

Statement of Community Involvement

Stokes Lane Solar Farm Land north and south of Rookery Farm Lane, RG23 8TH

May 2025





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1. Executive summary

This statement has been prepared in support of the submission of the planning application for the development of Stokes Lane Solar Farm on land north and south of Rookery Farm Lane (hereinafter 'the proposal'), by renewable energy developers, Stokes Lane Solar Farm Ltd, a joint venture between Solar2 and Recurrent Energy.

Early engagement on the proposal commenced in 2021, when we presented initial ideas to Monk Sherborne Parish Council. A second meeting followed in 2022. Following further technical work, we then commenced a period of engagement with the wider local community in February, March and April 2025, which provided a number of ways for local residents and stakeholders to find out more about the proposal and provide feedback.

We wanted to ensure the whole community had the opportunity to get involved. We posted a leaflet to all 2,006 households in the parish of Monk Sherborne and emailed it to more than 30 local stakeholders. We launched a project website with full information about the proposal. We held a drop-in community consultation event in the parish. This was followed by a further community meeting in response to requests from attendees at the consultation event. Approximately 100 people in total attended the two events. We invited feedback via the website and the drop-in event, for us to consider as we developed the proposal.

We received 60 written feedback submissions during the community engagement period.

Overview of feedback

In the feedback submissions received, most respondents commented on the choice of site for the proposal, the potential visual impact and raised concerns about food security.

79% of those who provided a feedback submission said they were either strongly or somewhat opposed to the proposal; and 12% said they were either strongly or somewhat supportive.

Respondents could provide further comments about the proposal. The themes of the comments received were as follows:

Theme	No. comments
Site selection/impact on conservation area/rural location	15
Food security	11
Visual impact	11
Consultation process	7
Potential impact on wildlife	6
Potential impact on the agricultural business that farms the site	5
Impact on the community	4
Support for the proposal	4
Questions about the biodiversity benefits of the project	2
Comments about the proposed access road	2





Supporting narrative for all the feedback themes is included in Section 5.

19 respondents who attended the drop-in event used the feedback form to request a follow-up meeting.

Outcomes of the community engagement activity

In response to feedback received during the community engagement activity, we have made the following changes to the (now submitted) proposal, which have resulted in changes to the layout of the proposal and the reduction of the overall size of the development:

- Feedback regarding landscape and visual impacts have had a marked effect on the evolution of the final layout and ultimately our choice of where to locate the proposed development. As a result, we have moved proposed panelled areas away from Rookery Farm Road.
- The land adjacent to the A339 (Kingsclere Road) was originally considered but then removed on the grounds of its proximity to the then AoNB, now North Wessex National Landscape.
- The most northerly part of the north eastern field was removed due to proximity to All Saints Church.
- The site originally extended to the Queens Cottages, but after feedback from Monk Sherborne Parish Council, a 100m buffer between the site and the cottages, plus additional proposed screening, has been incorporated into the design.

We have also made the following changes in response to feedback:

- The access and delivery of construction materials will come from the south of the site instead of from the north, avoiding Monk Sherborne and Sherborne St John.
- The name of the proposed development was changed from Monk Sherborne Solar Farm to Stokes Lane Solar Farm.

We will inform the local community and stakeholders that the application has been submitted by sending email notification to all stakeholders listed in Section 3 and by updating the project website. Information will be included as to how the planning application can be accessed and commented on via Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's website.





2. Engagement framework

The engagement process was developed through the provisions set out in government policy and planning quidance, namely:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated 2025), namely:
 - Paragraph 40, which states how early engagement can lead to improved outcomes for the community;
 - Paragraph 41, which encourages pre-application discussions between developers and the local community, as well as local authorities and statutory and non-statutory consultees;
 - Paragraph 42, which promotes the resolution of potential issues at the pre-application stage.
- Section 122 of the Localism Act (2011) which outlines the requirements for pre-application consultation, specifically:
 - Sub-section 61W which requires developers to publicise their proposed application and consult with specified individuals or groups before submitting a planning application; and
 - Sub-section 61X which imposes a duty on developers to take into account any responses received during the consultation process.

It also considered the advice for applicants as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (adopted November 2023), namely:

- Applicants or developers are expected to consult with the local community before submitting
 planning applications which are likely to generate public interest. Such consultation should be
 accessible and clear to the whole community (5.12)
- The council encourages developers and applicants to undertake a level of public consultation prior to submitting a planning application, as advocated in the National Planning Policy Framework. Such consultation could be with the town or parish council, ward councillors, neighbouring properties or interest groups local to the development site and include methods such as a public exhibition or meeting/discussions with affected individuals (5.13)

The community engagement activity was designed with the following principles in mind:

Inclusive

Initial engagement with the local parish council and ward councillors was undertaken in 2021 and 2022 (we attended two Monk Sherborne Parish Council meetings). Continued engagement also included the wider local community and local stakeholders as draft plans for the solar farm were brought forward, following a period of initial environmental assessments. We endeavoured to engage with residents living within the vicinity of the site as well as any local community groups and/or third parties related either by geography or interest.

