

**Byers Gill Solar
EN010139**

8.4.10 Statement of Common Ground with Redmarshall Parish Council

Planning Act 2008

APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

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

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to support the Examination of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for Byers Gill Solar (the Proposed Development).
- 1.1.2. This SOCG has been prepared jointly by **RWE (the Applicant)** and the **Redmarshall Parish Council (RPC)** in order to clearly identify the current position of the respective parties on specific matters that are, or have been, under discussion. It seeks to confirm to the Examining Authority (ExA) where there are points of agreement between the parties and where agreement has not been reached to date. It therefore aids the ExA in identifying any specific issues that may need to be addressed during the Examination and provides a structure to any further discussions for the parties engaged in the SoCG.
- 1.1.3. This document has been prepared in response to a specific request from the ExA as per the Rule 6 Letter [PD-003] issued on 25 June 2024.

1.2. Terminology

- 1.2.1. Section 2 of this document sets out the relevant matters raised through discussion between the parties. It provides a summary of the position of each party and identifies the status of discussions on each matter:
- “Agreed” means that a matter has been resolved between the parties and is not anticipated to be subject to further discussion;
 - “Under discussion” means that a matter remains in active dialogue between the parties and a final position has not been reached;
 - “Not agreed” means that the parties have established a final position that they cannot resolve the matter and will remain a point of difference.
- 1.2.2. In accordance with the request from the ExA in the Rule 6 Letter [PD-003], a **Low**, **Medium** and **High** ‘traffic light’ system is applied to each matter to indicate the likelihood of their resolution during the Examination period.

1.3. Status of this document

- 1.3.1. This document is currently in draft form and is unsigned.
- 1.3.2. When a final position has been reached on all matters, the respective parties shall sign the SoCG and submit it into the Examination as final and signed.

2. Current position

- 2.1.1. The table below provides a summary of the current position of the Applicant and RPC in relation to specific matters that have been under discussion to date.
- 2.1.2. Where a matter is not represented in the table, it should be assumed that it is either: (i) agreed between the parties and has never required detailed discussion; or, (ii) not relevant to the discussion between the parties.
- 2.1.3. Appendix A of this document provides a record of engagement undertaken between the parties in relation to the Proposed Development. This is limited to engagement which is materially relevant to the contents of this SoCG and does not seek to include every correspondence between the parties (e.g. that which was primarily administrative).

Table 1 Current position of matters relevant to the parties' discussions

Row ID	Topic	RPC Position	Applicant Position	Status
RPC1	Alternatives	<p>The Parish Council fully appreciate and support the need for renewable energy sources to be developed in this country – but feel that the number of proposals for solar farms in the area around Redmarshall is excessive. Councillors think that there are many buildings in Stockton on Tees such as schools, hospitals, factories and new houses along with previously developed sites that could be used as locations for solar panels instead of using large areas of open countryside.</p> <p>The Parish Council refute the RWE position that many domestic or industrial buildings do not have roofs that support solar PV, and consider that reference to high initial installation costs of alternative solar solutions reflects that the Proposed Development is taken forwards as an easier option.</p>	<p>As the cheapest form of energy, as well as being clean renewable energy, a fivefold increase in solar capacity is anticipated by 2050 in the Government's Energy Security Strategy 2022. This cannot be achieved through rooftop and brownfield solar installations alone, as they have considerable practical barriers of their own. Many domestic and industrial buildings either do not have roofs made of suitable material to support a solar system, do not have the infrastructure to export electricity to the grid, or simply present as an unaffordable solution, with initial costs of installation too high for some. The Planning Statement [APP-163], which has been submitted as part of the DCO Application, sets out the need for the Proposed Development, and how it is in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>	Not agreed
RPC2	Agricultural land	<p>The land proposed for the solar panels is not waste or marginal land. These fields have been used by local farmers for many years largely for arable crops with</p>	<p>ES Appendix 9.1 Agricultural Land Classifications and Soil Resources [APP-150] provides a summary of the Agricultural Land Classification for each parcel of land which is to be used by the Proposed</p>	Not agreed

