

Chimmens Solar Farm

Statement of Community Involvement



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced for a proposed 49.9MW solar farm and associated infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on lands at Chimmens Solar Farm, Mussenden Lane, Kent DA3 8NJ.
- 1.2. Renewable Energy Systems (RES) Ltd (the Applicant) has appointed Copper Consultancy, a specialist infrastructure communications company, to lead on stakeholder and community engagement. Copper Consultancy worked closely with RES throughout the engagement process to plan and carry out all engagement, manage correspondence, process all feedback and report on all comments made during the consultation period.
- 1.3. The SCI has been prepared by Copper Consultancy and the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development. As well as detailing the stakeholders and community the Applicant has consulted with during the pre-application period, this SCI also details the various consultation methods used.
- 1.4. The SCI goes on to summarise feedback from stakeholders and the community and how this feedback has been taken into account regarding the design of the Proposed Development.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) accompanies the planning application for the proposed 49.9MW Chimmens Solar Farm and associated infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on lands between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, within Sevenoaks District Council (the “Application Site”). The planning application is for construction and operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment, necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains (the “Proposed Development”). Please refer to Figure 4 and Figure 5 of the Planning Application Drawings for the layout of the Proposed Development.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 3.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Copper Consultancy and the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.

- 3.2. Conducting an early and transparent pre-application public consultation is consistent with the guidance within the NPPF (2023). Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

- 3.3. The NPPF goes on to state that:

“[Local Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.”

- 3.4. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 ensures Local Authorities develop strategies to engage the local community in the planning process. These strategies must be set out in a document called a ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ and must be aimed at all sections of society - including identified ‘hard to reach’ groups - and encourage engagement in the planning process. The aim is to encourage ‘ownership’ of the planning process by the community.

- 3.5. As a result, this SCI (for the Proposed Development) also fulfils a formal recommendation of Sevenoaks District Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), by documenting how people have been provided with an opportunity to feed into the design process of a scheme.

- 3.6. The consultation and engagement activity undertaken adheres to the guidelines and principles of Sevenoaks District Council’s revised Statement of Community Involvement¹, which was published in June 2020.

- 3.7. In addition to the above, the Applicant recognises that local people can make a valuable contribution to the proposals by offering their local knowledge and raising issues that may not have been considered by the Applicant or project team, in many cases resulting in a stronger proposal.

- 3.8. Consistent with advice in the LPA’s Statement of Community Involvement, this document forms a consultation supporting statement that summarises the consultation activities undertaken by the Applicant, a summary of comments received, and issues raised, and how the Applicant has had regard to these comments.

¹ https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/136/statement_of_community_involvement

3.9. The approach to community consultation as presented in this SCI reflects the LPA's advice. Throughout the pre-application public consultation, the Applicant has:

- Invited comments at a time when they can inform the process;
- Provided sufficient information to describe the subject matter of the consultation;
- Given notice of consultations in advance;
- Clearly described how to submit comments and emphasised that comments made were not representations to the determining authority (Sevenoaks District Council) and that there would be the opportunity for representations to be made to the determining authority once the planning application was submitted; and
- Considered the representations received prior to submitting the planning application.

4. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

4.1. This section details the key local stakeholders the Applicant identified and engaged with during the pre-application public consultation process. Prior to the start of the consultation, Copper Consultancy and the Applicant undertook detailed desktop research to develop a comprehensive understanding of the key stakeholders to engage with during pre-application public consultation. This research involved identifying local stakeholders located around the site of the Proposed Development.

4.2. The stakeholder groups identified included:

- The local population around the Application Site and access route; including Horton Kirby, Fawkham and the surrounding area; and
- Locally elected political representatives from the following parish councils and wards:
 - Horton Kirby & South Darent Parish Council;
 - Fawkham Parish Council;
 - Farningham Parish Council;
 - West Kingsdown Parish Council;
 - Ward councillors for Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darent ward and Fawkham & West Kingsdown ward, Sevenoaks District Council; and
 - Kent County councillors for Sevenoaks North & Darent Valley and Sevenoaks Rural North East.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1. The pre-application public consultation began on 12th of May 2023. During the pre-application public consultation, a range of communication methods were used to provide information about the Proposed Development and ensure that the local community had the opportunity to provide their feedback. As well as a dedicated phone number and email address for getting in contact with the project team, the team used a range of communication methods as described below.

5.2. Early engagement (May 2023)

5.2.1. Introductory letter to Member of Parliament

On 12th of May 2023, the Applicant wrote to the Member of Parliament for Sevenoaks, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in the near future. The letter also invited them to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix A.

5.2.2. Introductory letter to County and District Councillors

On 12th of May 2023, the Applicant wrote to the Sevenoaks District Council representatives for Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth ward and Fawkham & West Kingsdown ward, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in the near future. The letter also invited the parties to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix B.

5.2.3. Introductory letter to Parish Councils

On 12th of May 2023, the Applicant wrote to the parish councils of Horton Kirby and South Darenth, Fawkham, Farningham and West Kingsdown, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in the near future. The letter also invited the parties to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix C.

5.2.4. Introductory letter to nearest neighbours to the site

On 26th of May 2023, the Applicant sent a newsletter to 54 properties to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in the near future. The 54 properties were chosen due to their close proximity to the proposed site. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix D.

5.2.5. Website

On 31st of May 2023, a project website was launched <https://www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk/> containing introductory information on the Proposed Development, details of the upcoming exhibition, as well as contact details for the Applicant project team.

5.3. Pre-exhibition newsletter and advertising (June 2023)

5.3.1. Exhibition newsletter to nearest residents, parish councils, district councillors and county councillors

On 26th of June 2023, the Applicant sent a tailored exhibition newsletter to the 54 nearest properties to the Proposed Development; parish councils; district councillors; and county councillors to provide them with further details about the proposed solar farm and inform them of an upcoming public exhibition. The newsletter also contained contact details for the project team and the address for the project website where more information was available. In addition, the newsletter invited

them to a closed session, from 11am - 1pm, before the main public exhibition, to discuss any questions or concerns they had. A copy of the newsletter can be found at Appendix E.

5.3.2. Newsletter to local residents

On 26th of June, the Applicant sent a newsletter to 899 properties identified within the consultation zone shown below to inform them they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and to provide details of the upcoming public exhibition. The newsletter also contained contact details for the project team and the address for the project website, where more information was available. The consultation zone included all those identified as potentially being impacted by either the solar farm or the access route. A copy of the newsletter can be found at Appendix F.

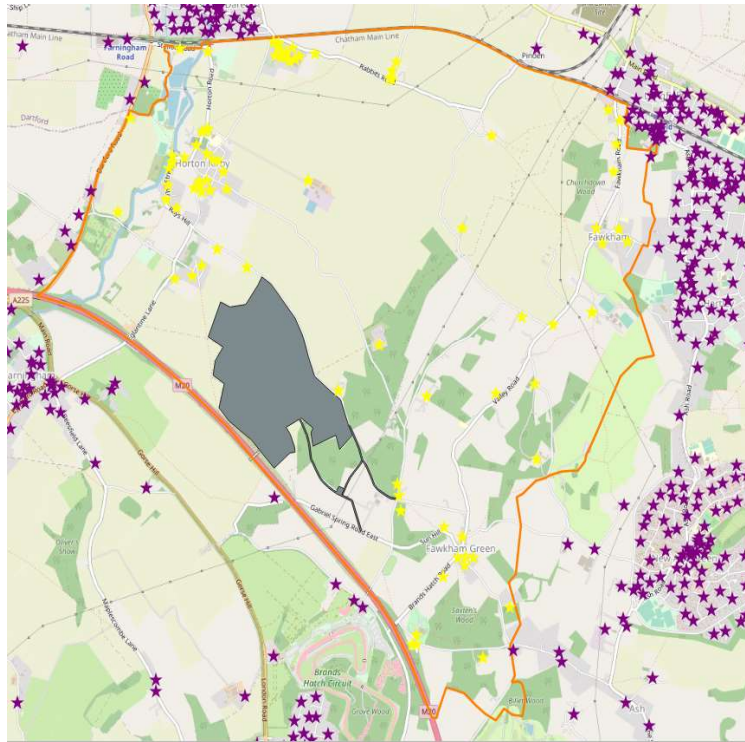


Figure 1: Consultation zone

5.3.3. Pre-exhibition advertising

The Applicant placed an advertisement in the Sevenoaks Chronicle, on 29th June 2023 for a week, to inform the wider community of the public exhibitions. A copy of the advertisement can be found at Appendix H. The advert was also placed by parish clerks on their respective social media pages and parish council websites. An article was also published in Kent Online, after a journalist reached out to the project team and asked for details of the Proposed Development. A copy of the article can be found at Appendix G.

5.3.4. Pre-exhibition meeting

On 28th June 2023, the Applicant met with representatives of the parishes of Horton Kirby & South Darenth, Fawkham, Farningham and West Kingsdown via Microsoft Teams. Details of the project were provided and there was extended time of discussion for those present to ask questions and share any concerns. Feedback shared during this meeting is included in Section 6.