The consultation activity was open to all, including any residents/stakeholders outside of those that were identified during a stakeholder mapping exercise.

Accessible and convenient

We held a drop-in community consultation event at Monk Sherborne Village Hall on Thursday 6 March from 3pm to 7pm to enable local residents/stakeholders to view draft plans, meet our team and provide feedback before plans were finalised. The venue, date and timings for this event were arranged to ensure it was at a time and place convenient to the community. A preview session was also held for





local councillors and interest groups before the main public session. In response to requests made at this event, a further follow-up meeting was held at Monk Sherborne Village Hall on Wednesday 9 April from 7:30pm to 9:30pm to address additional questions.

A dedicated community engagement website enabled residents/stakeholders to view the same information online that was shared at the drop-in consultation event, in their own time and to submit feedback at their convenience. The website – www.stokeslanesolarfarm.co.uk - is fully accessible and auditable.

A leaflet was sent to local residents and stakeholders to introduce the project and invite them to take part in consultation. As described in Section 4, whilst an error was made with the distribution of the leaflet by sending a leaflet for a different project based in Mid-Wales, this was rectified by responding to community members' emails regarding the error and ensuring the correct leaflet was delivered via Royal Mail to the distribution list. In addition, a second event was held to ensure everyone had the opportunity to ask questions about the proposal.

Enquiries and feedback were invited via the website, email and at the events.

Genuine and meaningful

Stakeholders were engaged at an early stage in the plans so that feedback could be gathered and comments could be considered before the proposal was finalised. The context, constraints and opportunities the site presents were clearly communicated so that feedback was invited on aspects that could readily be influenced. This Statement of Community Involvement sets out the feedback received, key themes and how comments have been considered.

Accountable

A full record of feedback was maintained throughout the community engagement period and this Statement of Community Involvement has been compiled and submitted with the planning application to detail the engagement activities and how we have considered the feedback received.





3. Stakeholders

The community engagement process was widely publicised to local residents and stakeholders, who are listed below.

Local community

We felt it was important to invite all residents in Monk Sherborne parish to get involved in the engagement activity. All households and businesses in the parishes received a leaflet through the post with information about the draft proposal and how to find out more. This 'consultation area' included 2,006 properties in total.

Stakeholders

We also sent emails to the following stakeholders to share information about the draft proposal and to invite them to take part in the community engagement activity:

Political stakeholders

- Member of Parliament for North West Hampshire
- Hampshire County Councillors:
 - Leader
 - Deputy Leader
 - Cabinet executive Member for Hampshire 2050 (Climate Change, Culture and Partnerships)
 and HR, Communications and Performance
 - Division Member for Calleva
- Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
 - o Ward Member for Sherborne St John and Rooksdown
 - o Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure
 - Cabinet Member of Climate and Ecological Emergency
 - Development Control Committee members
- Monk Sherborne Parish Council

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council officers

- Biodiversity Officer
- Climate Emergency Project Manager
- Climate Change Officer

Third party groups

- Natural Basingstoke
- Hampshire Climate Action Network
- Greener Basingstoke
- Butterfly Conservation (Hampshire Branch)
- Basingstoke Bees
- Four Lanes Trust





4. Community engagement activities

Community engagement objective

The objective of the engagement was to share information and plans for the proposal with local residents and stakeholders and provide an opportunity for them to ask questions and make comments. The overarching aim was for us to consider feedback from the community before submitting our planning application to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC).

Summary of activity

The table below shows the community engagement programme:

Table 1: Summary of Consultation Activities

Activity & stakeholders	Date(s)	
Stage one - early engagement		
Attend Monk Sherborne Parish Council meetings	2021 & 2022	
Email ward councillors for Sherborne St John and Rooksdown		
Launch initial community website		
Stage two - share plans and invite feedback		
Launch community engagement: Send emails to stakeholders Post leaflets to residents Issue press release to local media Launch updated community website	21 – 24 February 2025	
Hold drop-in community consultation event in Monk Sherborne Village Hall	6 March 2025, 4pm – 7pm, plus preview session for stakeholders from 3pm – 4pm.	
Close pre-application community engagement period (deadline for feedback)	28 March 2025	
Hold follow up community meeting at Monk Sherborne Village Hall	9 April 2025	

Early engagement

We met with the local parish council at a very early stage in the planning process to provide an introduction to the proposals, and to discuss the approach to community engagement.

