

**Byers Gill Solar  
EN010139**

# Statement of Common Ground with Great Stainton Parish Meeting

Planning Act 2008

APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

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

Volume 8

Deadline 4 - October 2024

Revision 1



# Table of Contents

Page

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1.	Purpose of this document	1
1.2.	Terminology	1
1.3.	Status of this document	1
<b>2.</b>	<b>Current position</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>A.1</b>	<b>Record of Engagement</b>	<b>22</b>

## Table of Tables

Table 1	Current position of matters relevant to the parties' discussions	2
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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 **Great Stainton Parish Meeting (GSPM)** 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 GSPM 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	GSPM Position	Applicant Position	Status
GSPM1	Impact on community	The proposed development by RWE is already causing divisions within the local community. Landowners who have consented to structures being placed on their land have withdrawn from the local community. Of the 27 households there are now none who support the development of Byers Gill, demonstrating 100% objection.	The Applicant acknowledges the concern of GSPM and recognises that different members of any community may have conflicting views on a proposed development.	Not agreed
GSPM2	Scale of development	If planners consult the map of the proposed development, they will note that the scale of the RWE development will be present on 3 sides of the village. The plans themselves have caused considerable anxiety for all 27 households, many of whom are elderly. There is a fear that the village will be surrounded by a sea of black panels, and this will have a negative impact on the mental health of the residents.	The Applicant acknowledges the concern of GSPM regarding the effects of the scheme on its community. ES Chapter 7 Landscape and Visual [APP-030] is provided with the DCO application and acknowledges that there would be residual significant effects relating to views at Great Stainton. These effects would be residual following the application of the mitigation hierarchy, which aims to avoid or reduce effects wherever feasible. Most of the significant adverse effects would arise during operation, however, they would be reversible following decommissioning. After decommissioning, the Proposed Development would leave a positive legacy of improved landscape fabric and character	Under discussion

Row ID	Topic	GSPM Position	Applicant Position	Status
			<p>due to the denser hedgerows and maturing trees which would be left after the lifetime of the operational development.</p> <p>The Applicant and Great Stainton Parish Meeting, and Bishopton Villages Action Group (BVAG) met on 10 October 2024 to discuss details of design, in the context of the concerns raised. A further update on the outcome of that meeting and ongoing discussions will be provided at a later deadline of the Examination and reflected in an updated SoCG to be submitted prior to close of Examination.</p>	
GSPM3	Impact on property value	<p>Some of the panel areas are very close to residents' properties. It has been reported that those seeking to sell their property within the village have had difficulty having their houses valued due to the ongoing planning proposal, as they are unable to determine a value for the properties concerned. Elderly residents wanting to downsize are now trapped in their properties and this is causing considerable anxiety to them. The uncertainty of the outcome of the DCO</p> <p>There is a wealth of evidence-based reviews available for the impact of solar power plants on house prices specifically. Some examples include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Disamenity Impact of Solar Farms: A Hedonic Analysis, David Maddison, Reece Ogier, Allan Beltrán <i>Land Economics</i> Feb 2023, 99 (1) 1-16;</li> </ul> <p>Davis, Lucas W. 2011. "The Effect of Power Plants on Local Housing Values and Rents." <i>Review of Economics and Statistics</i> 93 (4): 1391-</p>	<p>The Applicant acknowledges concerns relating to house prices, however this is not a material planning consideration. The Applicant is not aware of any evidence from the UK that suggests solar farms have a significant effect on house prices.</p>	Not agreed

Row ID	Topic	GSPM Position	Applicant Position	Status
		<p>1402.</p> <p>Dröes, Martijn I., and Hans R. A. Koster . 2021. “Wind Turbines, Solar Farms and House Prices.” <i>Energy Policy</i>155: 1–11</p>		
GSPM4	Landscape and visual	<p>The mitigation proposed by the developers with regards to screening the panels, battery storage units and relay stations will not be effective for this village due to the elevation that the village sits at and the undulating nature of the landscape. The village sits at a prominent elevation approximately 100-150ft above the proposed panel arrays. What mitigation is proposed will take many years to be effective and during the winter months be of little use. Many aspects of the proposed development will be visible from the village for miles. The reports within the proposal acknowledge that this village will be adversely affected.</p> <p>The panels proposed in areas A to D are intrusively close to resident’s properties and gardens.</p> <p>The characteristic of the landscape in which Great Station is situated, and its tranquil visual amenity with sweeping landscape views as far as the Cleveland Hills would be negatively impacted by the solar farm and fundamentally changed. RWE’s submitted document – 6.2.7 Environmental Statement Chapter 7 :Landscape and Visual point 7.13.1 itself states that in regards to Landscape Character: <b>Significant effects would arise during the operation on</b></p>	<p>As above, the Applicant does acknowledge that there would be some significant landscape and visual effects relating to Great Stainton, which cannot be mitigated following the application of the mitigation hierarchy. The assessment reported in ES Chapter 7 Landscape and Visual [APP-030] takes account the timeframes for establishment of mitigation. It is based on a conservative estimate of growth for new planting and took account of both seasonal variation and topography in considering the expected visibility with mitigation and the reporting of effects. The Applicant is willing to commit to semi-mature planting in cases where it would benefit specific receptors.</p>	Under discussion