5.3.5. Introductory email to local ramblers group

On 3rd July 2023, the Applicant wrote to representatives from Kent Ramblers, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and enclosing a newsletter regarding the upcoming public exhibition. The letter also invited these parties to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the email can be found at Appendix I and a copy of the newsletter can be found at Appendix H.

5.4. Consultation (July 2023)

5.4.1. Project website

On 10th July 2023, the Chimmens Solar Farm project website (<https://www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk/>) was updated to contain full information about the Proposed Development, including all consultation materials that were presented at the exhibition, and an online comments form for feedback. The project website is updated regularly including when the planning submission is made, to include links to all planning application documentation and information on how people can comment on the application. A snapshot of the project website can be found at Appendix I.

5.4.2. Pre-exhibition closed session

On 10th July 2023, the Applicant met with parish council representatives and nearby residents ahead of the public exhibition at 2pm, to discuss the proposal.

5.4.3. Public exhibition

A public exhibition took place between 2pm and 7pm on 10th July at Fawkham Village Hall. The exhibition contained detailed boards of all project information and the project team were on hand to discuss the Proposed Development, answer questions and explain how to provide formal feedback. In addition, copies of the event materials were available to take away, as well as the comments form.

The boards provided at the public exhibition were also published on the project website at <https://www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk/> from 10th July 2023. A copy of the exhibition boards can be found at Appendix J.

For those unable to attend the event and without internet access, hard copies of all the exhibition materials were available upon request.

A comments form was provided to encourage feedback from attendees about the project design, potential community benefits and renewable energy in general. The comments form was available at the exhibition; could be requested via the project contact details; and could also be completed online. A copy of the comments form can be found at Appendix K.

5.4.4. Follow Up Newsletter to residents of Saxon Place

On 20th July 2023, the Applicant sent a follow up newsletter to residents of Saxon Place, a housing estate close to the Proposed Development, informing them of the project and advising on how to find out more and submit feedback. The follow up newsletter was sent after one of the residents of Saxon Place commented at the public exhibition that not all of his neighbours had received the newsletter described above. A copy of the newsletter can be found at Appendix L.

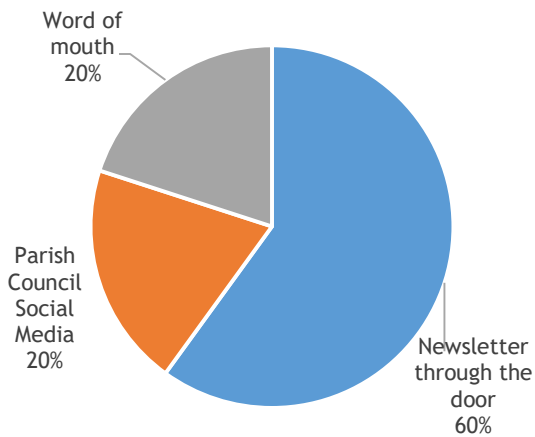
6. FEEDBACK RECEIVED DURING CONSULTATION

6.1. The following section summarises feedback received about the Proposed Development. This includes:

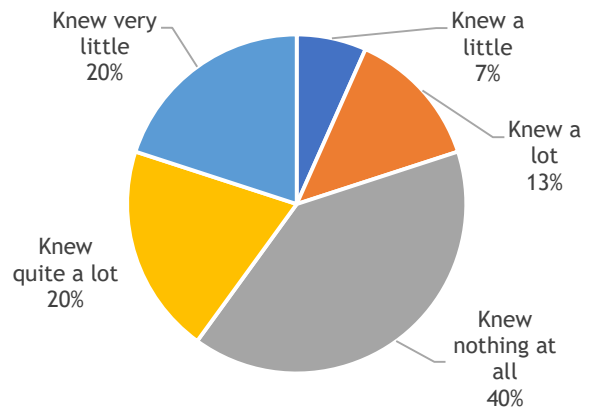
- 16 comments forms;
- Summary of comments made at a meeting with parish councils;
- Summary of comments made during the consultation exhibition; and
- An email from a resident containing feedback on the proposal.

Question 1

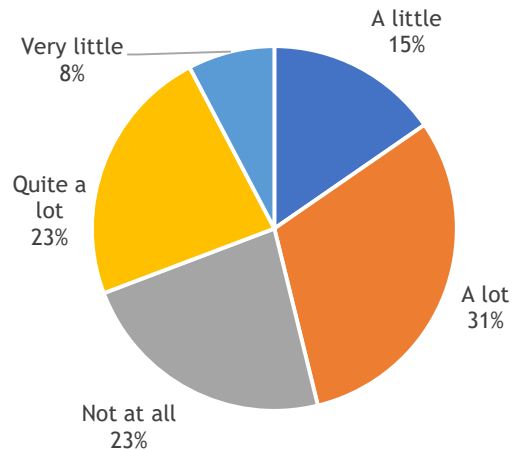
Q1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibitions?



Q1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm?

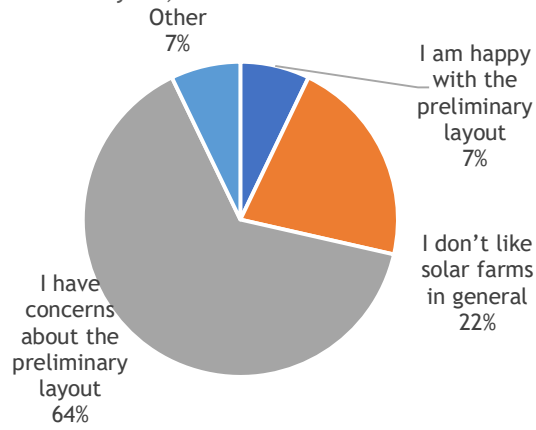


Q 1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding of the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm?



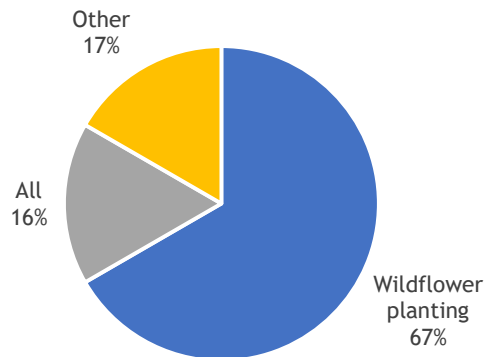
Question 2

2.1 What do you think about the preliminary design layout of Chimmens Solar Farm, including the site layout, location and access route?



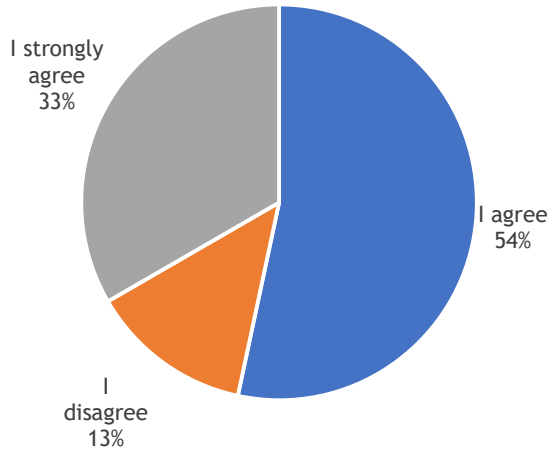
Question 3

Q3.2 The Chimmens Solar Farm, if consented, has potential to deliver significant biodiversity enhancement. Which biodiversity enhancement measures would you like to see?

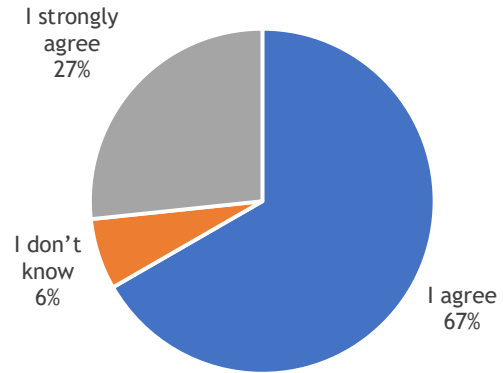


Question 4

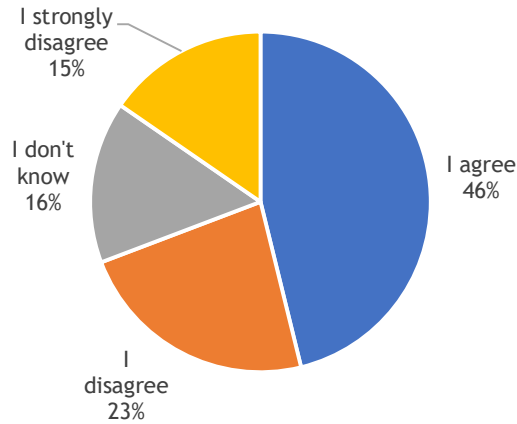
Q4.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?



Q4.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?



Q4.4 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to cut energy bills?



6.2. Addressing Feedback

The Applicant believes in meaningful and effective consultation, to facilitate constructive dialogue with stakeholders and the community. All feedback received through the pre-application consultation activities is considered, as part of the iterative design process. A summary of the feedback received, and the Applicant's response is below.