Leaflets and emails

A leaflet providing details of the proposals alongside a location map and information about the opportunities for community engagement was posted to all properties in the parish of Monk Sherborne. Whilst a human error meant that an incorrect leaflet was issued, this was addressed by responding to





enquiries regarding the error including from the local press, and ensuring the correct leaflet was distributed via Royal Mail. An email including the same information and a copy of the leaflet was sent to all the stakeholders listed in Section 3.

Website

We launched a dedicated project website to enable residents and stakeholders to view information about the proposal online, including a location map, site layout and visualisations. The website also included full details about the opportunities for community engagement and an online comment form.

Drop-in community consultation event

The community consultation event was an informal, exhibition-style session, with nine pull-up displays providing information on the draft proposal as follows:

- 1. Why we need more solar information about: Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council Climate Emergency; Energy Security and Cost of Living; Delivering Net Zero
- 2. The site a site location plan and details about why the site has been chosen
- 3. *Proposals* a Landscape Strategy Plan, details about the proposals including energy production, features of the site and project lifespan
- 4. *Landscape, Ecology and the Environment* information regarding landscape, biodiversity, drainage and flood risk, archaeology and the construction process
- 5. FAQs a list of questions and answers about the proposal
- 6. Community Benefits details of community benefits of the proposal
- 7. About information about Solar2 and Recurrent Energy
- 8. *Timeline and Next Steps* setting out the stages of the project from public consultation to operation of the solar farm
- 9. Viewpoint 1 and Viewpoint 5 photos of the site and photomontages showing anticipated views

In addition, there was a 3D fly-through model showing views of the solar farm site from the local area (with technical assistance from our team). Print-outs of the grid route and construction access route were also available.

Members of our project team were available to discuss the proposal and answer questions, and feedback was invited via comment forms.

All political stakeholders were invited to a preview session ahead of the drop-in event, from 3pm to 4pm. The public session was then held from 4pm to 7pm. A total of 66 people attended the event.

Follow-up community meeting

A large number of attendees both at the community consultation event and via the feedback form requested that an additional meeting was held in the village to address outstanding questions about landscape mitigation plans, the proposed grid access route and construction route, details of the onsite infrastructure, biodiversity net gain, the community benefit fund, and on-going solar farm maintenance. The date and time for this was agreed with the parish council (Wednesday 9 April from 7:30pm to 9:30pm) and approximately 30 people attended. We welcomed the opportunity to answer these additional questions, which were addressed in a presentation and follow-up question and answer session.

Recording and managing feedback

A comment form was available on the website and at the community consultation event. It included questions about respondent capacity (i.e. were they responding as a resident, a business owner or in





another capacity); level of satisfaction with the information provided about the proposals; sentiment towards the proposals; and suggestions for how the proposed community benefit fund could be used. The comment form also invited any further comments on the proposals.

A central record of all the feedback received was maintained throughout the community engagement period.

Engagement materials

A copy of all the engagement materials can be found in the appendices.





5. Community engagement feedback

Level of participation

Over 2000 leaflets and more than 30 emails were sent to invite local residents and stakeholders to take part in the community engagement activities. 66 people attended the community consultation event, approximately 30 came to the follow-up meeting, and 60 written feedback submissions were received during the community engagement period.

Whilst this represents a good level of participation (based on previous experience of community engagement exercises), it should be noted that the majority of those contacted about the proposal chose not to take part. This could signal a level of ambivalence or neutrality towards the proposal within the local community.

Channels of participation

60 written submissions were received as follows:

- Comment form completed at the drop-in event: 45
- Comment form submitted via the website: 15

The comment form posed a series of questions about the proposal and also included space for open comments (with no word or character limits).

Comment form feedback

The responses to the questions on the comment form were as follows:

Question 1. About you

- I am a local resident (living within approx. 10km/6 miles of the proposed solar farm site (please confirm which community you live within)
- I am a local business owner (operating within approx. 10km/6 miles of the proposed solar farm (please confirm below which community your business is located within)
- *I am a community council member (please confirm below which community council you are a member of)*
- I am a local council representative (please give further detail in the box below)
- Other

55 of the 60 written submissions included a response to this question. All 55 specified that they are a local resident living within approximately 10km/6 miles of the solar farm site. Three of these said they are also a local business owner operating within approximately 10km/6 miles of the site.

Question 2. How satisfied are you with the information provided about Monk Sherborne Solar Farm?

- Very satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Quite dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

All 60 respondents who completed a feedback form provided an answer to this question. The results were as follows:





Response	No.	% of
	responses	responses
Very satisfied	3	5%
Quite satisfied	9	15%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16	27%
Quite dissatisfied	13	22%
Very dissatisfied	19	31%

Question 3. Which of the following best describes your view of the proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm?

