



HELIOS RENEWABLE
ENERGY
PROJECT

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Pursuant to:
APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

**Consultation Report:
Appendix 14.1 - Feedback Analysis
Report**

June 2024



Appendix 14.1 – Section 47 and Section 48 Feedback Summary Report



Enso Energy - Helios Renewable Energy Project
Section 47/48 Feedback Analysis Report

June 2024

On behalf of:



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1.INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF CONSULTATION

This consultation report summarises the feedback received during the statutory consultation undertaken for Helios Renewable Energy Project which comprises a solar farm, alongside a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on land west of Camblesforth and north of Hirst Courtney in North Yorkshire, connected by an underground cable to a grid connection point at Drax National Grid substation ('the Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development is situated within the administrative area of North Yorkshire Council (formerly Selby District Council).

The Proposed Development has an expected energy generating capacity in excess of the threshold for onshore generating stations in England and therefore constitutes a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project' ('NSIP') under sections 14(1)(a) and 15(1) and (2) of the PA2008. Accordingly, we intend to make an application for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') to authorise the Proposed Development.

Consultation is an important part of the planning and development process. The 2008 Act requires developers to publicise their proposals widely as well as consult with the local community, local authorities, statutory bodies and persons with an interest in the land potentially affected by the proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). This process is referred to as 'pre-application consultation' and must be carried out before an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) can be accepted by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The statutory consultation took place between 26th October and 22nd December 2023. This followed an initial consultation which took place in summer 2022 and a period of ongoing engagement.

The initial phase of consultation was focused on presenting early information about the proposals based on information currently available as part of the early Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping process. In response to the feedback we received during this earlier consultation, the site layout was reduced, with the overall footprint of the site reducing from 757 hectares to 475 hectares. In addition specific areas for landscaping and biodiversity net gain areas were also identified, helping screen the solar panels, encourage pollinators and improved local wildlife habitats.

The statutory consultation presented the refined proposals and assessments as set out in the Preliminary Environment Impact Report (PEIR).

Feedback responses were received predominantly from residents living in close proximity to the Proposed Development. Feedback remained similar to issues raised in the 2022 consultation and ranged from specific comments and queries relating to individual respondents' property or land, through to general comments or queries about the proposals. Key themes in the feedback provided are recorded and reviewed within this document, but include:

- Impact on agricultural land and food security
- Scale of the project and setting
- Traffic and impact on local road network
- Impact on biodiversity and ecology

- Visual and landscape
- Impact on residents and on the value of homes
- Community Benefit and public rights of way
- Other environmental considerations, such as flood risk, glint and glare and noise

2. FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK RESPONSE OVERVIEW

There was a significantly lower rate of responses received from the statutory consultation period compared with the informal consultation which took place in 2022. In total there were a total of 64 responses, down from 110 responses previously. This can be an indicator that there is a good level of understanding of the proposals, or those who responded previously have adopted a neutral stance.

The table below summarises the top-level statistics of the feedback received and interactions throughout the consultation period between 26th October and 22nd December 2023:

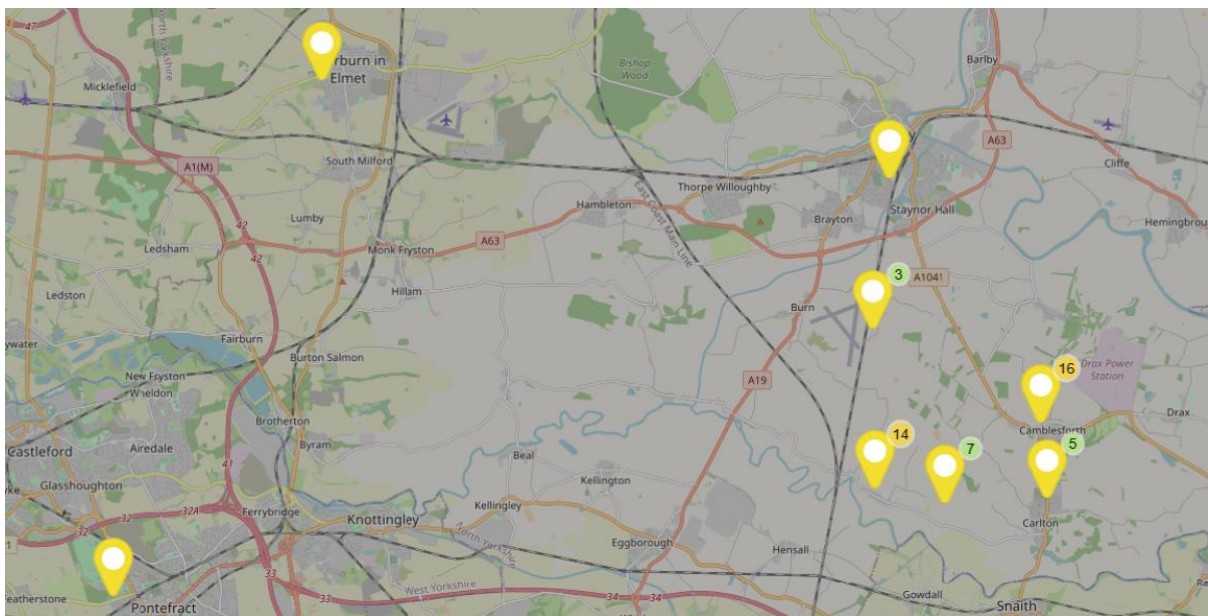
Number of newsletters issued to closest residents	5526
Number of public consultation events held	2
Number of attendees to events	117
Number of feedback forms returned (total)	64
<i>Of which:</i>	
- <i>Feedback form submitted in person at Camblesforth event:</i>	1
- <i>Feedback form submitted in person at Carlton event:</i>	1
- <i>Feedback form received via freepost following events:</i>	29
- <i>Online feedback forms:</i>	35
Number of emails (containing feedback) and emails (containing feedback) received*	50
<i>Of which:</i>	
- <i>Emails (feedback)</i>	19
- <i>Emails (enquiries)</i>	31
Number of (not unique) website hits during consultation period	472

**this does not include responses from statutory consultees (S42) which are being reviewed separately but does include those who have been identified as an S44 (landowner) or S47 stakeholder.*

As indicated in the table above, feedback was submitted primarily via the online feedback form and the feedback form available at consultation events. Both the online feedback form and hard copy feedback forms included the same questions for consistency.

In addition to the feedback forms, responses and information was provided via email and freephone. A summary analysis of the feedback provided via these means is also contained within this report.

Summary analysis of the feedback received and geographic location of respondents shows that generally, those living within the vicinity of the site were the most engaged, as is typical with proposed developments of this nature. The below map shows where respondents live in relation to the proposed site (note, not all respondents provided their postcode details alongside their feedback).



ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK FORMS

The feedback form was designed to direct respondents to provide feedback on specific areas that the Applicant wished to receive feedback, but also allowed space for general feedback where respondents were free to comment on any aspect of the proposals.

The feedback form questions linked to the information within the PEIR, and detail contained on the exhibition boards. This was designed to assist the respondent with providing information about the topics that were being asked about.