		<p>some pasture and hay meadows. This is not unproductive land and in the current times of increasing food insecurity the Parish Councillors object to plans that, if approved, would result in so much agricultural land around our Parish being industrialized in the way proposed by this planning application and other similar applications.</p> <p>The Parish Council consider that whilst the land may not be best and most versatile, it is currently regularly farmed without any problems.</p>	<p>Development. It confirms that only 6.1% of the total site area includes land considered Best and Most Versatile (BMV), which is Grade 3a and above. Natural England has confirmed in its Relevant Representation [RR-373, Key Issue NE6] that it is satisfied that the Proposed Development is 'unlikely to lead to significant permanent loss of BMV agricultural land, as a resource for future generations.'</p>	
RPC3	Land use	<p>The Parish Councillors have concerns that once the land has been used for solar panels it will be easier for other non-agricultural development to replace the solar panels or be added to the sites in the future. The installation of solar panels could lead to the sites being considered as previously developed land which could open the areas up to further applications for housing or industrial development.</p>	<p>The planning consent granted to the proposed development is temporary. There would be no change to the planning status of the land once the solar farm is decommissioned. The land used for the Proposed Development would be returned to its original use with areas of established mitigation left in situ where possible and in agreement with the landowner.</p>	Agreed
RPC4	Traffic and transport	<p>Redmarshall already has problems with excessive numbers of HGV's passing through the village to avoid using slightly longer routes on larger roads. This can be evidenced by recent origin and destination surveys undertaken by Stockton Borough Council Highways Dept. This development will increase a problem that is already at unacceptable levels. Traffic management plans may detail routes that avoid the need for HGV's to pass through Redmarshall but the Parish Councillors know from experience that plans are regularly ignored and enforcement of the traffic management plans is very difficult.</p> <p>The Parish Council would like to understand how any proposals to control traffic would be enforced.</p>	<p>ES Figure 12.1 [APP-099] shows the routing and access points during construction for each panel area. It is not proposed to use Redmarshall for access during construction, with routing for all panel areas to come from the west of the Proposed Development. ES Appendix 12.1 Transport Statement (Document Reference 6.4.12.1) identifies during the construction phase, it is expected that there would be an average of 6 HGV deliveries per Panel Area (12 movements). The assessment reported in ES Chapter 12 Traffic and Transport [APP-035] concludes that there would be no significant effects arising from the Proposed Development in relation to traffic and transport.</p> <p>The measures to manage traffic are set out in the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [APP-112] and it is requirement 6 of the draft DCO that this document and the principles it outlines will need to be further developed in detail, in consultation with the local planning and highway authorities, prior to commencing development. RWE and its contractor will be required</p>	Agreed

			to comply with the approved management plan under the DCO. Part 8 of the Planning Act 2008 defines the regime for enforcement of DCOs. It is an offence to breach the terms of a DCO.	
RPC5	Economic benefits	The Parish Councillors feel that the proposed Byers Gill Solar Farm brings very little in the way of benefits to the residents of Redmarshall. The employment opportunities are unlikely to benefit the local community but residents will face transport problems and other disruptions while development work is underway – particularly if all of the applications currently on the table and others recently approved in the area are all under construction simultaneously.	ES Chapter 9 Land Use and Socioeconomics [APP-032] considers opportunities for local supply chains during construction, for example ground works and the supply of materials are likely to be sourced locally. The assessment concludes that there would be a beneficial (not significant) effect arising from the Proposed Development in relation to employment and supply chain opportunities. ES Chapter 9 Land Use and Socioeconomics [APP-032] identifies the legacy benefits of the Proposed Development such as the provision of a £1.5m Community Benefit Fund payable over the life of the project (albeit the availability of the fund is not considered to be a relevant matter to the Secretary of State’s decision on the DCO application).	Not agreed
RPC6	Cable routes	As the Byers Gill sites are some distance away from the Norton substation significant work is proposed to lay underground cables to link the sites. If approved this will result in long term disruption for residents as they travel to and from the village. If this proposal is approved the Parish Council feel that more thought should be given to finding potential routes that crosses farm land rather than the local roads, or that makes use of the existing overhead infrastructure, rather than causing further disruption. Off-road cable routes must be prioritised as much as practicable.	The DCO application includes cable route options rather than one single defined route to provide sufficient flexibility to ensure that the Proposed Development is deliverable. The Applicant has expressed a preference within the DCO application for off-road cable routes, in part due to the reduced potential impact and disruption to the local road network of this option compared to the on-road cable routes. These are depicted in ES Figure 2.13 [APP-051]. It is considered that the Applicant and RPC are agreed in their position on this matter.	Agreed

A.1 Record of Engagement

Date	Method of engagement	Purpose / Description
02/11/2022 - 04/11/2022	Co-design workshops	Some RPC members attended co-design workshops
06/04/2023	Project newsletter	Newsletter issued to co-design workshop invitees to provide update on application.
05/2023 – 06/2023	Statutory consultation	RPC notified of statutory consultation
03/11/2023	Letter	Letter to outline changes to the design of the Proposed Development and proposed changes to the community benefit fund. Invitation to meet with the Applicant to discuss further
11/12/2023	Meeting (in person)	Meeting to discuss design changes, community benefit fund and next steps of DCO application.
16/09/2024	Meeting (in person)	Meeting to discuss the SOCG.