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		<p><b>Darlington LCS 6 Great Stainton Farmland</b> which would host Panel Areas A to D. As shown by Figure 7.1, the panel areas would occupy a notable proportion of this character area, making the solar farm a key characteristic. Planting of hedgerows with trees would reinforce the characteristic vegetation pattern, providing a positive legacy after decommissioning, <b>but this planting would not markedly mitigate the effects on the character of this area during operation.</b></p> <p>Darlington Borough Council's submitted evidence document: Deadline 1 submission – Darlington Borough Council – Landscape and Visual Amenity notes in regard to Great Stainton: (9.8) <i>The ES predicts significant (major/moderate) landscape and visual adverse effects during operation on the Great Stainton landscape character area.</i></p> <p>Due to the elevation relative to the panel areas screening with semi mature trees is still unlikely to be effective.</p>		
GSPM5	Good design	<p>It isn't clear where or how 'placemaking' is addressed within the Proposed Development. This is increasingly an important consideration for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The application itself acknowledges in ES Section 8.3.1 and 8.3.3 that the residents of Great Stainton will be adversely affected, and mitigation measures will only be minimally effective. The effect on the community of Great Stainton is admitted by the developers to be adverse, substantial, and long lasting. This appears to be at odds with the principles of good design and the proposed development has the hallmark of</p>	<p>The Applicant has set out how it has approached the design of the Proposed Development, in accordance with national policy on 'good design' within the Design Approach Document [AS-004]. As concluded in the Planning Statement [AS-163], the residual significant effects of the Proposed Development, including those on landscape, are not considered to outweigh the benefits of the Proposed Development, particularly within the context of it constituting Critical National Priority (CNP) infrastructure in national policy.</p> <p>The Applicant and GSPM continue to discuss this matter. The Applicant and Great Stainton Parish Meeting, and Bishopton Villages Action Group (BVAG) met on 10</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>an application that has been designed on a desktop using digital maps and without the necessary consideration of the effects of such a proposal on the local community or its environment.</p> <p>The client's claimed benefits are not benefits to this village or its residents, but to national policy.</p> <p>Please could the client provide us with evidence of how the development will outweigh its negative impacts in the context specifically of Great Stainton and its residents as claimed?</p>	<p>October 2024 to discuss details of design, in the context of the concerns raised. A further update on the outcome of that meeting and ongoing discussions will be provided at a later deadline of the Examination and reflected in an updated SoCG to be submitted prior to close of Examination.</p>	
GSPM6	Cumulative effects	<p>There are a number of other smaller sites already being developed and proposed adjacent to the RWE proposal that will add to the blanket coverage of the area with solar farms/factories. Not only will residents be able to see these farms from the village, travelling to other locations, West, South and East will compound the effect of living within an industrial landscape.</p> <p>The area of this proposed solar power plant is approx. 490 hectares. Within a 3km radius of the site there are already approximately 490 hectares of solar power plant with consent and/or under construction. Sites include; Gately Moor Solar Farm, California Farm Solar Farm, Whinfield Solar Farm, High Meadow 2 Solar Farm, Middlefield Farm Solar Farm, Burtree Solar Farm, Thorpe Bank Solar Farm, Long Pasture Solar Farm. This is evidenced in Darlington Borough Councils Landscape and visual assessment, table LLIR1.</p>	<p>As part of the DCO Application, the Applicant has prepared ES Chapter 13 Cumulative Effects [APP-036], which takes into account and assesses the combined and cumulative impact of the Proposed Development together with other proposed, in-planning or in-construction developments, should they all be built. ES Chapter 13 Cumulative Effects [APP-036] concludes that there would be no significant effects as a result of those combined or cumulative impacts, however the cumulative effect of renewable energy production development is a notable beneficial effect which could be significant in EIA terms given its potential national influence.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that there are a number of other proposals in the area.</p>	Not agreed