There were an array of responses, expressing support concern and indecision toward the proposals. Of the positive comments received, themes that arose included the importance of meeting Net Zero targets and an acknowledgement of the threat of climate change.

The main concerns outlined by local residents related to the impact on agricultural farming and food security. Additionally, local residents were concerned about the size of the proposed solar farm and whether noise and vibration during implementation and operation could be heard from their properties. Some respondents also felt that local biodiversity and ecology could be negatively affected by the changing land use. The final main concern

surrounded the appearance of the solar farm, with some respondents being concerned that the value of their homes would be affected.

The breakdown below demonstrates the various ways through which feedback was collated from respondents. The virtual exhibition form proved effective as consultees who were unable to attend the exhibition events in person were able to provide their feedback on the proposals digitally.

Online Feedback Forms	Hard Copy Feedback Forms
29	35

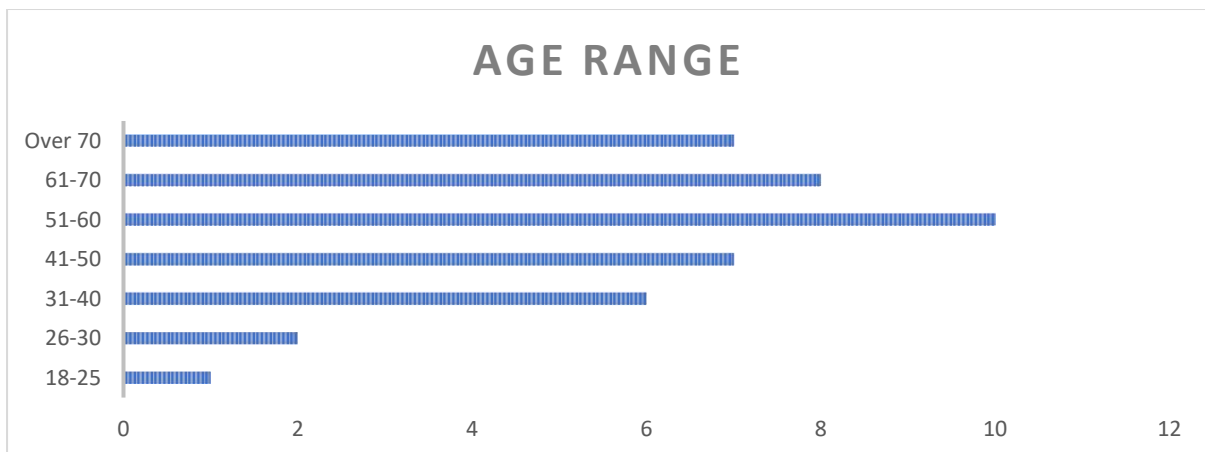
Consultees who were unable to complete the feedback form at the consultation event were able to take the form away and return via freepost.

The feedback received from all feedback forms has been collated, analysed and summarised in the following pages. Each question from the feedback form has been dealt with separately and both qualitative and quantitative feedback has been assessed below.

RESPONSE SUMMARY – DEMOGRAPHICS

In total, 54 feedback forms were completed, either online, at an exhibition, or returned via freepost. As can be seen on the maps below, the majority of respondents live within close proximity to the site.

Of those that answered the question, the highest level of response was from those aged between 51 and 60. Although, there is a spread of ages from 18, through to over 70.



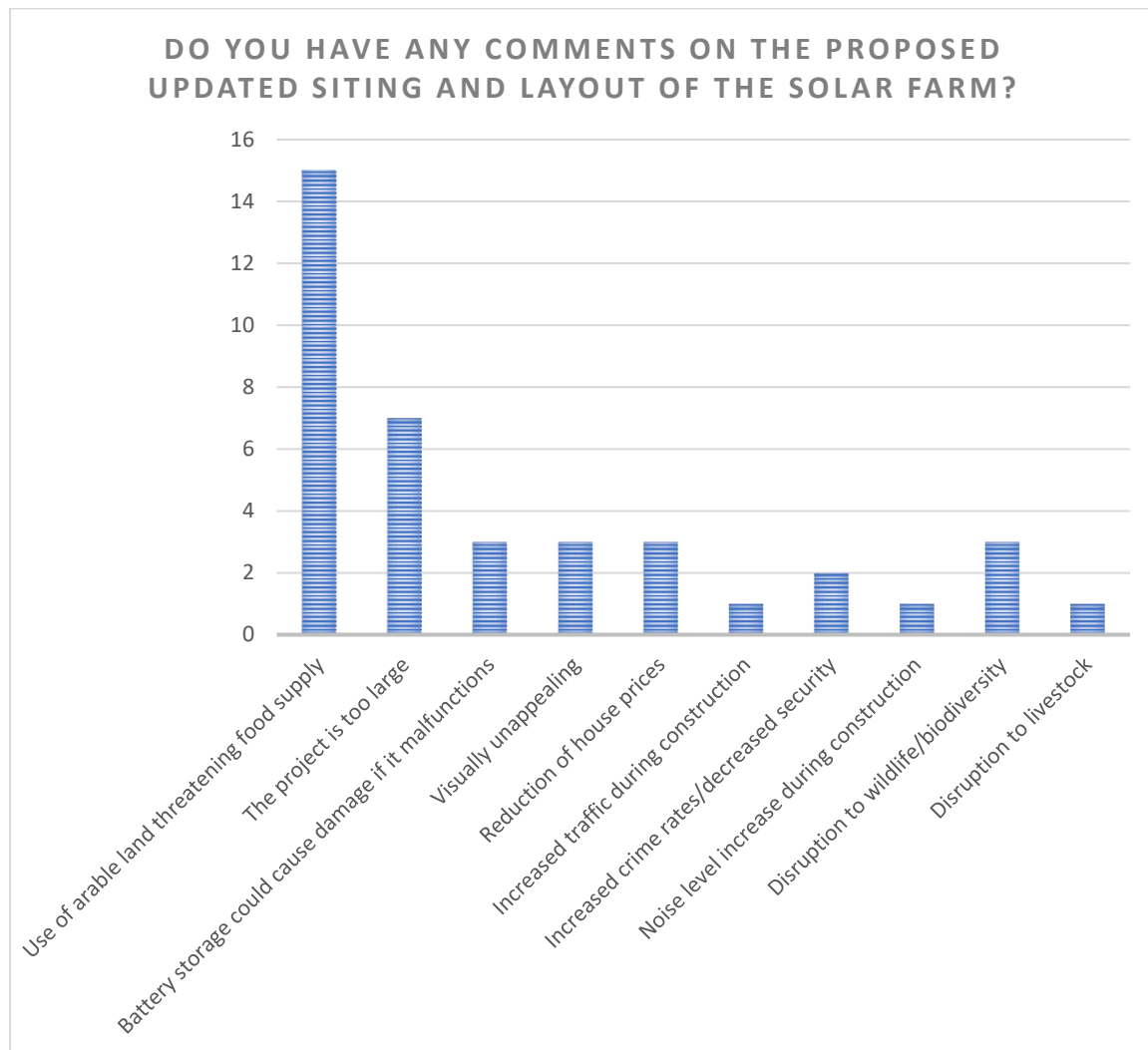
RESPONSE SUMMARY – PROJECT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 - Do you have any comments on the proposed updated siting and layout of the solar farm?

