of all responses.

CMcN explained that Quod had been appointed as Planning Consultants going forward. EP is now engaging with statutory consultees and is looking at where improvements can be made to the scheme.

ABC has asked for a second round of consultation and as part of that there will be a document providing a summary of comments and subsequent changes to the scheme. The consultation will be communicated by newspaper adverts, emails, posters, social media and via a newsletter drop to homes in the core consultation zone (2,200).

LH asked that CV check that properties on Church Lane are included in the mailing database.

There followed a debate about having a public event in Aldington as part of the next round of consultation. CMcN noted that much of the new information is likely to be highly technical in nature but that he would take away Members' views and consider holding an event in Aldington.

AS requested that the next consultation booklet includes the information on PROWs.

DB stated that Save Aldington group has been invited to contribute to the next consultation. CMcN responded that this were not the case but that EP had spoken to John King to look to understand the concerns he had raised. DB confirmed he was now again part of the Save Aldington group.

4. Community Benefit Fund

LH said she would like to have a discussion on the Community Benefit Fund. She has found many examples of projects that have paid communities more than is being offered and she would like the structure of the fund scoped out more. Parishes not directly impacted should not be included, so should just be Aldington and Mersham.

PB confirmed that the impact on Mersham is much less than Aldington.

WH stated that some of the project falls within Smeeth as well, so Smeeth should be included in the Community Benefit Fund.

SE stated that Smeeth is impacted, and her house is actually in Smeeth Parish.

CMcN responded that the fund is not part of the planning process, and developers are not obliged to pay anything. In the past solar has been subsidised, enabling developers to pay more. CMcN noted that many solar schemes do not offer any community benefit and noted the only relevant example in Kent (the Cleve Hill 350MWp DCO solar scheme in north Kent) did not offer any community benefit fund. CMcN confirmed the EP offer is £40,000 a year, index-linked. It is envisioned that a Trust would be set up to manage the funds, but it is up to the community, possibly through the CLP, to establish the structure of the fund. It is also important to remember that it will be at least three years until the fund is functioning.

WH stated that local people want to know how the money will be used and that Smeeth is forming a community sub-group. It is important to set out what the structure looks like.

DB did not feel like other local members of the CLP and felt it is incongruous to discuss a fund as it gives the impression that the project is a fait accompli. LH responded that it is practical to have these discussions, but to be clear that, in her view, the community doesn't want the scheme.

It was agreed that the Community Benefit Fund issue be kept on the table.

NS asked if any responses to the consultation opposed the solar farm. CMcN responded that a majority of responses did not support the scheme, but that this is typical.

PH stated that there are a number of industrial areas locally that could have panels and could EP look at the feasibility of looking at this brownfield land. CMcN responded that EP identified this site based on a set of criteria and has been working on this project for three years, so is not going to look at other areas.

5. Consideration of providing solar power to the village and/or roof top panels to residents

CMcN confirmed that it is not possible to 'supply' power from the project directly to the village. Putting panels on all homes in the village would be cost prohibitive, but there has been feedback regarding putting additional panels at the primary school, which would be possible.

6. Consultation with Natural England

CMcN confirmed that EP is obliged to consult with Natural England, has done so and has received its response to the consultation. CMcN also confirmed that Natural England does not consider the 40 year lifespan of the project to constitute a permanent loss of farmland.

7. Next Steps and Timeline

CMcN confirmed that responses to the revised Statement of Community Consultation will be received by the end of February. The timing for the next round of consultation has not been set, but is likely to be between mid-March and mid-April.

CL requested that any public meeting should avoid Easter, a bank holiday or the Coronation.

8. Any other business

CL asked if there was any data on the structure of the proposed internal road available. CMcN stated that he would make this available.

AS asked if there will be information on the PROWs in the next consultation, and if so, it should be better quality and more easily accessible. This was noted.

SE asked if members can email questions that they get asked by residents. CMcN confirmed that they could send any questions to the project email info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

9. Date of Next Meeting

LH stated that she would rather the next meeting was delayed and meaningful rather than holding one for the sake of it.

It was agreed that EP would provide an update to KB to circulate to the group in the next 6 weeks, and that a meeting date would be set after that.