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
<p>Consultation event</p> <p>One respondent comments that they feel it may have been more appropriate to have held the consultation event in Horton Kirby rather than in Fawkham. Another comments that they would have preferred a 'town hall' style event, where people were spoken to as a group and would have heard each other's questions and answers.</p>	<p>The Applicant understands the concern regarding the exhibition being held in Fawkham Village Hall. Horton Kirby was the first choice of location for the exhibition. However, when enquiries were made regarding hall hire, there was no availability for a full day booking (due partly to end of term / school holiday events). The venue was required all day due to the setup times required and the closed session in the morning for nearest neighbours and stakeholders.</p> <p>Multiple other venues were considered, and the next best option was Fawkham Village Hall. It is a host parish council and was chosen due to its proximity to the site and its availability.</p> <p>For those unable to make the event, all the materials provided at the event were also made available on the project website. A phone number and email address were also provided on the website, at the event and in the printed newsletter for anyone who wished to ask questions. Feedback could also be supplied through the website, using an online copy of the same feedback form that was provided at the event.</p>
<p>Consultation materials</p> <p>Some respondents express concerns with the consultation materials, commenting that they feel the materials lacked detail in the following areas:</p>	<p>As stated in the consultation materials, the following information gathering and assessments were carried out to inform the planning application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Statement;

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visualisations of the Proposed Development; • Size of the solar farm; • The case for solar power vs. other forms of renewable energy; • Assessment of noise and light pollution; • Manufacturing details of the solar panels; • Job creation as a result of the solar farm; • Other recently consented solar farms in the area; and • Ecological impacts. <p>One respondent comments that they feel the maps used were out of date.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) including a landscape masterplan; • Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP); • Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy; • Ecological Appraisal including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); • Arboricultural Impact Assessment; • Arboricultural Method Statement • Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) and agricultural impact assessment; • Acoustic Impact Assessment; and • Glint and Glare Assessment. <p>These technical assessments, along with photomontages showing the Proposed Development in future year scenarios from selected viewpoints, will be made available at the time of the planning application. The maps provided as part of the consultation materials were taken from the latest Ordnance Survey base-mapping (2023).</p>
<p>Consultation process</p> <p>One respondent comments that they feel the consultation window was too short. Another comments that they feel that the project benefits discussed in the materials will never materialise.</p>	<p>The consultation period (3 weeks) was in line with standard practice for this size of project and consent route. We note that no responses were received after the close of consultation.</p>
<p>Consultation publicity</p> <p>A few respondents comment that they feel RES did not do enough to publicise the consultation, specifically that they think that no information had been posted to residents.</p>	<p>The approach to publicity is described in Section 5 above.</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
<p>Consultation suggestions One respondent requests an in-person briefing for the four properties in Mussenden Farm.</p>	<p>The approach to publicity is described in Section 5 above.</p>
<p>Access route A few respondents express safety concerns regarding the junction on the proposed access route between Scratchers Lane and the A20, noting that this junction and the A20 have had safety concerns in the past. One respondent expresses concern about the impact of construction traffic on local traffic on narrow roads, with another expressing concern that construction traffic may deviate from the access route onto other local roads.</p>	<p>Access to the site has focused on minimising potential traffic disruption during the construction period. At the public consultation event, we heard about existing congestion problems at the village in Horton Kirby. The design of the Proposed Development avoids Horton Kirby village and minimises the use of narrow roads. Our construction traffic access strategy, as identified in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), identifies a suitable delivery route via A20>Scratchers Lane>Three Gates Road and Gabriel Spring Road East. Our planning application includes a CTMP that commits the construction deliveries to the delivery route identified. Furthermore, pre-application consultation advice has been sought from Kent Highways and Highways England and our access strategy is agreeable in principle.</p>
<p>Cumulative development Some respondents express concern regarding the cumulative effect of the project and another local solar farm which has recently been approved, commenting that this amplifies the perceived negative impacts of the Proposed Development, particularly the visual impact. A few respondents comment that issues regarding a local anaerobic digester have decreased their trust in developers.</p>	<p>Solar energy is now one of the most cost-effective ways to get the UK to net-zero carbon emissions and to ensure security of supply. We appreciate not everyone is in favour of solar farms, however, a recent government survey² has found that having been asked their views on the prospect of a solar farm being built in their local area, 81% of respondents said they would be very happy, fairly happy or would not mind. Only 3% were significantly opposed, while 8% felt that a solar farm would not be feasible locally.</p> <p>The planning application has been informed by a Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA), including a cumulative assessment. The Proposed</p>

²<https://solarenergyuk.org/news/public-has-positive-views-of-solar-farms-finds-government-survey/#:~:text=Solar%20Energy%20UK,-Immediate%20release&text=Asked%20their%20views%20on%20the,would%20not%20be%20feasible%20locally.>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>Development has been designed to minimise any potential cumulative impact. The design utilises existing vegetation and includes extensive new planting to reduce potential visibility from local properties.</p>
<p>Location One respondent expresses concern at the proximity of the solar farm to their house, commenting that the buffer between the edge of a solar farm and the nearest properties should be larger.</p>	<p>The site has been chosen as it has good solar irradiation levels, lies outside of any statutory environmental, archaeological and landscape designations and due to its proximity to a viable grid connection.</p> <p>The Proposed Development has been through a detailed design process, and the Applicant has taken account of feedback from the community and stakeholders, as well as the results of site surveys and assessments. This has resulted in a number of changes being made to the design to ensure the solar farm fits sensitively into the existing landscape whilst maximising the low carbon, low cost electricity generation. The design changes made include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including a minimum 100m buffer between residential properties and solar infrastructure; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the north west of the site, a 200m buffer has been achieved between residential properties and the solar infrastructure. • Including a minimum 5m buffer of new native woodland screening on the northern boundary of the site; • Changes to inverter and storage locations to benefit from existing mature native hedgerows so that screening will take effect immediately. <p>As well as appropriate setting back of the solar infrastructure, potential visibility will be reduced by existing trees and hedgerow and</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>proposed new and infill native planting. As well as providing screening, the planting will provide wildlife corridors and vital resources for mammals, birds, and insect species.</p> <p>A Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) provides an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed solar farm on the existing landscape and visual amenity of the site and the surrounding area and accompanies the planning application. A Landscape Masterplan accompanies the LVA and provides detail on where existing vegetation is retained and where we are proposing significant increases in new native woodland, hedgerows and other ecological enhancements which help us achieve significant biodiversity net gain.</p>
<p>Post-operation and future development A few respondents express concern regarding future impacts of the Proposed Development, namely that they fear that the site will not be fully restored at the end of the project lifetime; that the site will become brownfield and used for houses; or that the Proposed Development will expand beyond the red line boundary.</p>	<p>The Proposed Development has been sited and designed to integrate into the surrounding area as sensitively as possible and there will not be a long-term loss of greenfield or greenbelt land as the development is entirely reversible following the 40-year operational phase and can be returned to its former state.</p>
<p>Size A few respondents comment that they feel the Proposed Development is too big.</p>	<p>Unlike older solar farms which benefitted from subsidies, solar farms now need to be larger in order to drive the cost efficiencies needed to keep the cost of electricity low and to meet the government's net zero ambitions.</p>
<p>Agricultural land Some respondents express concern about the location of the Proposed Development, commenting it will reduce the amount of land available for agriculture, negatively impacting UK food security. A few draw attention to the classification of the land as BMV (best and most valuable).</p>	<p>The Proposed Development would not pose a threat to food security. One of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. Already in 2023, we are seeing further effects of climate change. The UK's hottest June on record has caused unprecedented deaths of fish in rivers and disturbed insects and plants, and the world's average temperature reached a new high for the third time in a week.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will help towards tackling climate change and furthermore, is specifically designed to be dual purpose, enabling</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing, and renewable generation.</p> <p>Agricultural land covers between 56% and 70% of UK land. Solar farms in the UK currently³ have a combined capacity of around 15GW which makes up just under 0.1% of land in the UK. By comparison, the total land used by the UK's golf courses is 0.5% and airports is 0.2%. The UK Energy Security Strategy commits to increase the UK's current 14GW of solar capacity by up to 5 times by 2035. If the government meets its target of increasing solar capacity fivefold, ground-mounted solar would cover a total of around just 0.3% of the UK's land surface which is still less than the total land used by the UK's golf courses.</p> <p>Sheep farming provides employment, supports rural economies and can produce a much more diverse ecological mosaic across the site. Landscapes managed by grazing sheep support a rich diversity of wildlife, while producing food.</p> <p>Furthermore, where a solar farm is installed on land which has been intensively farmed, it enables the ground underneath to recover, while providing income for the farming business.</p> <p>The majority of the Proposed Development is on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land. Whilst the preference is to always develop on land not classified as BMV, development on BMV land may not be precluded when there is a lack of alternative sites at lower Grades across the district, and a lack of realistic alternatives with readily available grid connection. Solar farm development is also unlikely to</p>

³https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/government_figures_show_a_6-7_increase_in_the_uk_solar_capacity_in_last_year/#:~:text=The%20UK%20government%20has%20published,solar%20installations%20in%20the%20UK