This question allowed for local residents to outline how they felt about the refined proposals when it came to siting and layout. All of those who filled out the hard copy or online feedback forms answered this question, which provided us with a widespread outcome with the comments provided. As displayed in the graph below, the main concern for members of the public was the use of arable land to build the solar farm on. The key reason behind this concern was the possibility of food insecurity due to taking this land out of commission and

instead into commission for the solar farm. Along the same lines were comments from residents believing that the project was too large for the area, and that it would be visually unappealing for those living in residences nearby.

During construction, the main concerns on the siting and layout of the solar farm related to increased traffic in the area. Some of those who filled out the feedback form believed that when the solar farm is being constructed, there could be noise from those installing the solar panels, as well as the delivery lorries carrying equipment.



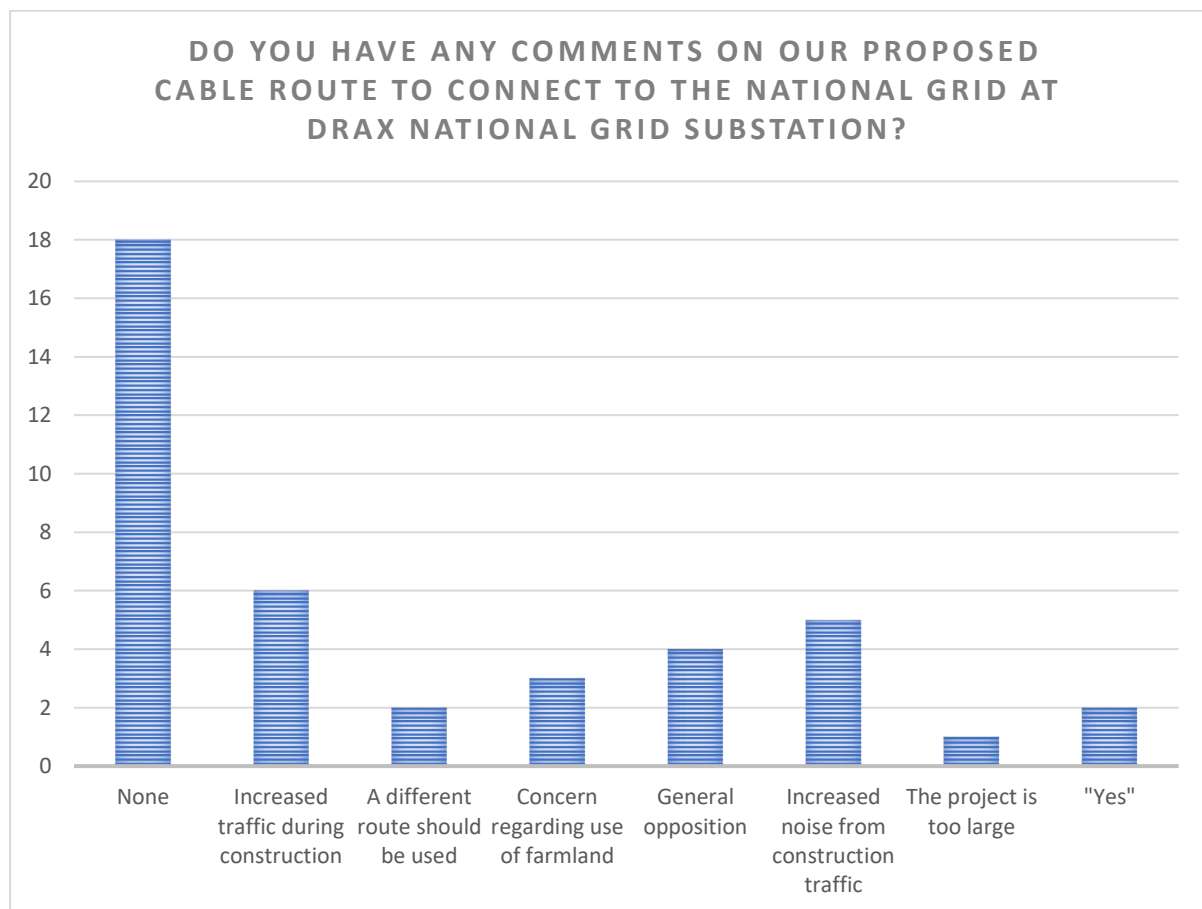
The word cloud on the following page consists of all responses to this question, with the larger words being the ones that occurred the most often. Similarly to the graph, agriculture and the changing land use was a common issue. Of the residents had concerns that possible toxicity could make its way into the soil if the battery energy storage system was to malfunction, this is represented in the words “poisonous”, “toxic” and “gases”. Some of those who left comments raised concerns but did have a general understanding and appreciation for the importance of the project in tackling climate change. This is represented by the words “good” and “future” as seen in the word cloud.

Question 2. Do you have any comments on our proposed cable route to connect to the national grid at Drax National Grid Substation?

This question allowed for us to get some more specific responses regarding the route to connect the solar farm to the National Grid. This question did generate a significant amount of useful feedback, for example, some responses suggested different routes to the substation.

A significant amount of responses echoed the previous question, such as concerns surrounding traffic, as well as concerns regarding the use of farmland.

The largest proportion of those who filled out this question of the feedback form had no comments to make about the cable route. This is extremely positive and a good sign that the refined proposals are viewed positively across the majority of local residents.