-Ends-

Acronyms:

CLP – Community Liaison Panel
EP – Evolution Power

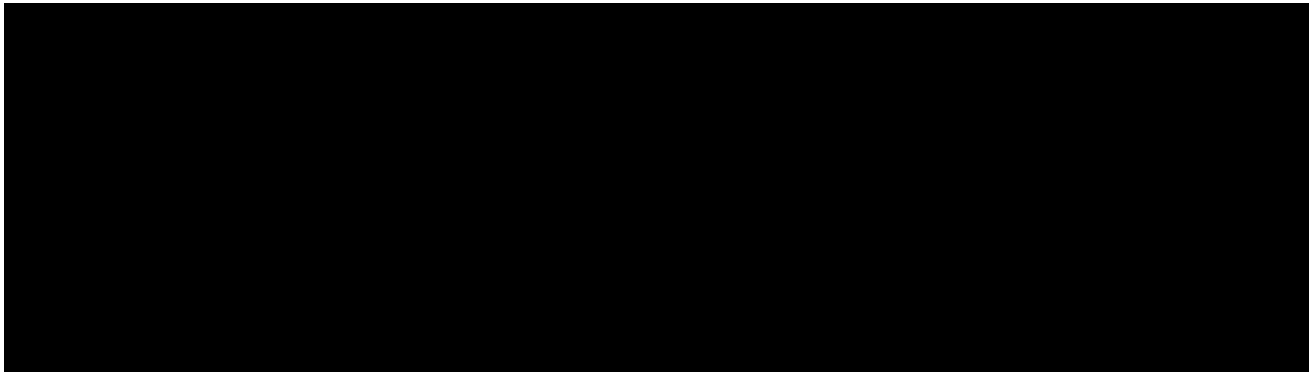
ABC – Ashford Borough Council
ABPC – Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council
FHDC – Folkestone and Hythe District Council
KCC – Kent County Council
PROW – Public Rights of Way
SGS – Stonestreet Green Solar



Stonestreet Green Solar – Community Liaison Panel

Meeting: Fraser Room, Aldington Village Hall, 6.30pm-8.30pm, Thursday 15 June 2023

MEETING NOTES



Observer: Colleen Loader (SSSS)

1. Introduction by the Chair

Karen Byrne welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Confirm notes of previous meeting

CLP members approved the notes of the previous meeting (held 07/02/2023). No matters arising.

3. Project Update from the Applicant

CMcN provided an update on the project including details of the consultation timeline, the consultation documents and plans, and outlined the key changes that have been made to the project since the last consultation.

CL asked if all the hedgerows on the plans were new ones. CMcN confirmed that the plan shows both new and existing hedges.

CL asked if the plan showed hedgerows rather than trees. CMcN replied it was both.

CL asked what the optimum height of hedges and trees would be to avoid shade on the panels. CMcN replied that generally hedges would be kept to 3 metres and that the project design includes a set back for the panels to allow for shading impacts.

CL asked what size of tree and hedge plants would be used. CMcN replied it would be a combination of small, medium and large.

LH stated that she felt a 3 metre hedge height would be uncharacteristic of the area and this will impact on views along surrounding lanes. CMcN stated that he is not sure it is correct, citing a number of surrounding lanes that already had hedgerows significantly in excess of 3 metres. LH commented that this was only because landowners had allowed hedges to grow.

SW asked how EPL001 can ensure that new planting will survive. CMcN replied that there a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will be agreed as part of the DCO.

NS noted that the plans detailing that changes to the PRoW network were significantly better than those used in the Autumn 2022 Statutory Consultation and requested an in-person session with EPL (likely at the Sellindge event) to go through the PRoW changes. CMcN confirmed that he will be at the event and can go through the changes. CMcN also made the CLP aware that a separate document had been included in the Consultation Material specifically relating to this matter that explained in detail the approach to the PRoW network.

CL asked whether the servicing and maintenance plan carries over to any new owners of the project and how long it lasts for. CMcN confirmed that it is in place for the term of the project and any new owner will be legally obliged to deliver the plan.

RB asked whether the plan will be in the public domain. CMcN confirmed that a draft of the plan would be part of the DCO and the final plan would be agreed with ABC/KCC.

SB asked for confirmation that the requirements in the plan will be binding to any successors in title. CMcN confirmed that would be the case.

LH requested that the colours be changed on the Public Access Network Plan to make it more legible. CMcN said the team would check if it was possible.

PB asked whether the proposed new cycleway from Mersham to Aldington was progressing with the Church Commissioners. CMcN explained that as the proposed route is outside the Order Limits/red line of EPL's proposal they were unable to act unilaterally but have had good initial conversations with the Church Commissioners and will look to develop these conversations once the DCO is submitted. PB said that Mersham PC has lots of contact with the Church Commissioners so could help to facilitate conversations.