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>lead to significant and irreversible long-term loss of BMV agricultural land. Indeed, the low intensity regime of a solar farm allows the regeneration of soil quality, ensuring the availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for the future.</p> <p>The planning application is also informed by an Agricultural Impact Assessment which considers the availability of agricultural resource in the local area, an analysis of the ALC grading at Chimmens Solar Farm and the impact of diversifying the landowner's business. There is a significant threat to farming practices across the UK due to the challenges caused by the changing climate, which is having an impact on the viability of some agricultural businesses. Projects like Chimmens Solar Farm can enable diversification of agricultural businesses whilst tackling the effects of climate change.</p> <p>The proposed Chimmens Solar Farm planning application is supported by a Site Alternatives Study which concludes that the site is the most appropriate and viable site for connecting clean green renewable solar electricity to the grid.</p>
<p>Environmental impact Some respondents express concern that the Proposed Development may negatively impact the environment, with a few specifically mentioning what they believe will be negative impacts on biodiversity, particularly birds and bats. Some, in response to the feedback question about biodiversity opportunities, comment that they feel it would be better for the environment not to build the solar farm than to build it alongside biodiversity enhancements.</p>	<p>There are no statutory designated sites within or adjacent to the proposed site. The application is supported by an ecological appraisal, which includes various ecological surveys (breeding bird surveys, wintering bird surveys, Phase 1 and Phase 2 Habitats Surveys). The results of these surveys were used to inform the final design layout of the Proposed Development and inform mitigation measures.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will deliver new landscape and ecological measures and overall the Biodiversity Net Gain for this proposal is 45% net gain in area habitats and a 39% net gain in hedgerow habitats, as a</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>result of the proposed development. All of these new habitats will provide significant improvements for all species in the local area.</p> <p>As identified in the Landscape Masterplan, the Proposed Development will create new 35 acres of habitat for skylark within the site boundary and on land immediately north of the solar farm. Furthermore, the new species rich grassland, >480m of native woodland planting and >4000m of new hedgerow planting throughout the Proposed Development site will significantly improve foraging habitat for skylark species both within the immediate site and the wider surrounding area.</p>
<p>Environmental suggestions Respondents make the following suggestions as to how the Proposed Development could improve the environment: implementing all suggested biodiversity enhancements; and encouraging hedgehogs.</p>	<p>See 'Environmental impact', above.</p>
<p>Glint & glare One respondent queries whether reflection from the solar panels could increase the probability of road accidents through temporarily blinding motorists.</p>	<p>A glint & glare assessment has been carried out and used to inform the design. The results of this assessment have been included in the application. Overall, there are no glint and glare impacts on receptors including residential properties, road, rail, air and pedestrians.</p>
<p>Green belt A few respondents express concern that the Proposed Development would be built on green belt land, with a few suggesting that this designation is sufficient reason not to build the project at the proposed location (please note that those who expressed concern about the visual impact are reported on below).</p>	<p>The Proposed Development will be designed to integrate into the surrounding area as appropriately as possible and the results of a Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) were used alongside topographical surveys results to inform this design.</p> <p>Due to the temporary nature of the Proposed Development, there will not be a long-term loss of greenbelt and the land can be returned to agricultural practices at the end of the solar project.</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>There are strong local and national policies demonstrating the need for renewable energy projects in order to tackle climate change and meet the government’s targets for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Proposed Development aligns with these policies and the benefits of the renewable energy generated by the project would be realised locally and nationally.</p> <p>The proposed Chimmens Solar Farm planning application is supported by a Site Alternatives Study which identifies that a significant amount of land with Sevenoaks District Council is Greenbelt and therefore unavoidable when finding suitable sites to host ground mounted solar development.</p>
<p>Noise A few respondents query how much noise will be produced by the Proposed Development, with one commenting that they are concerned that any predicted noise impact may be exceeded.</p>	<p>Solar panels themselves do not generate noise. The main noise source associated with a solar farm will be from the project Substation and the inverter/battery storage locations.</p> <p>A background noise survey has been undertaken to assess any potential for noise from the Proposed Development and to inform the project design, in consultation with the Council’s Environmental Health Officer (EHO). The solar farm will operate within agreed noise limits and no adverse noise impacts are anticipated from the Proposed Development.</p>
<p>Visual impact Some respondents express concern regarding the visual impact of the project. A few comment that the project should not be visible for residents, without specifying further, whilst others comment that it will “ruin” their view or that it is “wrecking” the landscape. Some comment more generally that they enjoy their current view, which may have influenced their reasons for living in the area and they are concerned they will lose this enjoyment if the Proposed Development is built.</p>	<p>As described in Section 5 above, the project team undertook additional engagement with those living closest to the Proposed Development and therefore most likely to be impacted. An early newsletter was sent out to these nearest neighbours, giving them advanced notice of the proposal and the upcoming consultation, and the exhibition included a private session for nearest neighbours to discuss any concerns.</p> <p>We have worked hard to choose a location and a design which will keep the visual impact of the Proposed Development to a minimum. We will</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>use screening by native vegetation (both existing and new) to screen the solar farm as much as possible from view.</p> <p>The site is not located within any nationally designated landscapes and potential visibility of the Proposed Development would be largely limited by the existing surrounding woodland, hedgerows and the M20 Motorway.</p> <p>There are a small number of residential properties in the vicinity of the site, and again many of these would be well screened by existing vegetation. New and/or infill planting will be undertaken, where required. As well as minimising potential visibility, the planting will provide a plentiful source of food and shelter for a range of fauna.</p> <p>A Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) has been included with the planning application, which will ensure any potential impact on the landscape is appropriately assessed and mitigated.</p> <p>Since the consultation, we have also made changes to inverter and storage locations to benefit from existing mature native hedgerows so that screening will take effect immediately.</p>
<p>Bills A few respondents challenge the idea in the consultation materials that solar farms will result in lower electricity bills.</p>	<p>As we transition to a net-zero future, reducing the impacts of climate change both locally and globally, RES' priority is to deliver clean, green electricity at the lowest cost for consumers. New analysis on electricity generation costs published by BEIS shows that large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind, are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation. This makes developments like Chimmens Solar Farm not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>As a country, we still rely heavily on gas for the generation of electricity (nearly 50%) so the increase in worldwide gas prices does have an impact on the commodity price of electricity. Currently in the UK market, wholesale electricity prices are set by the most expensive form of generation - i.e. gas-fired generation. Until renewables command the highest per cent of generation in the UK, gas will continue to determine the price we pay for our electricity.</p> <p>In 2021, renewables were responsible for 29% of the electricity generation in the UK. This alone displaced around £6.1 billion worth of gas, equivalent to £221 of gas per household.</p> <p>Carbon Brief analysis⁴ shows that nearly 90% of the increase in bills over the last year is due to the rising price of gas, which has more than tripled over the same period with most of the remaining increase in bills is due to the cost of energy suppliers going out of business.</p> <p>While the UK has gone a long way to move away from fossil fuels and into renewables, we still have a system that is reliant on global gas supplies for our electricity and heating. Building more home-grown renewables will mean we don't have to rely on volatile gas pricing bringing the cost down over time and increase security of supply.</p>
<p>Community benefit suggestions Respondents make the following suggestions for how the proposal could benefit the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships; • Cheaper or free electricity for the community; 	<p>As we transition to a net-zero future, reducing the impacts of climate change both locally and globally, the Applicant's priority is to deliver clean, green electricity at the lowest cost for consumers.</p> <p>RES is committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, local contractors and employees are used in all aspects of solar farm development. The</p>