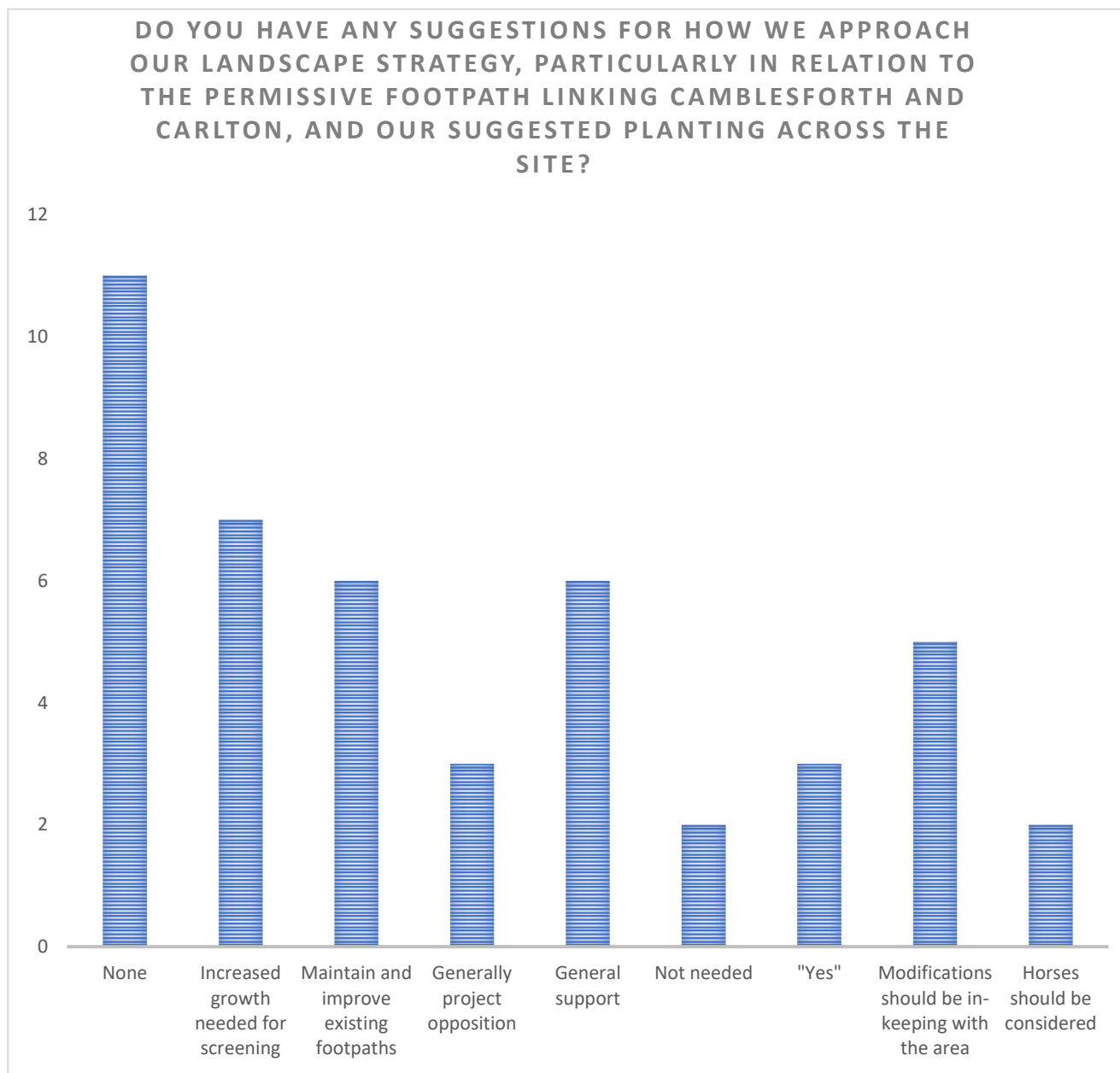


Question 3. Do you have any suggestions for how we approach our Landscape Strategy, particularly in relation to the permissive footpath linking Camblesforth and Carlton, and our suggested planting across the site?

This question allowed for and in depth understanding of how residents reacted to the updated landscape strategy associated with this project. A significant proportion (11 people) of those who filled out this question had no suggestions, this is a positive step as there were increased responses to this question when it was asked at the informal consultation.

Of those who had suggestions and submitted them, some suggested increased additional planting was needed for screening, however, we note a fine balance needs to take place as some local residents believed that modifications should be in keeping with the area.

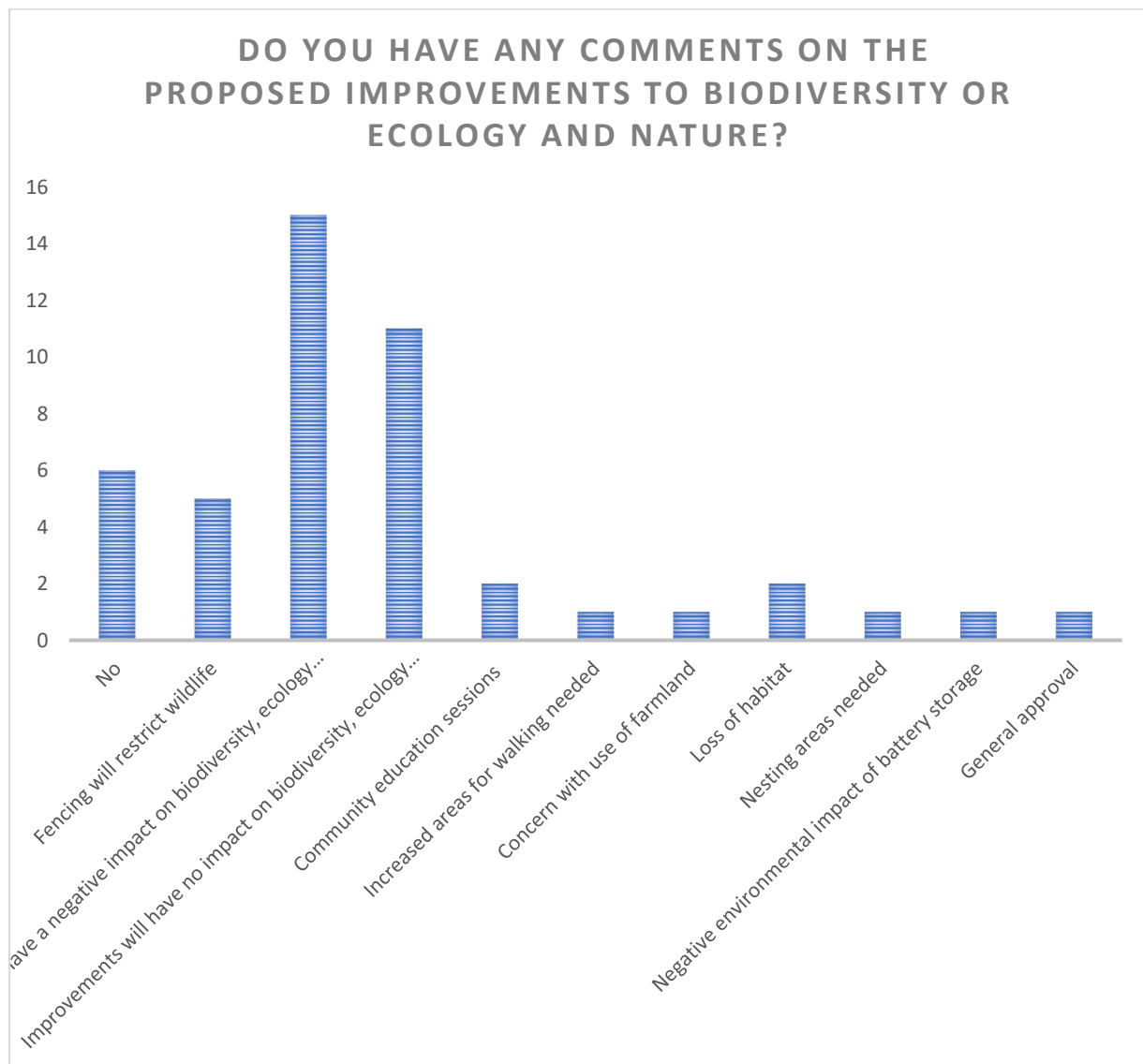
Additionally, some residents noted that the footpaths are used by both walkers and also horses. Therefore, any screening that takes place should be suitable for those using the footpaths on horseback as well.



Question 4. Do you have any comments on the proposed improvements to biodiversity or ecology and nature?

Question 4 yielded similar results to the above question on landscaping and planting. Local residents asserted that biodiversity and nature were extremely important to them, living rurally. There should be a careful balance struck between ensuring that fencing successfully shields those living closest to the development, but also ensuring that wildlife is able to access the area. 11 of those who filled out the feedback form believed that the project would not have a negative impact on the local biodiversity. 15 people were concerned that this project could have a negative impact on biodiversity ecology and nature, reasons for this included the possible negative environmental impacts if the battery storage most malfunction and also the possible loss of habitat during the projects construction.