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		<p>This has cumulative impacts in multiple spheres including loss of rural land, loss of visual amenity, loss of landscape characteristic, loss of biodiversity, impacts to highways, impacts to flood risk etc. In light of this, please could RWE provide evidence to back up their statement in ES Chapter 13 Cumulative Effects: that there would be no significant effects as a result of those combined or cumulative impacts?</p>		
GSPM7	Biodiversity	<p>There is considerable concern for the wildlife that currently enjoys the area’s rich habitats if this development goes ahead. Great Stainton hosts a SSSI site at Catkill lane, and a Local Wildlife Site at Carr House. Both of which will be irreversibly damaged by this development on their doorstep. CPRE and Durham Bird Club have submitted documents outlining concerns on the species these environments and our village landscape host.</p> <p>Multiple wildlife receptors such as ponds/water bodies have not been surveyed by the applicant RWE which host rare and threatened species such as Otters. There are many species of ancient and rare flora and fauna across this rural area.</p> <p>Our residents take great joy in living among this landscape which hosts bird species such as; barn owls, herons, sparrowhawks, snipe, curlews, lapwings, swans, moorhens, coots. Mammal and invertebrate species such as damsel and dragon flies, moths, butterflies, newts, frogs, toads, otters, stoats, foxes, hares, badgers and many species of deer. Aquatic vertebrate such as rudd, tench, and perch. This list is not exhaustive.</p>	<p>ES Chapter 6 Biodiversity [APP-029] concludes that there would be no significant effects arising from the Proposed Development, including on birds and mammals. Natural England as the statutory nature conservation adviser has expressed no concern regarding the DCO application and its assessment [RR-373].</p> <p>There will be 8m buffers (3m from hedgerows to security fencing and 5m from security fencing to Solar Cells) between Solar PV modules and hedges to retain foraging and commuting corridors. These buffers will enable large mammals such as deer to able to continue to move between fields and ensure the Solar development is permeable to them. Fencing will not be buried so foraging badgers will be able to push up under the fence to forage under panels should they wish – as they do with standard agricultural stock fencing.</p> <p>The solar sites are secured by CCTV and any activities taking place within the areas managed by RWE would be prevented.</p>	Not agreed

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		<p>Directional drilling is proposed beneath watercourses within the proposed area which would cause harm to our riverine habitats and species.</p> <p>Poaching and rural crime is already an issue that the local police are having little success in stemming. The fencing surrounding the solar farms/factories will funnel larger wildlife down channels which will, if anything, make poaching an easier, and therefore more appealing thing to do. The fencing and farms themselves will disrupt/destroy tracks and paths used by the wildlife. There is little information on the effect of the scale of the fields of panels (The equivalent of 1200 football fields) on bird life and of migratory patterns of visiting birds in the winter.</p> <p>Every year hundreds of thousands of birds are killed by solar farms across the globe. Many are water birds that fly into solar panels, deceived by the panels' resemblance to the surface of water. This phenomenon is called the 'Lake Effect'.</p> <p>The client states that there would be no significant effect to this wildlife, please could evidence be provided to justify these claims. For instance, many species of ground nesting birds inhabit the fields where solar panels are directly proposed. These species would be eradicated from these areas which is a significant impact in isolation.</p>		
GSPM8	Agricultural use	<p>Claims that the land will improve during the life of the solar farms are spurious at best. It is well known that plants devoid of light do not thrive. The idea that sheep and poultry can graze the land where the solar farms are is fictitious. The</p>	<p>Solar farms help regenerate soil quality, and so are helping to ensure the continued availability of high quality agricultural acreage for future generations. The impact on soil is outlined in ES Chapter 9 Land use and Socioeconomics [APP-032]. There is predicted to be a</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>grazing under objects that create a shadow is not nutritious and sheep work in flocks which the panels arrangement does not allow. There is then a problem if sheep do go in the farm areas of actually rounding them up. Farmers in the area see this idea as inappropriate and the photograph used in the proposal by RWE we understand to be a stock photograph taken in a small development where the sheep were subsequently removed. As such, it's use is a deliberate misleading of those it is seeking to persuade.</p> <p>Soil quality – All areas will have the topsoil removed which is the quality soil for any crop growth, we have yet to understand where and how this is being stored. Once land is impacted by heavy construction machinery the sub-strata of the soil will be damaged if construction conditions are not perfect, as we have seen from the local existing site, construction takes place whatever the weather. To regenerate the land back to a condition suitable for productive agricultural crops the land will need to be managed in a way that would not be beneficial for food production. This would be due to the introduction of pests such as ‘wire worm and leather jackets’ due to the land not being managed for 40 years. These pests in the soil would kill any crops sown, therefore would have to be managed out of the land over a period of years. RWE claim that the soil will be ‘regenerated’ has no foundation. Wildflowers planted will initially grow to a certain degree (not</p>	<p>moderate adverse effect on soil resources during construction, with a moderate beneficial effect on soil resources at decommissioning due to improved soil health.</p> <p>Vegetation is capable of growing underneath solar panels, and livestock such as sheep are able to graze amongst solar panels; This approach is used in many operational sites. The list below has been compiled of Solar Farms RWE is aware of where sheep or other animals graze (noting these are not The Applicant’s):</p> <p>Higher Hill, Butleigh, Somerset (sheep) - BA6 8TW                      Yeowood Solar Farm, North Somerset (chickens, laying hens) - BS49 5JL                      Park Farm, Leicestershire (sheep) - DE12 7HD                      Wymeswold Solar Farm, Leicestershire (sheep) - LE12 5TY                      Eastacombe Farm, Devon (sheep) - EX31 3HX                      Wyld Meadow Farm, Bridport, Dorset (sheep) - EX13 5UH                      Newlands Farm, Axminster, Devon (sheep) - EX13 5RX                      Fenton Home Farm, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire (sheep) - SA62 4PY                      Trevemper Farm, Newquay, Cornwall (sheep) - TR8 5EN                      Benbole Farm, Wadebridge, Cornwall (geese) - PL30 3EF                      Twitch Hill Solar, Shropshire (sheep) - TF10 9AE                      Manor Farm, Eggington Solar, Leighton Buzzard (sheep) - LU7 9NE</p> <p>Topsoil will not be removed from all areas but will remain in situ and undisturbed for the lifetime of the Proposed Development over the vast majority of the land. The only requirement to remove topsoil will be mostly temporary and short-term for construction access tracks, construction compounds and laying the underground cables; as well as for areas of operational infrastructure such as operational access tracks, substation, BESS, inverters, switchgear and spare containers. These have been sited mostly on moderate quality Subgrade 3b land, with only 0.2ha of BMV Subgrade 3a land required for these elements of the Proposed Development.</p>	