CL asked if all footpaths were 10metre wide and whether they would be hardcore or as they are now. CMcN confirmed that all footpaths on the plan were a minimum of 10 metres and that they would remain as they are now. He also confirmed that EPL would be talking to KCC regarding measures to prevent access for off road vehicles as a number of local consultees had raised this as a concern.

PH asked what the view would be like on a walk to Evegate. CMcN stated that fencing on one side would be deer fencing and that there are cross sections in the Book of Plans that illustrate the distances between hedges, fencing and panels.

CL asked for further information on the alarm system used and the security fencing. CMcN confirmed that EPL would provide further details on the alarm system to CLP members.

LH enquired regarding the access to the fields on Goldwell Lane and that EPL had been asked to take Goldwell lane out of the access road. CMcN stated that alternative access to those fields is not feasible.

PH asked EPL to check the language used regarding transport impact on the village, as Goldwell Lane is part of the village. CMcN confirmed he was aware that this point had been raised in the Autumn 2022 Statutory Consultation and he understood this point had been addressed but he would check the language and change where required prior to submission.

PB asked whether there was a crossing missing from the Indicative Proposed Layout Plan across Laws Lane. CMcN agreed that it appeared it was missing and will be amended in the final version submitted.

CL asked if there was any more detail on the temporary haul road in addition to the information already provided to the CLP. CMcN confirmed that no further detail was available at this time and that specification details will be agreed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

4. Next Steps and Timeline

CMcN went through the project timeline, with a likely date for DCO submission in September/October.

5. Any other business

PB stated that Kent Community Energy would like to contact EPL and that he had given them CMcN's details. CMcN thanked PB for the introduction.

6. Date of Next Meeting

KB stated that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed but is likely to be early/mid September.

It was agreed that in any case EPL would provide a written update for CLP members at the end of July.

-Ends-

Acronyms:

CLP – Community Liaison Panel

EPL – EPL 001 Limited

ABC – Ashford Borough Council

ABPC – Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council

FHDC – Folkestone and Hythe District Council

KCC – Kent County Council

PROW – Public Rights of Way

SGS – Stonestreet Green Solar



Stonestreet Green Solar – Community Liaison Panel

Meeting: Fraser Room, Aldington Village Hall, 6.30pm-8.30pm, Thursday 21 September 2023

MEETING NOTES

[REDACTED]

1. Introduction by the Chair

Karen Byrne welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Confirm notes of previous meeting

CLP members approved the notes of the previous meeting (held 15/06/2023). No matters arising.

3. Project Update from the Applicant

Consultation Feedback

CMcN reported that there had been two key pieces of feedback from Statutory Consultees. The Environment Agency (EA) has provided new information on the impact of the scheme on the flood storage area. As a result, EPL 001 has removed panels from fields 26-29 but will retain the fields within the redline to allow more biodiversity and ecology on the site as well as ensure the new footpaths in that area can be delivered as part of the scheme.

CMcN also report that EPL 001 will be making changes in relation to the substation, taking account of water and visual impact requirements. A visualisation of the substation from the AE657 footpath north of Backhouse Wood will be included in the application.

DM asked if fields 26-29 would have open access. CMcN responded that the ecologist is reviewing what access could be granted without ecological impact. DM indicated that Aldington School would be interested in using the area for off-site learning opportunities.

CMcN stated that UK Power Networks have also confirmed that the cable route can connect at the UKPN substation at Sellindge (removing the requirement for the Alternative cable route included in the Statutory Consultation). EPL 001 is waiting for confirmation on whether it will be able to use the existing ducts under HS1 or will need to construct new ducts.

SW asked where any new ducts would go and whether the cables would have to go over the humpback bridge on Church Lane. CMcN replied that it is expected that they will be under HS1 directly opposite the eastern end of Sellindge Substation and that UKPN would be responsible for all of the cabling from Sellindge to the project's substation.

Changes made to the proposal

In addition to removing the panels from fields 26-29, CMcN also confirmed a number of other small changes to the scheme:

- There have been a number of small changes to the edge of the redline, largely to take into account hedgerows and other minor impacts.
- In field 3 the panels have been pulled back away from a potential barn conversion near to the Stonelees property.
- After running noise scenarios based on different temperatures, acoustic fencing will be introduced for some inverters to minimise any noise impact.

PB stated that Historic England had raised questions over the long-term visual impact of the project from Mersham. CMcN replied that the project's Heritage consultant was reviewing the feedback and will be providing visualisations of the project from Mersham and that EPL 001 will respond to all comments received from Historic England in due course.