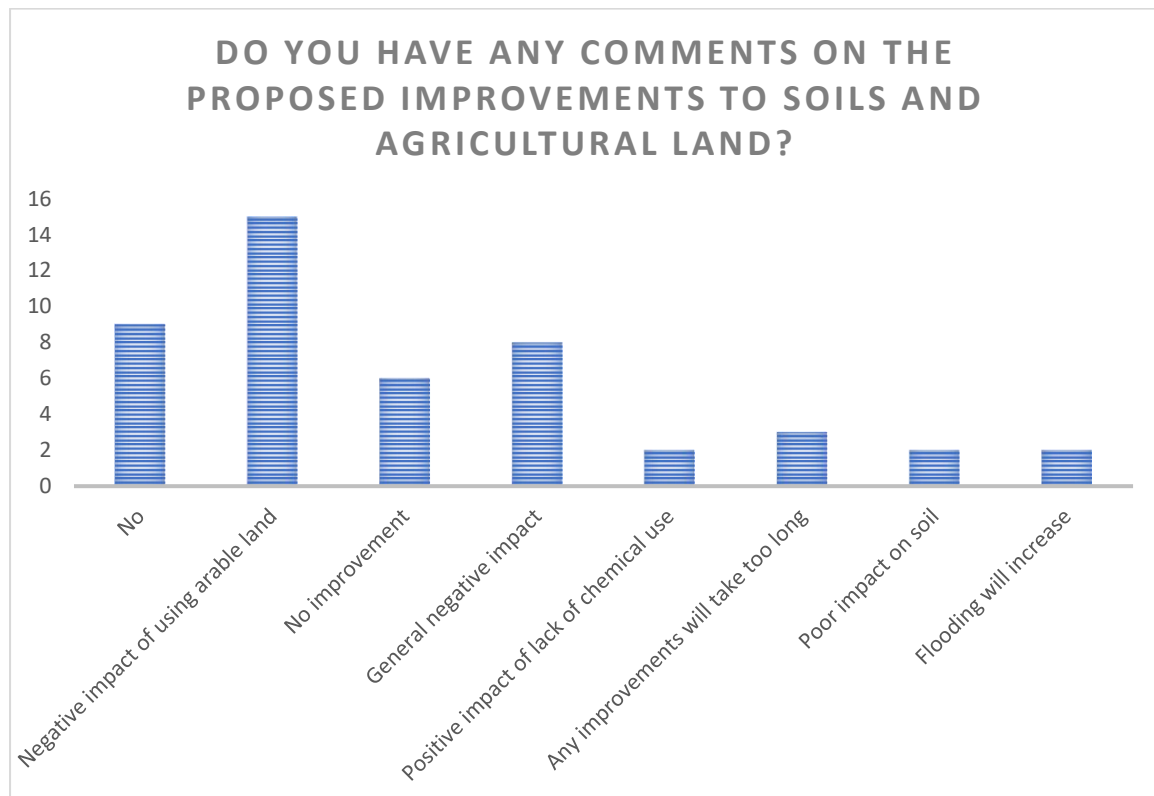
Other residents saw the project as an opportunity to improve the area to increase biodiversity. 2 residents suggested community education sessions where they could learn about the local environment, identifying that this was an opportunity that was not currently available in the area. Another resident suggested implementing nesting boxes around the outskirts of the project boundary as a way to encourage local wildlife to the area.



Question 5. Do you have any comments on the proposed improvements to soils and agricultural land?

This question saw no comment from 9 people, which suggests that there is little concern either way on this aspect of the proposals. Of those who did provide a comment, a majority shared concerns over the use of arable land, a common theme across many questions on the feedback form.

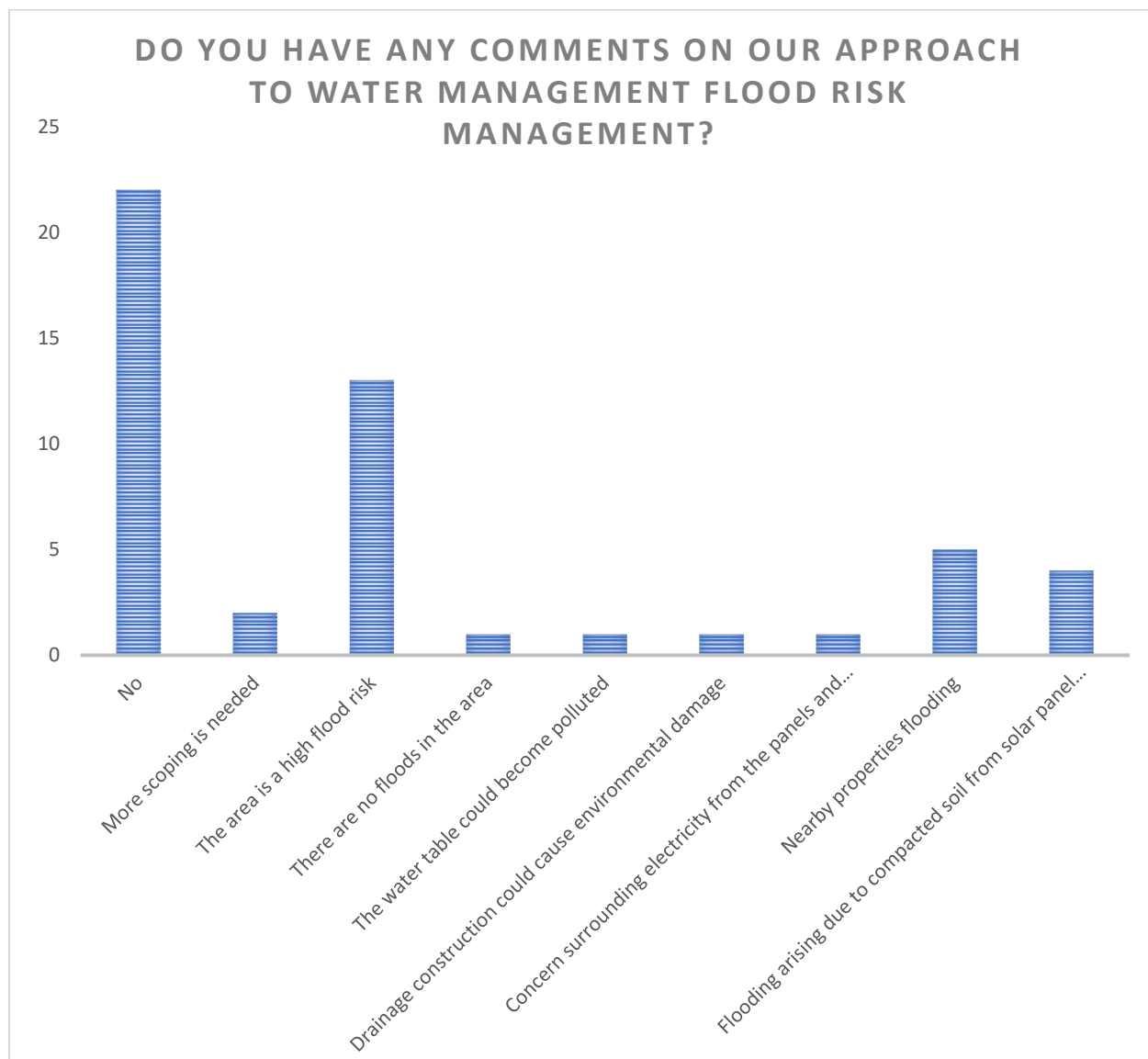
There were a range of neutral responses, such as 6 people believing that there would be no change compared with the current site conditions, and an additional 1 person suggesting that the proposed improvements would not have any improvement on the area as a whole.