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		<p>to maximum capacity due to the soil quality) however, unmanaged areas will be overtaken by weeds such as docks, thistles, ragwort which is poisonous to some livestock. All of these would normally be managed by the farmer to grow anything on the land. What are plans to manage the area? We know that the decommissioning takes up to 5 years, then the management of the land 'fit for purpose' to productive agricultural land could take another 5 years.</p> <p>Grazing - If we consider RWE proposal to graze sheep and poultry what are their husbandry plans? Sheep/poultry will be hidden out of site under the panels, which would make the management of checking these animals for illness or death virtually impossible. Animal welfare must be considered here. If vermin such as foxes got into the area there would be no escape for sheep/poultry. The killing spree of such would be out of sight of any surveillance. Can examples of how this is working be given for a site of this scale.</p> <p>We would welcome details of sites where sheep are grazing land occupied by solar panels.</p>	<p>As set out in 6.4.2.12 Environmental Statement Appendix 2.12 Outline Soil Resources Management Plan [APP-116], detailed proposals for the excavation and storage of topsoil for these elements of the Proposed Development will be set out in the detailed SRMP prepared by the Contractor but which will be required to follow best practice for handling and storing soils as set out in Section 5 of the Outline SRMP. This includes the remediation of any soils compacted by construction activities.</p> <p>The land will not be unmanaged during the operation of the Proposed Development but managed in accordance with 6.4.2.14 Environmental Statement Appendix 2.14 Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) [APP-118]. It will also be fenced against livestock predators.</p>	
GSPM9	Biodiversity	<p>There are also claims that the set aside land will be abundant with wildflowers etc. Again, the claims by the proposal are against the evidence relating to how wildflowers flourish.</p> <p>Wildflower meadows require annual maintenance and direct sunlight to grow. Solar panels by their nature are installed to capture the sunlight, thus it will not reach the ground beneath and instead the likelihood is monocultures of weeds not wildflowers. The images that adorn RWE's</p>	<p>Measures to ensure that new planting and management of existing vegetation meets the design intent throughout the operational life of the Proposed Development are secured via ES Appendix 2.14 Outline LEMP [APP-118]. The Applicant notes that GSPC has not provided any evidence regarding wild flower growth and solar panels. There are existing "game strips" in the fields currently which are used to grow wildflowers and provide habitat.</p> <p>The Outline LEMP [APP-118] secures the maintenance of the planting during the entire operational period of the</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>information reports and booklets of wildflower meadows are of the nature that they would be required to be maintained annually, rotavated, and resown which is misleading.</p> <p>These are many examples of local councils in this area seeding verges with wildflowers. If annual maintenance in the form of cutting down plants at the close of a season and then reseeding, If this was not required to produce a viable wildflower verge in the next season, it is highly unlikely that they would carry out such maintenance.</p>	<p>Proposed Development. Section 7 and Appendix 1 of the Outline LEMP set out the maintenance operations and schedule for implementation, whilst Section 8 sets out the monitoring activities. The LEMP would be developed in more detail prior to commencing development and would be subject to approval by the local planning authority.</p>	
GSPM10	Agricultural use	<p>The land that the RWE development proposes to use is productive agricultural land. The company claims that much of it is of a poor quality (grade 3B or worse). This is at odds with the actual production and productivity of the land. Local farmers who are not part of the RWE proposal have raised concerns in respect of this. There is local concern that the results within the application have been taken to satisfy the results of the application. The grading of agricultural soils process involves subjective judgement by its nature, GSPC do not have the funds to carry out our own study on this parameter.</p> <p>The majority of the land proposed has and is currently growing high yielding cereals, or is providing winter grass feed, haylage/silage for animals. Any crop production is always subject to the management of the land and weather conditions. Providing management of land is done correctly i.e. introducing organic matter into poorer quality land, then there is no reason providing the conditions of input are good that</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 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. The Applicant has engaged with Natural England during the pre-application period regarding its assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on agricultural land, which included carrying out surveys of the land. 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>	Not agreed