⁴ <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-data-and-research/data-portal/wholesale-market-indicators>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new or improved local playground; • New burial ground; • Refurbishment of local tennis courts; • New footpaths in the area of the solar farm; and • Improvements to local roads <p>A few suggest the Proposed Development should provide all the benefits suggested in question 3.2 of the comments form (wildflower planting; bee banks/hives; bird and bat boxes; and invertebrate hotels).</p>	<p>major opportunities arise during the construction phase when suitably qualified local firms are often invited to bid for different aspects of construction. We encourage our contractors to source construction materials locally and to use local transport and plant hire companies where possible, in addition to local services and amenities.</p> <p>In addition, the Proposed Development would deliver significant business rates over its lifetime, supporting vital local services for all local residents.</p> <p>The Applicant will continue to investigate and consider the ideas provided by the community during the consultation, with regard to local benefits and also welcomes further feedback and ideas from the local community on priority projects and aims in their area, which may be able to be supported as part of the proposal.</p>
<p>Heritage</p> <p>A few respondents comment that the project is in the same area as listed buildings and that it is ‘not in keeping’ with the heritage and character of the area.</p>	<p>A Heritage Statement, including an assessment on setting of heritage assets, has been included with the planning application. This report states that there are no heritage assets within the site. Impacts on setting of Grade II listed buildings are anticipated to be at the low end of the spectrum. Consultation is ongoing with Kent County Council Archaeologist.</p>
<p>Property value</p> <p>Some respondents express concern that the Proposed Development may devalue their properties.</p>	<p>Property value is subjective and can be affected by a range of factors. There is no firm evidence on whether UK solar farms do or do not affect house prices. The Applicant is aware of residents close to other renewable energy projects, who enjoy having renewable energy projects close by and believe that they add value to their community.</p> <p>Potential impact on local properties, in terms of noise, visibility and glint and glare, have been assessed as part of the preparation of this</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>planning application and design changes and mitigation measures have been adopted where appropriate to minimise any potential impacts.</p>
<p>Compensation A few respondents comment that they wish to be compensated if the Proposed Development reduces the value of their property.</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>Brownfield A few respondents suggest the project should be built on brownfield land instead of the proposed site, with a few noting that the proposed site is on green belt land.</p>	<p>The proposed Chimmens Solar Farm planning application is supported by a Site Alternatives Study which considers the grid capacity, use of agricultural land and green belt, availability of sites (including Brownfield sites) to host solar within Sevenoaks District Council.</p> <p>The Site Alternatives Study identifies that a significant amount of land with Sevenoaks District Council is Greenbelt and therefore unavoidable when finding suitable sites to host ground mounted solar development. There is insufficient brownfield land in the District to accommodate the large-scale solar deployment required to achieve net zero targets. Furthermore, according to the Sevenoaks DC Brownfield site register, there are no brownfield sites suitable (in terms of size) for a solar farm and in proximity to grid (with capacity).</p>
<p>Roof tops A few respondents suggest solar panels should be built on roof tops instead of on the proposed site.</p>	<p>In June 2021, Solar Energy UK, published an analysis estimating that, residential and commercial development is expected to account for nearly 37% (15GW) of the projected 2030 solar PV deployment of 40GW, with the remaining 63% (25GW) coming from large scale ground mounted solar farms.</p> <p>Solar Energy UK estimates that there is around 250,000 hectares of south-facing rooftop space in the UK, which means there is significant</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	potential for commercial and industrial rooftop solar systems but not enough to deliver on net zero.
<p>Wind Some respondents suggest that wind farms should be developed instead of solar, either locally or in the UK in general.</p>	A future balanced energy mix is vital to improve the reliability and resiliency of the energy grid and helps to ensure affordability for customers. Experience and research show that it's important to avoid overdependence on any single fuel type. The future energy mix will be a diverse menu of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, all pulling together to meet the net zero targets. Other renewable technologies will have their own merits in relation to cost, efficiency, environmental or social benefits.
<p>Other alternatives A few respondents comment that the Proposed Development should be built elsewhere, without commenting further. Respondents also made the following suggestions as alternatives to the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving recycling • Rewilding the land • Tidal power • Fracking 	The planning application includes an alternatives assessment which identifies the site selection process used when identifying the Proposed Development as the best possible location for solar development. The alternatives assessment includes a range of factors such as environmental designated sites, grid capacity and point of connection as well as our engagement with landowners who are interested in farm diversification.
<p>Other A few respondents express scepticism regarding climate change, the usefulness of solar or renewables in dealing with the current energy or climate situation (with some advocating fossil fuel alternatives), the efficiency of solar farms or the need for additional electrical capacity.</p>	<p>Solar panels don't need direct sunlight to operate, and they produce power all year round. In addition, we are proposing the use of bi-facial solar panels which can produce more electricity in less space. Diffuse sunlight is sufficient, and a grass surface reflects enough light to justify the use of bifacial modules.</p> <p>The Proposed Development would include battery storage to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities of the site.</p>

Consultation	How it has been addressed in the Proposed Development
	<p>The UK energy grid system used to rely on a small number of power stations. As the grid system becomes increasingly powered by solar and other renewables, it has become much more diverse and distributed.</p> <p>Our grid is becoming smarter to match supply and demand. The UK's reliance on the use of natural gas to balance the system will reduce as we see larger amounts of energy storage in the system. Systems like batteries and electric vehicles, as well as green hydrogen, are able to store surplus energy from renewables and release it when required. Energy storage systems can be co-located as part of an electricity generation scheme or standalone systems.</p>
<p>Support One respondent expresses support for the Proposed Development, on the grounds that they feel it will have low impact on the ground and can be reversed at the end of its lifetime.</p>	

7. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

- 7.1. The Applicant is committed to ongoing engagement with the community. Community newsletters will be used to provide updates on the status of the application, which will also serve to remind the community of how they can get in touch if they would like more information and how they may submit a representation to the Determining Authority. The Applicant will also publish the planning application on the Chimmens Solar Farm project website.
- 7.2. The Applicant will also continue to monitor feedback up until determination.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has provided an overview of the engagement and consultation activities that have been, and continue to be, undertaken by the Applicant on the Proposed Development.
- 8.2. The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has allowed the Applicant to identify and respond to local issues and potential concerns.
- 8.3. Analysis from the comments forms has shown that those who attended the public exhibition felt better informed about the proposals further to their attendance. 54% increased their understanding of the proposed development either 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' following attendance at the exhibition.
- 8.4. The Proposed Development has been through a detailed design process, and the Applicant has taken account of feedback from the community and stakeholders, as well as the results of site surveys and assessments. This has resulted in a number of changes being made to the design to ensure the Proposed Development fits sensitively into the existing landscape whilst maximising the low carbon, low cost electricity generation. These are described above, and include:
 - minimum 100m buffer between residential properties and solar infrastructure;
 - new native woodland screening on the northern boundary of the site;
 - changes to inverter and storage locations to benefit from existing mature native hedgerows so that screening will take effect immediately.
- 8.5. The Applicant is committed to continuing the open dialogue it has established with the local community during pre-application public consultation as the application process continues, as outlined within this SCI.

Appendices

APPENDIX A	Introductory letter to MP
APPENDIX B	Introductory letter to county and district councillors
APPENDIX C	Introductory letter to parish councillors
APPENDIX D	Introductory Letter for nearest neighbours
APPENDIX E	Newsletter to nearest residents, parish and district councillors
APPENDIX F	Email to MP, county and district councillors
APPENDIX G	Newsletter to local residents
APPENDIX H	Pre-exhibition Advertising
APPENDIX I	Introductory email to local ramblers group
APPENDIX J	Public Exhibition Materials
APPENDIX K	Comments Form
APPENDIX L	Follow up Newsletter to Saxon Place Residents

Appendix A: Introductory letter to MP

12 May 2023

Dear ■

RE: Chimmens Solar Farm proposal between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, Sevenoaks

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, with a view to submitting a planning application this year.

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy business active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution. At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe.

Analysis from the Climate Change Committee and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero targets. Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation, making developments like the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm not just good for the environment but also consumers.

Solar farms have significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. A typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to provide a range of ecological benefits. Furthermore, the land can easily be returned to agricultural use on decommissioning of the solar project.

We have undertaken a number of initial technical and environmental assessments, which have helped to inform a preliminary design of the scheme. Further surveys and assessments will be carried out as the project progresses, the findings of which will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application. At this early stage, we are liaising with Sevenoaks District Council on the proposal, and we have recently submitted an EIA Screening request.

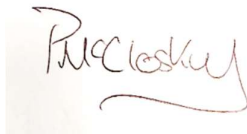
RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. In the coming weeks we will be undertaking a range of consultation activities, including a public exhibition. Further information will be provided soon. Feedback from the community and stakeholders will be taken into account, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

We will also be shortly launching a dedicated website which will be updated regularly.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm in more detail with you and would be happy to arrange a meeting at a convenient time over the coming weeks.

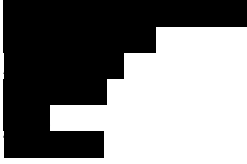
Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,



Pauric McCloskey
Development Project Manager
M: 07799 900 569
E: pauric.mccloskey@res-group.com

Appendix B: Introductory letter to county and district councillors



12 May 2023

Dear 

RE: Chimmens Solar Farm proposal between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, Sevenoaks

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, with a view to submitting a planning application this year.

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Solar farms have significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. A typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to provide a range of ecological benefits. Furthermore, the land can easily be returned to agricultural use on decommissioning of the solar project.

We have undertaken a number of initial technical and environmental assessments, which have helped to inform a preliminary design of the scheme. Further surveys and assessments will be carried out as the project progresses, the findings of which will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application. At this early stage, we are liaising with Sevenoaks District Council on the proposal, and we have recently submitted an EIA Screening request.

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. In the coming weeks we will be undertaking a range of consultation activities, including a public exhibition. Further information will be provided soon. Feedback from the community and stakeholders will be taken into account, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

We will also be shortly launching a dedicated website which will be updated regularly.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm in more detail with you and would be happy to arrange a meeting at a convenient time over the coming weeks.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. McCloskey', written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Pauric McCloskey
Development Project Manager

M: 07799 900 569

E: pauric.mccloskey@res-group.com

Appendix C: Introductory letter to parish councillors

[REDACTED]
Horton Kirby and South Darenth Parish Council
The Village Hall
Horton Road
South Darenth
Dartford
Kent DA4 9AZ

12 May 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

RE: Chimmens Solar Farm proposal between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, Sevenoaks

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, with a view to submitting a planning application this year.

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy business active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution. At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe.