PB also asked about feedback from ABC in relation to project design changes. CMcN confirmed that EPL 001 had responded to the majority of comments received from ABC in the 2022 Statutory Consultation resulting in significant improvements to the design. EPL 001 has responded to ABC's 2023 Statutory Consultation comments and is in on-going dialogue.

PB enquired about any comments from KCC and CMcN confirmed that EPL 001 expects to respond to comments raised shortly.

NS asked if a new footpath has been put in across field 19. CMcN confirmed that this hasn't been included.

AS asked if there had been any changes to footpaths since the consultation. CMcN replied that the footpath diversions in fields 26-29 will be removed, but the new footpaths proposed in those fields to improve the local network will remain.

Themes from the consultation feedback

CMcN went through the key themes that came from the consultation and EPL 001's responses on these;

Size of project – determined by the energy need and required to use available grid capacity to achieve 2050 Net Zero legal requirement.

Visual impact – the project is generally well screened, with main views coming from the PRowS

Alternative sites – this site was chosen following a lengthy exercise in screening out other options as previously explained during the public presentation held in November 2022.

Use of good agricultural land – 80% of the site is not classified as best and most versatile land

Light pollution – there will be no lights except in an emergency

PRowS – there are changes to the PRow network, but impact should be limited

Cumulative impact – the submission will consider the cumulative impact which will be examined by the Inspector

Panels from China – this is a global topic which the industry is aware of. EPL 001 will monitor its supply chain and report on this.

AS asked about the PRowS working group - CMcN confirmed that this will be established after the DCO decision is made and the group will focus on how the changes to the network are implemented to minimise disruption for the local community.

DM observed that 60 consultation responses on the project was quite small and possibly indicates that most people are neutral or positive about the project. CMcN replied that other schemes have been more controversial and noted that the Aldington event held from 3pm directly opposite the local school did not attract any parent attendees which could indicate DM's comment was correct. DB stated that this could have been for other reasons.

DCO Submission Timeline

CMcN stated that the timeline could not be confirmed as EPL 001 is waiting for final confirmation of the grid route from UKPN but hopeful that a response would be received in the next few weeks. The CLP will be informed and a newsletter will be issued to local residents before submission.

DB asked if the application will be a draft or final. CMcN confirmed that the application will be in final form, noting that EPL 001 has previously submitted the initial ES Chapters to the Planning Inspectorate in draft form for review, as is standard practice.

Post Acceptance Arrangements

CV confirmed that there would be a newsletter distributed before the application is submitted and a further one if the application is accepted. The newsletters will contain information on how

to register as an interested party. Statutory notices will also be placed in local and national newspapers.

SE asked what the stages were. CMcN replied that there would be a six-month examination, then three months for a recommendation and then three months for the Secretary of State (SoS) to make a decision. This process will all be set out in the newsletters.

PB stated that in his experience these types of decisions are rarely taken within the statutory timelines. CMcN replied that recent experience for similar projects is varied with some decisions issued sooner and some delayed.

Any other business

DM asked if there was any progress regarding the cycle route to Mersham. CMcN stated that EPL 001 remains keen to provide this and will make contact again with the adjacent landowners. PB offered to raise with his contact if that would be helpful.

PB raised a concern from LH regarding the access for HGVs using Goldwell Lane and the impact on Aldington School. CMcN replied that there would be only one HGV and 4/5 LGVs a day, and that the route was purposefully designed to avoid passing the school.

PB asked if there was a draft traffic chapter and whether KCC had reviewed this. CMcN replied that the draft traffic chapter is on the project website and that KCC has reviewed this.

SW asked how the power gets from fields 20, 21 and 22 to the substation. CMcN replied that it would be via underground cable along Goldwell Lane which would result in some temporary disruption.

The Chair asked on behalf of TR if there was any update on introducing a circular bridleway route around the site. CMcN replied that this is not under consideration but that the existing bridleway will be cleared and that EPL 001 will be responsible for its maintenance.

AS confirmed that it is actually a byway and there followed a discussion regarding whether it would be open to all traffic. PB suggested taking it up with CB and KCC.

CMcN stated that EPL 001 would provide the CLP with an update on progress by the end of November.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that this would be confirmed once EPL 001 had greater clarity on timeline to submission.

-Ends-

Acronyms:

CLP – Community Liaison Panel
EPL – EPL 001 Limited
ABC – Ashford Borough Council
ABPC – Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council
FHDC – Folkestone and Hythe District Council
KCC – Kent County Council
PROW – Public Rights of Way
SGS – Stonestreet Green Solar