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		<p>you should not get a productive crop. Permanent loss of this agricultural land will be 40 years + decommissioning and management of land 'fit for purpose' 50 years.</p>		
GSPM11	Flood risk	<p>Flood risk is of great concern, especially in light of climate change impacts forecast to increase our flood risk with warmer and wetter winters, and increased intensity of summer storms. For Great Stainton there is a concern that the proposed solar farm will affect the local flood risk, especially from pluvial receptors.</p> <p>In the documents provided on flood risk by RWE they state that the construction of this development will increase surface runoff and overland flow. We already have a highway surface flooding issue in this area with many roads impassable during heavy rain in both the summer and winter. This year alone, from autumn to spring fields were saturated with surplus runoff inundating local roads. Of most alarm was incidents where access routes in three directions out of the village were impassable due to highway flooding. Should a village resident have required access to emergency services during this period it would have been challenging and a potential risk to life.</p> <p>RWEs reporting also states that it will increase soil compaction to the land, this will have further drainage and flooding issues within the catchment and increase flood risk for residents and people who live downstream on our rivers. Changing the characteristics of an area of land as big as 490 hectares from rural fields, covered in vegetation and agricultural land to industrial land, covered in</p>	<p>ES Appendix 10.1 Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Document Reference 6.4.10.1) is provided with the DCO application. ES Appendix 10.1 concludes that the Proposed Development will be safe for its lifetime and will not impact flood risk on site or off site. The infrastructure is positioned such as not to impede flow routes and will have a negligible impact on floodplain storage.</p> <p>The Applicant acknowledges concerns regarding existing flooding on roads in the area, however this is not within the control of the Applicant and should be raised with the relevant local authority. As cited above, the Proposed Development would not increase flood risk or exacerbate these existing issues.</p> <p>Further updated flood modelling information is currently being developed through discussion with the EA and is to be submitted by Deadline 4; this will also be shared directly with GSPM for consideration and further discussion.</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>solar panels will have an adverse effect on the rainfall runoff, drainage and flooding in this area by cumulative effect. The report also outlines that 6800m<sup>2</sup> of land is going to be changed to impermeable land in Appendix 10.1 of RWEs Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, this will impact flood risk.</p> <p>6.6ft high fences are proposed around the sites and batteries. The fences will act to trap debris and increase the flood risk locally when we get overland flow on this area proposed and they pose a blockage risk.</p> <p>Finally, it is of great concern that the data and evidence that RWE have submitted contains no detailed calculations, modelling or study of the areas flood risk mechanisms. Only a desk top study has been carried out so the assessment of both fluvial and pluvial flood risk to Great Stainton is largely unaddressed and unknown by the developer. For instance, how has the developer quantified the risk of flood flows with climate change during the lifetime of the development proposed in this catchment?</p>		
GSPM12	Flood risk	<p>Much of the drainage within the fields in the area is of an age where it has not been mapped. The construction of the panels, using piles driven into the ground to a depth required, is likely to damage or destroy the drainage systems in place. This will exacerbate the run-off effect on local roads. The effect of the scale of the panel area on run-off does not appear to have been modelled. As observed earlier, in the Great Stainton vicinity the ground is undulating, and the proposals see panels placed on the south facing</p>	<p>As reflected in the Mitigation Route Map [APP-171], ground investigations would be undertaken prior to commencement to inform detailed design. This would seek to reduce existing uncertainties such as buried infrastructure or potential for contamination and would inform the detailed drainage design. Field drains are designed to remove water from a field to adjacent land or drainage; if this were to be removed it would not exacerbate existing problems on the road network or in neighbouring land.</p> <p>The Applicant is willing to commit to engaging with neighbouring landowners at detailed design to further</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>hills. This would seem to suggest that the run-off in the valley areas will be accelerated.</p> <p>Due to there being no mapping drains and neighbouring farm fields/roads are bound to be affected/damaged. All ditches around proposed sites would need to be cleaned and maintained by farmers who are taking part in this proposal so that any potential drain damage causing flooding would go into the ditches first. Are there proposals for this to take place? Who is liable for flooding to neighbouring farms and roads? What is the plan to resolve such issues?</p>	<p>understand the existing drainage network and to ensure any damage would be avoided. This will be confirmed via an update to the ES Errata and Management Plans Proposed Updates [REP2-012] at a future Deadline.</p>	
GSPM13	Construction effects (traffic and transport and noise)	<p>There are concerns with the construction phase of the farms. The road systems in the area are of a poor quality and the route from the A1 is narrow and busy. Although it will be argued that the construction phase is temporary, the estimated 12-24 months to complete is considerable and the driving of piles into the ground will be a constant noise. As the village has so much construction in the area on the proposal then we can expect a high degree of noise.</p> <p>We believe that the ‘Applicant’ should be directed to Ian Ridley’s Relevant Representative Comment which details all of the proposed Traffic Issues, especially that no proposed Construction Traffic be allowed to journey along the C46 to Great Stainton and certainly not through the Village. The overall noise and safety implication and the wellbeing of the village residents should be paramount.</p> <p>Traffic serving the Proposed Sites A and B should</p>	<p>The assessment reported in ES Chapter 12 Traffic and Transport [APP-035] concludes that during the construction phase there would be no significant effects arising from the Proposed Development in relation to traffic and transport. An Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [APP-112] is provided with the DCO application which identifies the specific roads to be used for construction traffic and measures that would be implemented to reduce local disruption and adverse impacts, such as scheduling HGV arrivals.</p> <p>The assessment reported in ES Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration [APP-034] concludes a significant adverse effect would arise during construction and decommissioning activities, however this would be short-term and reversible. No significant effects are identified during the operation of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The period of 12 – 24 months for construction refers to the whole of the proposed development. Panel Area construction timelines individually are likely to be shorter, around 6-9 months, with noise generating activities such as piling likely to be 2-4 months.</p>	Under discussion