Analysis from the Climate Change Committee and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero targets. Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation, making developments like the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm not just good for the environment but also consumers.

Solar farms have significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. A typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to provide a range of ecological benefits. Furthermore, the land can easily be returned to agricultural use on decommissioning of the solar project.

We have undertaken a number of initial technical and environmental assessments, which have helped to inform a preliminary design of the scheme. Further surveys and assessments will be carried out as the project progresses, the findings of which will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application. At this early stage, we are liaising with Sevenoaks District Council on the proposal, and we have recently submitted an EIA Screening request.

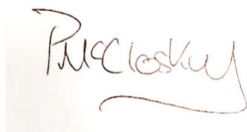
RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. In the coming weeks we will be undertaking a range of consultation activities, including a public exhibition. Further information will be provided soon. Feedback from the community and stakeholders will be taken into account, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

We will also be shortly launching a dedicated website which will be updated regularly.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm in more detail with the parish council members and would be happy to arrange a meeting at a convenient time over the coming weeks.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,



Pauric McCloskey
Development Project Manager
M: 07799 900 569

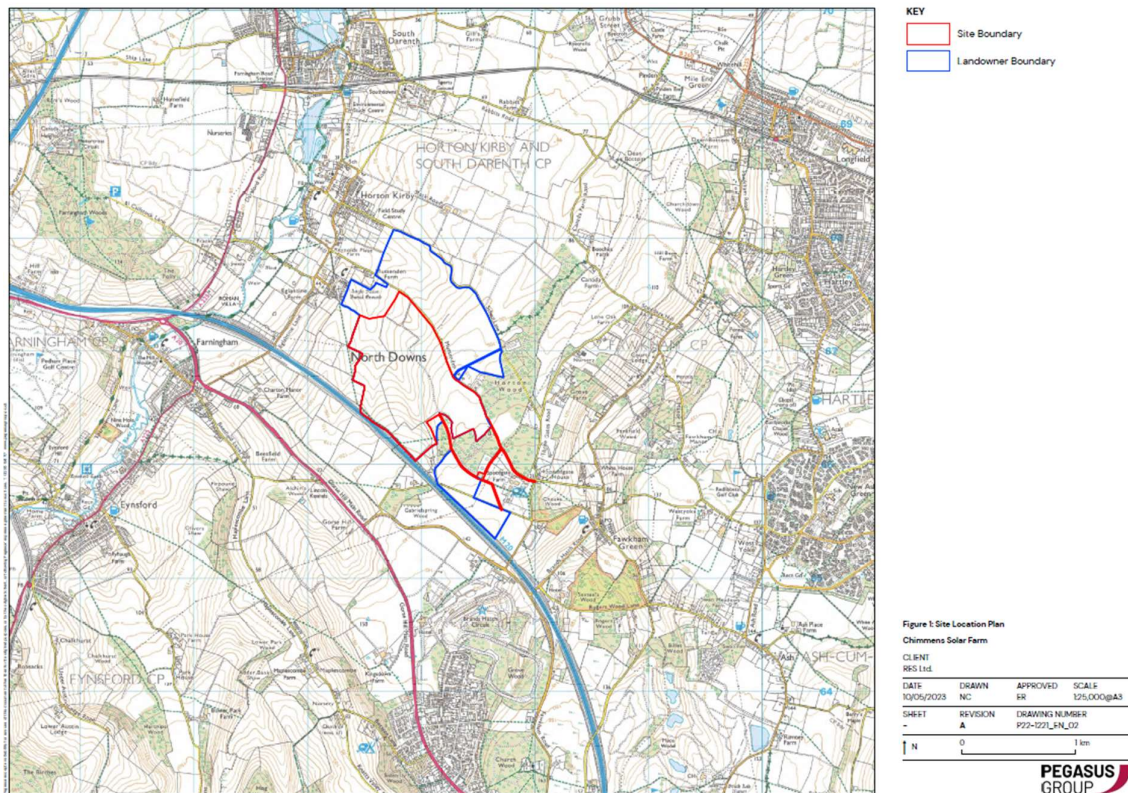
Appendix D: Introductory letter to nearest neighbours

26 May 2023

Dear «Title» «Surname»,

RE: Chimmens Solar Farm proposal between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, Sevenoaks

I am writing to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, with a view to submitting a planning application this year. The preliminary area that we are currently investigating is shown on the Site Location Plan below. As a close neighbour of Chimmens Solar Farm, I wanted to write to you to inform you of our plans. We have also commenced consultation with the parish councils (Horton Kirby and South Darenth; Fawkham; Farningham; and West Kingsdown), elected representatives and Sevenoaks District Council, to whom we have recently submitted an EIA Screening request.



RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy business active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution. At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe.

Analysis from the Climate Change Committee and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero targets. Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation, making developments like the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm not just good for the environment but also consumers.

Solar farms have significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, nectar-rich areas for pollinators, and woodland. A typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to

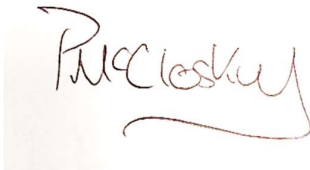
provide a range of ecological benefits. Furthermore, the land can easily be returned to agricultural use on decommissioning of the solar project.

We have undertaken a number of initial technical and environmental assessments, which have helped to inform a preliminary design of the scheme. Further surveys and assessments will be carried out as the project progresses, the findings of which will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application.

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community, especially our nearest neighbours, in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. In the coming weeks we will be undertaking a range of further consultation activities, including a public exhibition. Further information will be provided soon, including the launch of a dedicated website which will be updated regularly. Feedback from the community and stakeholders will be taken into account, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Pauric McCloskey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Pauric McCloskey
Development Project Manager
M: 07799 900 569
E: pauric.mccloskey@res-group.com

Vira Veselukha
Community Relations Team
T: 02079351222
E: Vira.Veselukha@copperconsultancy.com

Appendix E: Newsletter to nearest residents, parish and district councillors

CHIMMENS SOLAR FARM

JULY 2023



We wrote to you recently to advise that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham.

Environmental and technical surveys have been ongoing in recent months to investigate the suitability of the site for a solar farm development. These surveys have informed a preliminary layout and design.

RES is keen to engage with the local community and gather feedback on the preliminary design. The feedback will be taken into consideration, along with the results of future site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design.

Public Exhibition

We will be holding a public exhibition in the local area to share more information about the project, the preliminary design and to enable you to provide us with your feedback. Members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.



We would like to invite you to a closed session from 11am to 1pm, prior to when the exhibition below opens to the public, to find out more about the project and ask questions.

**Monday 10th July
2pm to 7pm**

Fawkham Village Hall
Valley Road, Longfield DA3 8NA

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at:

www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk

from 10th July 2023.

The public exhibition is the start of a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the preliminary design. Feedback can be provided in writing by filling out a comment form at our public exhibition or online on our website.

We are requesting feedback on the preliminary design by 31st July 2023. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Sevenoaks District Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

Chimmens Solar Farm at a Glance

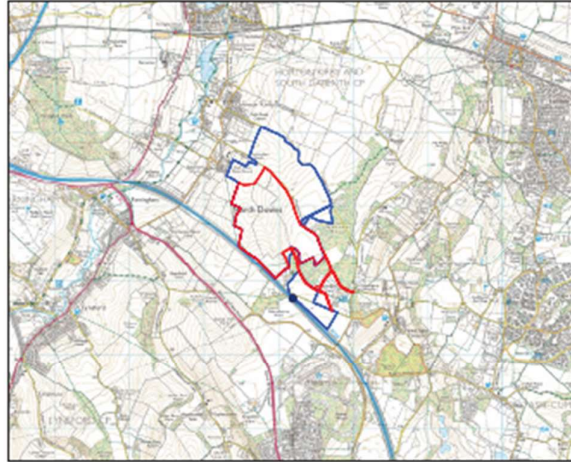
Chimmens Solar Farm is located on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham.

It is anticipated that the solar farm would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of clean, low-cost renewable electricity. This is enough to power approximately 22,500¹ homes, saving up to 15,000² tonnes a year of CO₂ compared to electricity from fossil fuels like gas.

Chimmens Solar Farm has many potential benefits:

- › Fighting climate change (which is a long-term threat to the countryside)
- › Local biodiversity enhancement opportunities
- › Local economic benefits (through business rates)
- › Improved energy security

The site has been chosen as it has good solar irradiation levels, lies outside of any statutory environmental, archaeological and landscape designations and due to its proximity to a viable grid connection.



● Site Location

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In addition to the benefits above, we are asking the community for suggestions for further local benefits that the project could deliver.

About RES

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy company with operations across Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific. At the forefront of renewable energy development for over 40 years, RES has developed and/or built more than 23GW of renewable energy capacity worldwide.



Pauric McCloskey

Development project Manager

✉ pauric.mccloskey@res-group.com

☎ 07799 900 569



Vira Veselukha

Community Liaison Officer

✉ vira.veselukha@copperconsultancy.com

☎ 020 7935 1222

If you require information in Braille, large text or audio, please let us know.

¹ The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).

² Based on Carbon Trust conversion figures for UK Grid electricity of 0.19338 kgCO₂e per kWh.