Question 6. Do you have any comments on our approach to water management flood risk management?

This question was less engaged with than the rest. The general opinion shared by those who filled out this question hinted towards a large acceptance on the projects approach to water management and flooding, with 22 people making no comment.

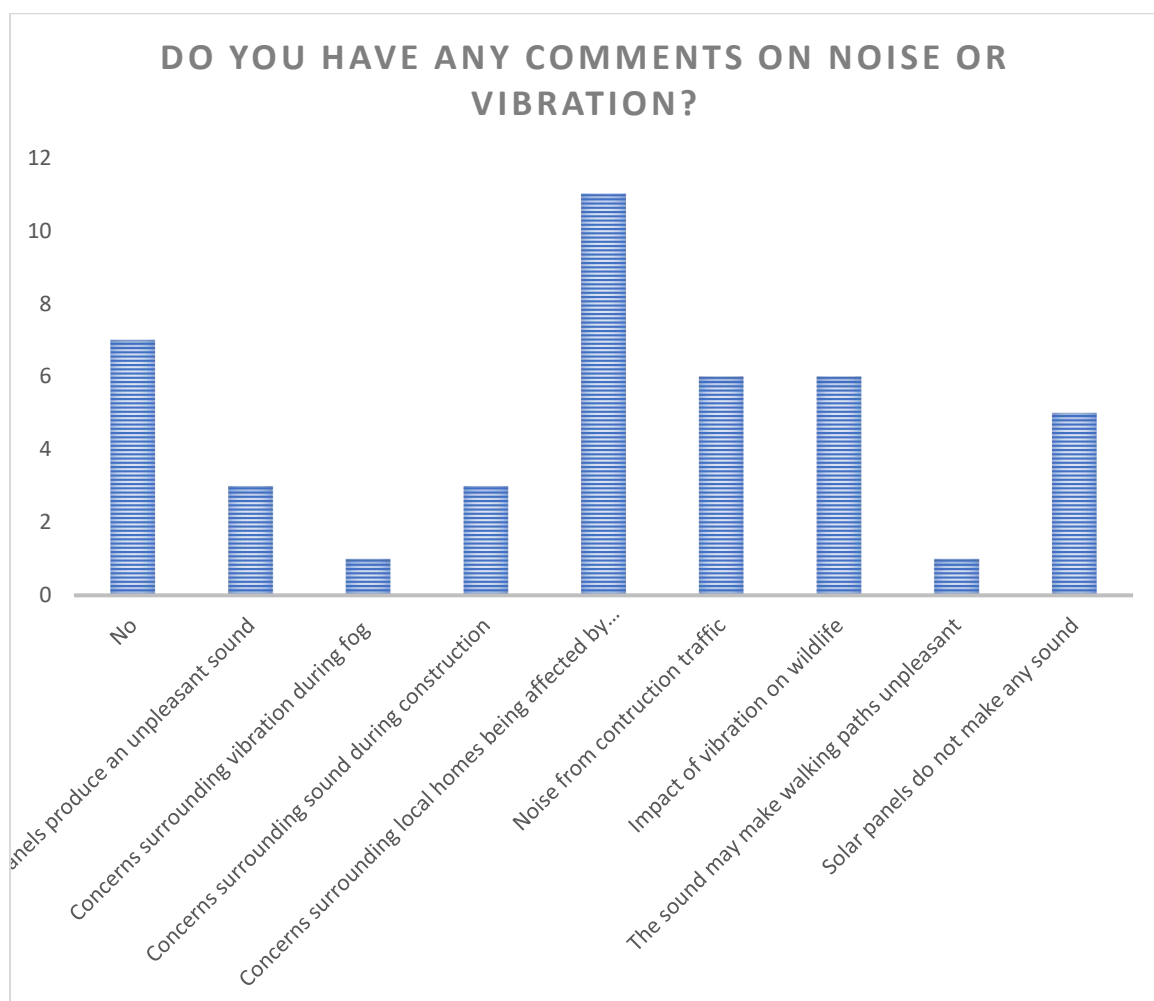
However, some of the feedback was quite mixed when it came to those reflecting on the state of flooding and flood defences in the area. 13 people believed that the area was of a high flood risk, raising concerns that the solar farm could cause further negative impacts on flooding. On the other hand, one participant argued that flooding is not an issue in this area, therefore this wasn't an issue that should need to be considered by the project team. There were additional concerns raised by local residents who bordered the development that their homes may be at a higher risk of flooding as a result of the implementation of the solar farm.



Question 7. Do you have any comments on noise or vibration?

This question received a range of responses across how noise could be an issue throughout the construction and completion process of the solar farm. The main concern for those living in homes bordering the development was that noise during construction and then vibration from the panels could be heard from their homes. Of the 11 people this applied to, two people noted that they worked from home and they worried about being able to hear noise whilst they're working.