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		<p>enter the area from the west via the A1 and NOT be allowed to progress eastwards beyond the entrance to Site B.</p> <p>Traffic serving the remaining Proposed Sites should enter the area via the A66 from the south and not be allowed to travel north beyond the entrance to Site D which is situated south of Great Stainton</p> <p>Generally there are suggestions that the whole proposed scheme could be constructed 'piecemeal' which in turn would imply that individual sites maybe constructed without connection to the Main Electricity Grid or is it intended that said connection lines are installed initially which would only extend the time of the overall traffic disruption?</p> <p>The client has stated that the noise and vibration effects would be short term and reversible. Please could the client provide evidence on how these effects can be reversible to our residents?</p>	<p>The Applicant is expecting to submit further noise modelling information at Deadline 4 and will share this with GSPM for further discussion.</p>	
GSPM14	Crime	<p>We understand from other developments that have taken place of a similar nature to the RWE proposal, that increased levels of crime have been an issue. Considerable quantities of fencing and panels have been reported as being stolen during the construction phase. These reports are of a concern as bringing organised criminality to areas of development.</p> <p>Criminal activity is rising around solar farms. EnergyGlobal.com (10 Oct 2023) "<i>Solar Theft' - why is it on the rise and how can farms protect themselves?</i>" notes that police data shows a</p>	<p>The Proposed Development would include security measures such as CCTV to be installed along with the security fencing associated with the onsite substation. The CCTV would be motion sensitive and monitored by a security firm able to reach the site. Incidences of crime, should they occur, would be reported to the local Police force.</p> <p>Infrared light is not visible.</p> <p>The use of deer fencing is secured as a design principle in the Design Approach Document [AS-004] and Requirement 3 of the draft DCO [REP2-029]. To change this to security fencing post-consent would require separate approval by the local planning authority and would not be automatically</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>staggering 48% rise in solar panel and cabling theft from 2021 to 2022. Referencing one instance in Northamptonshire where £10'500 worth of solar panels were stolen from a solar farm development.</p> <p>How are we going to be reassured that due to criminal activity the permitter deer fencing proposed will not be changed to security fencing?</p> <p>Great Stainton currently enjoys uninterrupted dark skies with minimal light pollution from streetlights as there are none present in the village. CCTV systems would pollute these skies with infrared light.</p>	<p>permissible under the scope of the DCO. As reflected in the secured commitment to deer fencing, the Applicant has no intention to use security fencing.</p>	
GSPM15	Battery safety	<p>There is significant concern in the village that the battery storage units have the potential to develop faults and to ignite producing 'thermal runaway' that is impossible to extinguish. Concerns are that there will be extremely toxic fumes produced and water used (and it must be in a huge quantity) to dampen the fire will produce pollution of the local water courses. We have not seen an adequate plan to deal with this by RWE.</p> <p>Batteries are proposed to be located only 400-450m from resident's property boundaries. Whilst the applicant has stated the risk of an adverse incident involving the battery storage systems is low due to the measures taken to contain 'thermal runaway' etc, an incident would have a high risk to residents and would likely</p>	<p>The DCO Application is supported by ES Appendix 2.13 Outline Battery Fire Safety Management Plan (oBFSMP) [APP-117], which sets out how the measures for ensuring safety is at the forefront of the Proposed Development. It considers specific risks such as thermal runaway, access and water contamination. This plan has been developed with regard to the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) and it has been developed in consultation with the local Fire and Rescue service.</p> <p>Impacts from potential fire/explosion in relation to the BESS has been assessed within ES Appendix 2.5 Major Accidents and Disasters Assessment [APP-104]. It concludes that the reasonable worst-case risks relating to BESS are managed to an acceptable level taking into account the mitigation proposed and secured through the DCO.</p> <p>Requirement 11 of the DCO requires that the battery safety plan is developed in further detail and consulted on with the</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>require the evacuation of residents due to the toxic nature of the fumes created.</p> <p>It is also noted that the local beck feeds the River Tees and it is not clear to residents how RWE would contain the resulting pollution arising from both the incident itself and the measures taken by the emergency services to contain/minimise the incident.</p>	<p>Health and Safety Executive and the local fire service prior to any approval by the local planning authority.</p>	
GSPM16	Community impacts	<p>In recent years the village church has closed to services, the parish meeting room has been sold off for residential development and the village pub and restaurant has been for sale for over two years. There is speculation that prospective purchasers are being deterred by the RWE proposals and this will be ‘The nail in the coffin’ of any village assets other than private housing.</p> <p>Recreational beauty of this area is a great attraction for many. With residents and visitors enjoying the footpaths, green lanes, and bridleways for recreational activities such as hiking, dog walking, trail running, and biking. Residents of Great Stainton confirm the great benefit from these activities on the mental health and wellbeing, that spending time in a tranquil rural landscape allows.</p> <p>Loss of recreational land replaced by tunnels of access.</p> <p>The Ordnance Surveys published book names ‘The Best Walks in Britain’ published 2005</p>	<p>ES Chapter 9 Land Use and Socioeconomics [APP-032] provides an assessment of the Proposed Development in relation to its socioeconomic effects. This includes consideration of effects on community facilities. It concludes there would be no significant effects relating to this matter, however there would be a beneficial (not significant) effect arising from the Proposed Development in relation to employment and supply chain opportunities.</p> <p>Additionally, there would be the provision of a £1.5m Community Benefit Fund payable over the life of the project (albeit the availability of that fund is not considered to be a relevant matter to the Secretary of State’s decision on the DCO application).</p>	Not agreed