Appendix F: Email to MP, county and district councillors

Dear [REDACTED]

In May we wrote to you to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, with a view to submitting a planning application this year.

I am pleased to inform you that we will be holding a public exhibition in the local area on 10th July to share more information about the project, the preliminary design and to enable you to provide us with your feedback. Members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

Please find attached a newsletter update for Chimmens Solar Farm on behalf of RES, with details of our upcoming event and public consultation.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Chimmens Solar Farm Community Relations Team

Dear Councillor [REDACTED]

In May we wrote to you to let you know that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham, with a view to submitting a planning application this year.

I am pleased to inform you that we will be holding a public exhibition in the local area on 10th July to share more information about the project, the preliminary design and to enable you to provide us with your feedback. Members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

Please find attached a newsletter update for Chimmens Solar Farm on behalf of RES, with details of our upcoming event and public consultation.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Chimmens Solar Farm Community Relations Team

Appendix G: Newsletter to local residents

CHIMMENS SOLAR FARM

JULY 2023



RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham.

Environmental and technical surveys have been ongoing in recent months to investigate the suitability of the site for a solar farm development. These surveys have informed a preliminary layout and design.

RES is keen to engage with the local community and gather feedback on the preliminary design. The feedback will be taken into consideration, along with the results of future site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design.

Public Exhibition

We will be holding a public exhibition in the local area to share more information about the project, the preliminary design and to enable you to provide us with your feedback. Members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.



Monday 10th July
2pm to 7pm

Fawkham Village Hall
Valley Road, Longfield DA3 8NA

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at:

www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk

from 10th July 2023.

The public exhibition is the start of a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the preliminary design. Feedback can be provided in writing by filling out a comment form at our public exhibition or online on our website.

We are requesting feedback on the preliminary design by 31st July 2023. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Sevenoaks District Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

Chimmens Solar Farm at a Glance

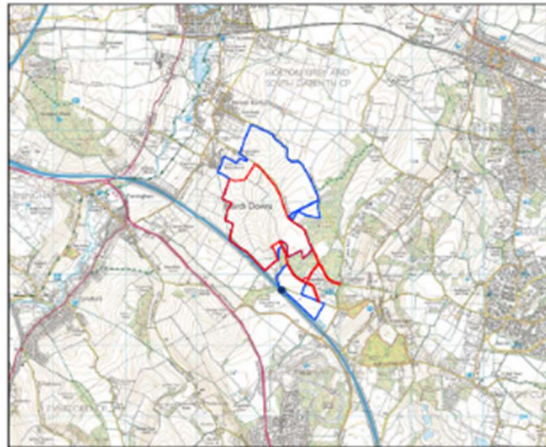
Chimmens Solar Farm is located on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham.

It is anticipated that the solar farm would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of clean, low-cost renewable electricity. This is enough to power approximately 22,500¹ homes, saving up to 15,000² tonnes a year of CO₂ compared to electricity from fossil fuels like gas.

Chimmens Solar Farm has many potential benefits:

- ▶ Fighting climate change (which is a long-term threat to the countryside)
- ▶ Local biodiversity enhancement opportunities
- ▶ Local economic benefits (through business rates)
- ▶ Improved energy security

The site has been chosen as it has good solar irradiation levels, lies outside of any statutory environmental, archaeological and landscape designations and due to its proximity to a viable grid connection.



● Site Location

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In addition to the benefits above, we are asking the community for suggestions for further local benefits that the project could deliver.

About RES

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy company with operations across Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific. At the forefront of renewable energy development for over 40 years, RES has developed and/or built more than 23GW of renewable energy capacity worldwide.



Pauric McCloskey

Development project Manager

✉ pauric.mccloskey@res-group.com

☎ 07799 900 569



Vira Veselukha

Community Liaison Officer

✉ vira.veselukha@copperconsultancy.com

☎ 020 7935 1222

If you require information in Braille, large text or audio, please let us know.

¹ The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).

² Based on Carbon Trust conversion figures for UK Grid electricity of 0.19338 kgCO₂e per kWh.

Appendix I: Introductory letter to local ramblers group

████████████████████

To whomever this may concern

I am writing to inform you that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham.

We will be holding a public exhibition in the local area to share more information about the project, the preliminary design and to enable you to provide us with your feedback.

Members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

We are running a public consultation on 10th of July at Fawkham Parish Council Village Hall where you will have the opportunity to share feedback on our proposals. If you are not able to make the in-person event, you will have an opportunity to submit your thoughts on our project website - [Chimmens Solar Farm \(chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk\)](http://chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk).

Kind regards,

████

Chimmens Solar Farm Community Relations Team

Appendix J: Public exhibition materials

WELCOME TO CHIMMENS SOLAR FARM PUBLIC EXHIBITION



RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land between Horton Kirby and Fawkham as shown on the image below. The name "Chimmens" comes from a common name associated with one of the fields within the site.

- Our goal is to develop a solar project that would:**
- » Fight climate change (which is a long-term threat to the countryside)
 - » Improve energy security
 - » Provide local economic benefits
 - » Integrate into the local landscape
 - » Enhance local biodiversity

SITE LOCATION PLAN



It is anticipated that the solar farm would be capable of generating up to 49.9 MW of clean, low cost renewable electricity. This is enough to power approximately 22,500¹ homes, saving up to 15,000² tonnes a year of CO₂ compared to electricity from fossil fuels like gas.

HAVE YOUR SAY

This stage of consultation is your chance to tell us what you think, which will help us as we refine the design.

We are requesting feedback on the preliminary design by 31st July 2023.

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SAY BY:



- Filling in a comment form and:
- Leaving it with one of the project team members at the public exhibition; or
 - Posting it to Chimmens Solar Farm Project Team, C/O Copper Consultancy, Third Floor South, 49 Carnaby Street, London, W1F 9PY
- Or by filling in the online version of the comment form at chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk

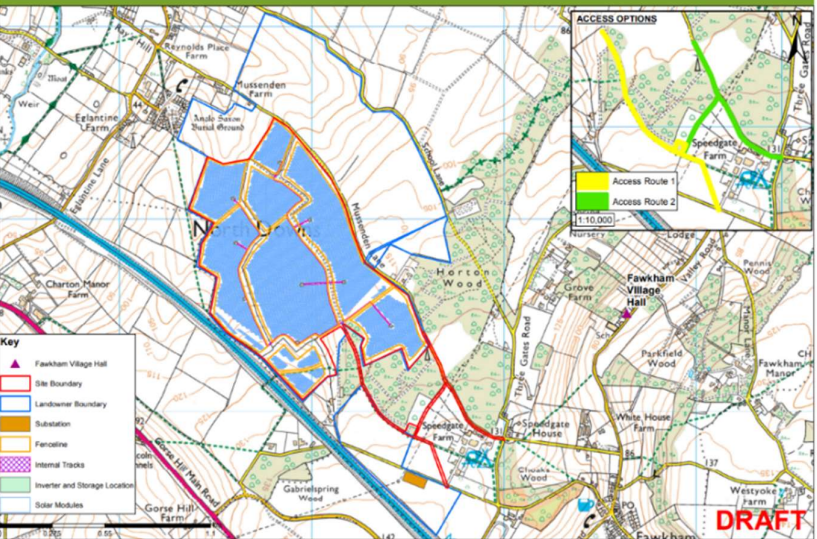
1 The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).

2 Based on Carbon Trust conversion figures for UK Grid electricity of 0.19338 kgCO₂e per kWh.

CHIMMENS SOLAR FARM



PRELIMINARY SOLAR LAYOUT



The plan to the left shows the preliminary solar layout for Chimmens Solar Farm.

The site infrastructure is expected to include:

- » Solar panels mounted on a frame with 0.8m ground clearance (to allow sheep grazing) and maximum height up to 3.6m;
- » A network of internal access tracks;
- » Access from local public highway (to be determined);
- » A substation/transformer with security fencing and grid connection;
- » Inverters on hardstanding and hybrid battery storage containers;
- » Temporary construction compound(s); and
- » Deer fencing within and on the perimeter of the solar farm.

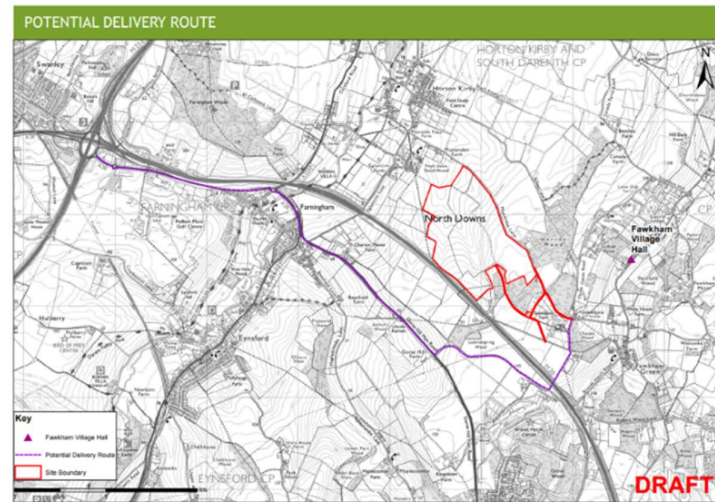
ITERATIVE DESIGN PROCESS



The preliminary solar layout for Chimmens Solar Farm has been carefully designed to minimise potential impacts from the development. In order to refine and improve the design, we will undertake a full suite of engineering, planning and environmental assessments. A sample of the ongoing assessments are identified in the non-exhaustive table below.