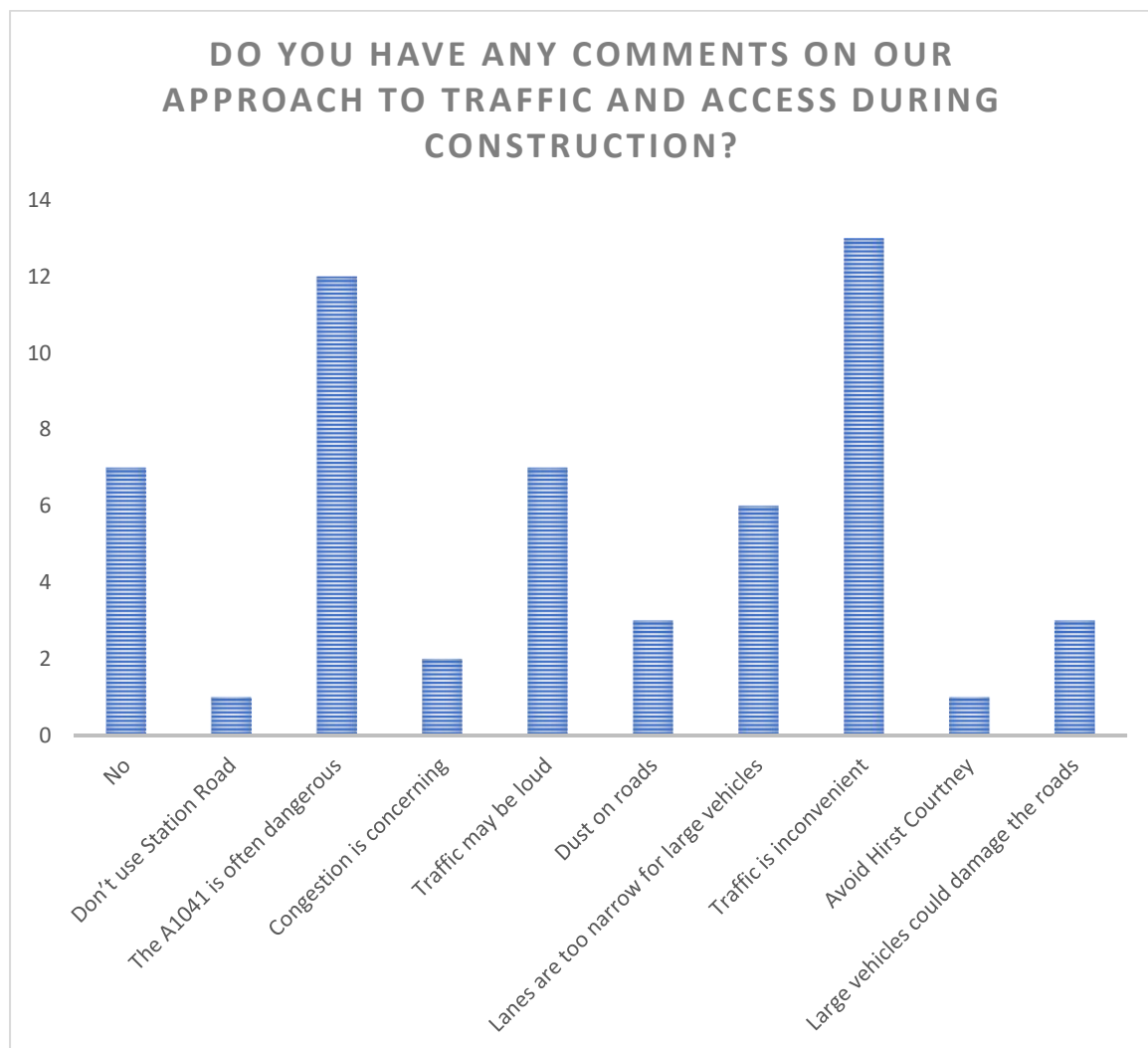
For those who weren't living directly next to the development, the main concerns were the impacts on primarily on the villages of Hirst Courney and West Bank, either through continuous audible vibration and traffic during construction, and the impact of possible vibration on local wildlife. Going against the general theme of these responses, 5 respondents argued that solar panels do not make any sound when in operation therefore this is not an issue.



Question 8. Do you have any comments on our approach to traffic and access during construction?

There was a significant amount of very useful feedback relating to our approach to traffic and access during construction of the project. For example, there were some responses detailing what roads were inappropriate and how would be best to receive deliveries without going on country lanes.

A further prominent theme was that residents were worried that the traffic and access will be inconvenient to them when they're trying to access the roads. 13 people noted that traffic is inconvenient especially on the smaller country lanes, and three people raised concerns that there could be dust on the road which could cause damage to their cars.



Question 9. Do you have any thoughts on how the project could provide community benefit for local communities?

The following are an overview of different submissions on how the project could provide community benefit for the area:

“We have 3 projects currently requiring funding our beautiful village hall needs a make over as does the cricket pavilion. We also need urgent repairs to the full length of the cemetery”

“Those within a certain radius of the plot should be given cheaper electricity tariffs or a payment as compensation for the environmental change as a yearly payment”

“No. Camela Lane Solar provides substantial amount that is adequate for Camblesforth already.”

“Build Camblesforth a new village hall”

“Camblesforth Chapel needs refurbishing badly. Perhaps it could be combined with a community centre which the village lacks. The lane at the back of Camblesforth hall, which is used very much by walkers dog walkers pram pushes and runners could be paved/improved.”

“Reduction in electricity bills. Local road improvements, general landscaping.”

“You could provide an energy subsidy to local residents. The current grants look very difficult to apply for!”

“Local councils will no doubt be offered incentives for local communities but living as we do, outside the villages, little will benefit me and my neighbours. Donations to Burn, which is the other side of the airfield, would not greatly benefit us. Perhaps supply of high speed broadband to Hagg Bush Lane residents would be a positive move, or indeed hard surfacing the track to our residences.”

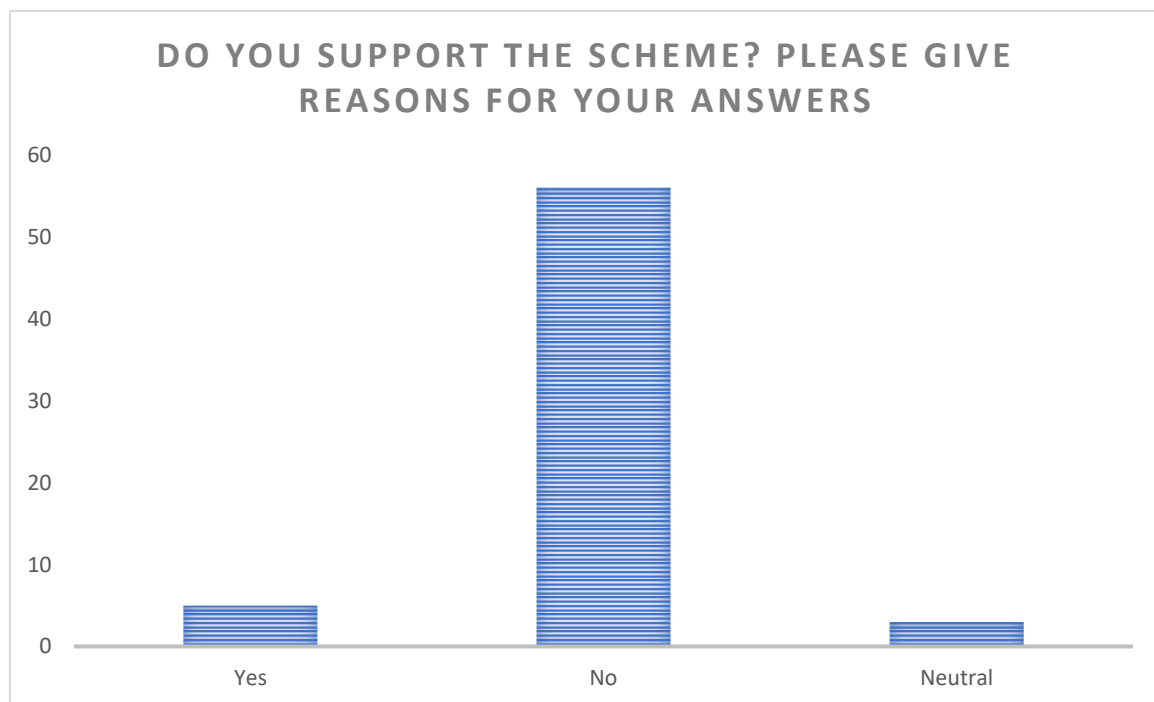
“If it goes ahead, then I would like to think you could look at co tributing towards a Playground for the children in Carlton. The current playground is in a poor state. In Camblesforth perhaps you could look at contributing to the Chapel as it is needing windows replaced and could benefit from some modernising. There is no village hall in Camblesforth so the Chapel could be a good place for the community if it was in good repair.”