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		<p>includes a route through Great Stainton Village and its surrounding area titled Brafferton to Ketton Country. It notes that the walk rambles through green lanes and ancient highways of outstanding beauty. These routes should be treasured and not industrialised as proposed by RWE into tunnels of access following the loss of this recreational land.</p>		
GSPM17	Alternatives	<p>As set out at Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1), and in the post-hearing submission [REP1-030], GSPM consider that RWE should demonstrate that the Proposed Development is still the best solution to the issues associated with the advancement of the national green energy strategy now that onshore wind is permitted again.</p> <p>Position reserved</p>	<p>As set out at OFH1 and in the written summary of case, and subsequently in more detail in the Energy Generation and Design Evolution Document [REP2-010] the Applicant considers that relevant policy, namely through the National Policy Statements, do not require the Applicant to demonstrate that the Proposed Development is the best-case solution. Paragraph 2.2.4 of that document confirms the Applicant’s position that “The effect of the policies on alternatives in EN-1 mean that there is no obligation to show that the Proposed Development represents the best option from a policy perspective.”</p>	Not agreed
GSPM18	Carbon assessment	<p>As set out at Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1), and in the post-hearing submission [REP1-030], GSPM consider that the findings of the Supreme Court under the ‘Finch’ case (Horse Hill, Surrey) should be considered in relation to whether it changes the case for Byers Gill Solar. GSPM stated the ExA should consider whether ‘these developments have resulted in the Byers Gill submission being superseded by changes of policy, to the extent that it does not represent the most effective solution to national priorities relating to energy security, net zero carbon</p>	<p>As set out in the Applicant’s post-hearing submissions [REP1-006], page 23, the Applicant considers that the Finch case cannot be equivalently applied to the Proposed Development. The Finch case found that the eventual burning of fossil fuels extracted from the proposed oil development were an ‘inevitable emission’ of the extraction phase and therefore the environmental impact assessment of that scheme was inadequate. The Proposed Development, as a solar scheme, would not result in such downstream effects and the EIA therefore remains adequate as submitted.</p>	Agreed