<p>LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE</p>	<p>No agricultural land will be lost because of the development. Agricultural use of the land will be retained throughout the project lifecycle in the form of sheep grazing. Due to the low intrusive nature of solar panels, a typical solar farm uses around just 5% of the total site area with the rest of the land remaining undisturbed, creating significant opportunities to provide a range of ecological benefits.</p> <p>The temporary change of land use during the solar project allows the regeneration of soil quality, improvements in soil organic matter and ensures the availability of high-quality agricultural land for the future.</p> <p>We are currently gathering site specific information on Agricultural Land Classification and this will be used to inform the design of the project.</p>	<p>GREEN BELT</p>	<p>The solar farm will be designed to integrate into the surrounding area as appropriately as possible and the results of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be used alongside topographical surveys results to inform this design.</p> <p>There will not be a long-term loss of greenfield or greenbelt land as the development can be returned to agricultural practices at the end of the solar project.</p> <p>There are strong local and national policies demonstrating the need for renewable energy projects in order to tackle climate change and meet the government's targets for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Chimmens Solar Farm aligns with these policies and the benefits of the renewable energy generated by the project would be realised locally and nationally.</p>
<p>CULTURAL HERITAGE</p>	<p>Whilst there are no designated heritage assets within the Chimmens Solar Farm, there are a number of assets within 500m of the project, particularly to the west and north west including listed buildings (Mussenden Farm and Eglantine Farm), registered parks and gardens (Franks Hall) and scheduled monuments (Roman Granary).</p> <p>We are currently consulting with Kent County Archaeologist and undertaking a geophysical survey on site. This will help us understand the potential unknown archaeology. We will also consider the potential for indirect impacts on heritage assets. A full Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment will support any future planning application.</p>	<p>ECOLOGY</p>	<p>Chimmens Solar Farm has significant potential to enhance biodiversity, hosting a range of habitats including species rich grassland, hedgerows and tree planting to provide habitats for all types of protected species.</p> <p>Chimmens Solar Farm will deliver significant habitat improvements. We are currently consulting with Kent County Ecologist in regards to the scope of baseline ecology surveys, potential mitigation measures and achieving Biodiversity Net Gain. A full Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) will support any future planning application.</p>

POTENTIAL DELIVERY ROUTE



Access is an important consideration when selecting a potential solar farm site. We are currently undertaking a traffic survey and a topographic survey and consultation with Kent Highways is pending.

The preliminary design includes a potential delivery route (purple line) for construction materials via A20 > Scratchers Lane > Three Gates Road.

This route avoids the villages of Horton Kirby and Fawkham Green and therefore avoids potential disruption during construction. We are currently investigating two access options from Three Gates Road:

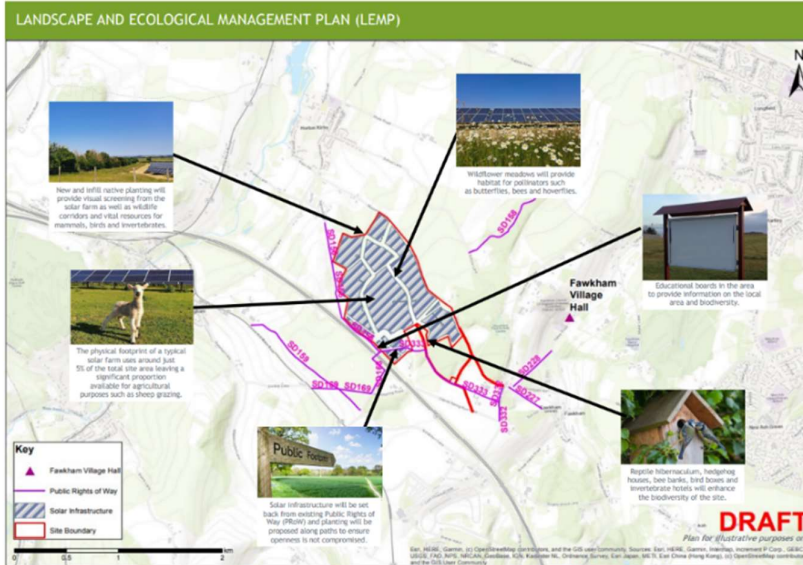
- » Via Gabriel Spring Road (East)
- » Mussenden Lane.

We will consult with the Sevenoaks District Council; Kent Highways; local parish councils; the local community; and other relevant bodies to produce a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to support any future planning application.

The CTMP outlines the overall framework for managing the safe movement of construction and delivery traffic as well as itemising the expected number of traffic movements and timing restrictions.

The traffic movements will be limited to avoid morning and evening peak times, where possible. There will also be a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to engage with local residents throughout the construction and operational phases, if the solar farm is consented.

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT



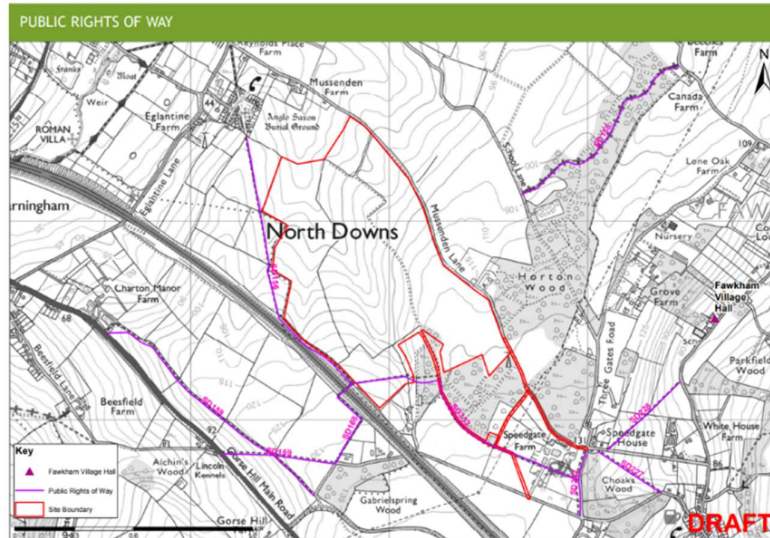
The plan to the left shows a preliminary Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

The preliminary LEMP illustrates our immediate and long-term commitment to deliver landscape planting, retain and protect Public Rights of Way as well as the protection and enhancement of biodiversity around the site.

As the design progresses, the LEMP will be developed further with site-specific details on measures to enhance existing habitats, protect species and provide landscaping specifications for new vegetation in accordance with relevant standards.

In addition, the final LEMP will provide information on the timings and aftercare regime for all planting.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY



RES understands the importance of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to the local community.

At this preliminary design stage we understand that there are two PROW footpaths in the local area (SD155 and SD333) as shown on the drawing below. SD155 is located outside the site boundary to the west and the south of the project. SD333 crosses within the south side of the site boundary.

Site surveys and consultation with the local authority are ongoing in order to understand the location and status of the PROW footpaths. The preliminary design illustrates our commitment to retain and protect the existing PROW footpaths with appropriate buffers and setbacks applied. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will assess any potential impact on the PROW footpaths. Landscape planting (hedgerows and trees) will be proposed along existing PROW footpaths where appropriate to reduce potential impacts.

Appendix K: Comments form



RES believes in meaningful and productive consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive consultation. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing the design of the project.

At the Public Exhibition and on our website we have presented preliminary design drawings. Feedback from the local community on the preliminary design is an important part of our pre-application consultation and we would be grateful if you could take the time to fill out this comments form with your feedback. You can also fill in an online version of this comments form on our website: www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk. We are requesting feedback on the preliminary design by 31st July 2023. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

1. Chimmens Solar Farm public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibitions?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter through the door | <input type="checkbox"/> Poster in local venue or noticeboard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advert in local newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Parish council social media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Project website - www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk



1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knew a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew very little |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knew quite a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew nothing at all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knew a little | |

1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding of the proposed Chimmens Solar Farm?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A lot | <input type="checkbox"/> Very little |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quite a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A little | |

1.4 Do you have any suggestions for ways in which we could have improved our exhibition or website?

www.chimmens-solarfarm.co.uk



2. Chimmens Solar Farm Proposal

Your views on the Chimmens Solar Farm, specifically the preliminary layout of the project where people's comments can have a direct influence, will be considered when developing the design of the project.

APPENDIX L: Follow up Newsletter to Saxon Place Residents

Dear [REDACTED]

I hope you are keeping well.

Thank you again for raising with us that some residents of Saxon Place didn't receive a letter regarding Chimmens Solar Farm , please again accept my apologies for this. I just wanted to send a quick email to let you know that we have sent new letters out and they should be delivered soon.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Chimmens Solar Farm Community Relations Team