“This project needs to enhance the local bridleway network in the area, offering safe off road riding to the hundreds of horses in the area, more screening to hide the horrific site of the huge, ugly panels. Move them away from the housing in West Bank, increase the number of drainage dykes, & improve the drainage in the fields. Improve all rights of way, build a nature reserve for the impacted wildlife.”

Question 10. Do you support the scheme? Please give reasons for your answers.

The majority of participants from the online and hard copy feedback forms opposed the development, with five supporting and three neutral. For those who opposed the scheme, the majority opposed on the grounds that arable land, previously used for food production, was going to be used to house the solar farm. Of the more neutral opinions, the main reason for those remaining neutral was that the location of the site was not ideal, yet they recognised that climate change needed immediate action. This was something that was echoed across the main supporters, who stated that there is a need for immediate work towards meeting net zero goals if Britain is to become a climate change superpower.

A full overview of the comments can be seen below the graph:



“Yes” comments:

“I understand the proximity to Drax’s is important and solar is a preferred energy source. I am cautiously supportive of the scheme and hope the care for the environment shown in the consultation is realised if the development goes ahead.”

“I support the scheme provided it is fully screened from village housing”

“I support this scheme because it’s important to protect our planet and move to more renewable energy”

“No” comments:

“No. I am totally against using good arable land to site any solar projects. I believe brownfield sites should be used for such projects. For example, decommissioned power stations such as Eggborough should be used.”

“I do not support the scheme, it is too big for our area. The damage to our wildlife, biodiversity and loss of prime farm land will be enormous. The access during construction is very poor and will be a constant danger to residents at that time. Battery storage is still a major fire risk and noise from the inverters can be intrusive”

“Absolutely not. Get rich quick scheme. Do you not think that living within the 'Power Triangle' of Drax, Eggborough & Ferrybridge that we might know this Country's Energy System? Your project is a drop in the ocean for what this Country needs for renewable energy. You are scam artists and you will be exposed. Get rich quick schemes that exploit farmers and pay them a pittance. Disgrace. YOU ARE NOT WANTED and I sincerely hope this project falls flat on it's behind”

“Neutral” comments:

“I'm neutral - I don't like the ideas of losing the fields to solar panels. But until its built and finished its hard to say and we do have to do something to provide all this energy we consume”

EMAILS

Email enquiries	Email feedback (from residents and S47 stakeholders)
31	19

We received 31 email enquiries asking for information relating to the project, including responses from two Parish Councils, Keir Mather MP and 17 from residents.

The majority of feedback received from email responses focused on similar themes which reflected the response received from Hirst Courtney and West Bank Parish Council plus six other respondents who listed the following issues as their key concerns:

- Loss of good quality agricultural land
- Detrimental change to the character of open fields and farmland
- Health & Safety risks posed by the battery storage and long term as a result of noise and visual impact
- Cumulative impact alongside the 2 other solar farms proposed
- Risk of encouraging further crime in the area
- Potential negative effect on house prices
- Alongside various projects locally expected around the same time, there will be a huge impact in terms of traffic
- Negative impact on natural biodiversity and habitats
- Better alternatives in terms of location and more efficient energy production
- Increased risk of flooding to an already high risk flood area
- Loss of public access routes

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

As previously noted, the key issues reflect the feedback received from the initial consultation phase in 2022. Many of the responses were specific to a respondent's house or land and were therefore relevant to individuals.

Further detail can be found in the specific questions tables in this document, and in the feedback database, which contains all comments made.

There were a high number of respondents stating that they support the principle of utilising renewable energy to help combat the climate crisis, however several noted that they did not support the use of solar energy generation in this location.

Aside from general support or opposition to the principle of the development, key themes and issues raised through the feedback included:

Impact on agricultural land – Food security: One of the most commonly noted themes throughout all feedback provided was related to the loss of high-quality agricultural land and the subsequent impact on the region/country's ability to achieve its food security ambitions.

There was a general consensus that brownfield land should be prioritised and that the scale of this proposals (see below) on agricultural land, and the cumulative impacts of this alongside other planned and consented developments in the local area meant that the impact on food security was unsustainable.

Scale of the project and setting: As referenced in relation to the impact on agricultural land, several respondents also made comment about the scale of the proposals being too large for the local area. The geographic spread of the development across land in this location was felt to be too great. General comments made statements relating to the impact a scheme of this size would have on the local area, affecting visual amenity, house prices, traffic and the local environment.

The cumulative impact of this development alongside other local existing industrial activity (such as Drax Power Station) consented and planned renewable schemes in close proximity, and other development such as housing was noted by various respondents concerned over the scale of the scheme in the context of its setting.

Traffic and impact on local road network: Numerous comments and concerns were noted in relation to the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the local road network. Existing traffic routes were deemed to be inadequate and residents living close to the site raised concerns about additional large vehicle traffic on the existing road network.

Impact on biodiversity and ecology: Whilst several respondents noted the positive effects on biodiversity the proposals could have, numerous comments and concerns were raised in relation to the potential impacts to local wildlife and the impact of the 'loss' of green fields on local habitats. Erecting fencing and materials across the area was noted as a concern for wildlife on the site.

Visual and landscape: One of the most common 'general' comments made by respondents related to the visual impact these proposals could have on the local area. The transition from green fields to areas covered in solar panels was a concern for many respondents, especially in a landscape that had previously been industrial, but was now changing as coal mining and the larger power stations were disappearing. Concerns and discussion around the visual impact on specific properties and proximity to local housing was regularly noted. Suggestions or concerns about the use of screening to 'hide' the development was also commented on. Numerous respondents felt that it was not possible to address the visual impact concerns due to the scale of the development. Other specific concerns relating to visual amenity focused on the potential for glint and glare to affect local properties or passers-by.

Impact on residents and on the value of homes: Linked to the above points, respondents highlighted concerns over the impacts of traffic, loss of visual amenity, impact to agricultural

economy and activity and various other factors such as noise and construction impacts as reasons why they believed that house prices would be affected.

A high proportion of respondents that raised concerns about this point live close to the proposed site and made comments relating directly to their own property or land.

Community Benefit: Whilst several respondents noted that they did not feel that any community benefit could be achieved from this development, various suggestions and feedback was provided.

One of the most common themes in this respect was the potential for the development to make improvements to the local public rights of way through and around the site. Several specific comments on walking/cycling routes that could be improved were made and a general consensus was that if non-motorised links between villages and to and from Selby could be improved, it would be seen as a local benefit.

Other popular requests for community benefit included a reduction in energy bills, supporting local jobs and the economy, engagement with local organisations to make improvements and education opportunities.

Other environmental considerations: A range of other specific points, comments, queries and feedback included environmental concerns and issues relating to flood risk and drainage, noise, pollution and health considerations (such as radiation or impacts to wellbeing through proximity to the scheme). These were either general comments or queries, or very specific to the respondent's own property.