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		emissions targets and food production for the UK.  Position reserved		
GSPM 19	Heritage	Great Stainton is home to multiple heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets defined by Historic England. The Kings Arms Pub is Grade II listed, The village water pump is grade II listed, All saints Church is Grade II listed, Stainton Grange is Grade II listed, Stainton grange water pump is grade II listed, Preston Lodge farm and outbuildings is Grade II listed, The Old Rectory is grade II listed The Old School is a non-designated heritage asset as it outdated the national schools act in 1847. These sites are designated as such because they are recognised for their speciality in the national context, and a historical context and to protect their character. The character of these sites stems from the landscape which they are situated within, therefore the proposed solar farm will have adverse impact to these heritage assets in Great Stainton.	ES Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology [APP-031] assesses the effects of the Proposed Development on heritage assets. It concludes that there would be no effects in relation to the heritage assets listed. Although the heritage assets cited by the Parish Council are not located within the Order Limits, they were considered as part of the settings assessment which informed the Environmental Statement. The assets are discussed under 'Group 7' within Table 2 of Technical Appendix 8.2: Historic Environment Settings Assessment [APP-146] which follows the standards and guidance set out by Historic England, principally 'The Setting of Heritage Assets – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3.  The assessment work has been reviewed and issues agreed upon with both Historic England and Darlington Borough Council's Conservation Officer	Under discussion
GSPM20	Business Impact	There are multiple businesses operate out of Great Stainton village. These businesses are set to be impacted by this development putting peoples' livelihoods at great risk. Oat Hill Farm Boarding Kennels and Carr House Kennel Club breeder have both expressed concern that their businesses would become unviable due to the noise and disruption of the construction of this solar farm. Oat Hill Kennels are licenced by the local authority and must comply with legislation	The Applicant is currently engaging with Oat Hill Farm Boarding Kennels to understand the impact on the business and establish a mechanism to support the business during construction of the Solar Farm.	Under discussion

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		<p>under the Animal Welfare Act 2018 set by DEFRA. Pannels are proposed just 3m away from this business, therefore the noise would raise a welfare issue and this the business owner believes it would not be viable to operate during this construction phase of up to 2 years. This would have devastating impact on these families.</p>		
GSPM21	Noise	<p>RWE confirm in their report that noise and vibration would have significant adverse effects during construction and decommissioning for Great Stainton’s residents.</p>	<p>ES Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration [APP-034] provides an assessment of potential noise effects of the Proposed Development. . It concludes a significant adverse effect would arise during construction and decommissioning activities, however this would be short-term and reversible.</p>	Under discussion
GSPM22	Community Benefits	<p>The level of funding identified by RWE for Community Benefit is meagre compared to either the community benefits offered by wind farms in the area and in relation to the projected profits of the proposal suggested by RWE. We understand that DBC are putting forward a national model for Community Benefits. We would ask that RWE consider the following proposal from the GSPM:</p> <p>There should be Community Funding per kw/mw generated that is at least as commensurate with that of wind power schemes</p> <p>Any funding should be index linked with RPI/CPI</p> <p>Direct payments should be made to those households directly affected by the proximity of solar factories and ancillary equipment (based on an agreed distance) in the form of subsidised energy costs.</p>	<p>The approach to the Community Benefit Fund has been set out in the Community Benefit Fund document set out [REP2-011]. It has not been possible to discuss the fund with Parish Council’s to date in response to their request not to do so.</p> <p>The current proposal is for £210 per MW, which would equal £37,800 per year totalling £1.5m across the lifetime of the project, noting that this would be linked to inflation (so the total figure will increase).</p> <p>There is not a current framework that would allow for direct subsidy of energy bills to those in proximity to a solar farm.</p> <p>The Community Benefit Fund would be administered by Grantscape, who would manage applications for the use of the fund. The intention of the funding is to prioritise the communities most directly affected by the development. Grant applications will have to demonstrate their relevance to the community,</p>	Under discussion

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		<p>Community Funding should be administered and governed by a body independent of the donors and the local authority.</p> <p>Funding should be ringfenced for the benefit of those communities affected.</p> <p>The purpose of eligible grant funding should be that it has a demonstrable link to benefitting the community.</p> <p>Those communities affected by the proximity of solar factories, should be able to have an opportunity to comment on any proposed community funding scheme prior to implementation.</p>	<p>RWE would welcome the opportunity to engage with representatives of the Parish's and other organisations regarding the use of the fund.</p>	

## A.1 Record of Engagement

Date	Method of engagement	Purpose / Description
2/11/22-4/11/22	Co-design workshops	Some GSPM members attended co-design workshops
6/04/23	Project newsletter	Newsletter issued to co-design workshop invitees to provide update on application.
05/23 – 6/23	Statutory consultation	GSPM notified of statutory consultation
3/11/23	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
14/12/23	Meeting (in person)	Meeting to discuss design changes, community benefit fund and next steps of DCO application.
18/09/24	Meeting (in person)	Meeting to discuss SoCG
03/09/24	Email	The Applicant provided GSPM with an updated draft SoCG to reflect the above meeting
10/10/2024	Meeting (in person)	The Applicant and Great Stainton Parish Meeting, and Bishopton Villages Action Group (BVAG) met to discuss details of design.