- Strongly supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Undecided
- Somewhat opposed
- Strongly opposed

Again, everyone who completed a feedback form provided a response to this question.

Response	No.	% of
	responses	responses
Strongly supportive	5	8%
Somewhat supportive	2	3%
Undecided	6	9%
Somewhat opposed	10	17%
Strongly opposed	37	62%

Questions 4 and 5 asked respondent for suggestions for how a potential community benefit fund could be used. The responses provided are being considered by the applicants in line with current discussions on best practice in this area.

The final question on the comment form was as follows, inviting open feedback on the proposals:

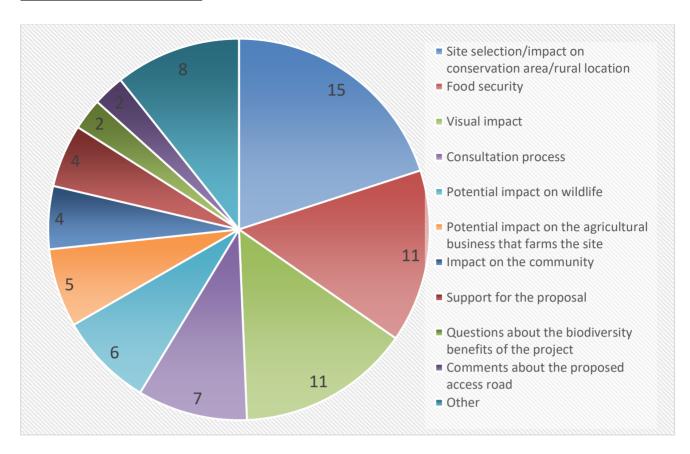
Question 6. Do you have any further comments regarding Monk Sherborne Solar Farm you would like to share?

50 respondents provided further comments in response to this question. The themes of the responses to this question are categorised and shown on the following page.





Overview of feedback themes:



Site selection

15 respondents made comments about the choice of the site for the solar farm, raising concerns about the potential impact of the proposal on the local conservation area and the rural character of the area.

Food security

11 respondents made comments about the potential impact of the proposal on food security, suggesting that the land should remain in agricultural use for growing crops for food.

Visual impact

11 respondents raised concerns that the proposal would have a negative impact on views of the village and surrounding countryside, with others saying it would dominate the landscape.

Consultation process

Seven respondents made comments about the consultation process, with some saying that not enough people were notified about the proposal in time to take part in the consultation or attend the follow-up meeting, and others referring to an incorrect leaflet having been sent out.

Potential impact on wildlife

Six respondents voiced concerns about the potential impact of the proposal on local, with references to birds, bees and deer.

Potential impact on the agricultural business that farms the site

Five respondents said they were concerned about the impact of the proposal on the farmers who currently farm the site, and that people could lose their jobs as a result of the proposal.





Impact on the community

Two respondents said they were concerned about the impact of the proposal on the local community (but did not specify the particular type of impact); whilst a further two respondents said the cumulative impact of this and other planning proposals could have a negative impact on the community.

Support

Four respondents provided comments to say that they support the proposal.

Biodiversity of the project

Two respondents questioned the proposed biodiversity benefits of the proposal.

Access road

One respondent said they were concerned about the impact of the site access road on cyclist safety; and another said the use of the road to access the site would degrade the road and that it first needs improving.

Other

Eight further comments were made outside of the themes above (each in one feedback submission only):

- Concerns about solar power technology
- Concern that the solar farm is too large
- Question about whether solar panels are manufactured ethically
- Concerns about potential noise from the solar farm
- Concerns about how the Community Benefit Fund would be spent
- Request from a local beekeeping group to put beehives on the site
- Additional footpaths should be provided around the site
- Villagers should receive reduced energy bills





6. Responding to feedback themes

Our response to all the comments received during the community engagement period can be found below.

Site selection

We think this is an appropriate site for a solar farm because:

- It is close to a distribution grid connection with available capacity. Options for the grid connection route are being investigated.
- The orientation and topography of the site is suitable for solar panels.
- enhancements and is a suitable distance from nearby homes. This means the development will have a minimised impact on local residents and the wider surrounding areas. To mitigate visual impact upon the surrounding area, the proposal includes a range of additional screening such as tree planting and hedgerow infill, as set out in the Landscape Strategy Plan that has been submitted with the planning application.
- The site is not within any areas designated for landscape, ecology or heritage sensitivity, including Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).
- It is well-located for construction and maintenance access.
- There is sufficient land to accommodate the development alongside significant biodiversity enhancements.

Food security / Potential impact on the agricultural business that farms the site

The site can remain in agricultural use throughout the lifespan of the solar farm - sheep will be allowed to graze beneath the panels if this is what the landowner/farmer chooses. At the end of the project's lifespan, the solar farm will be decommissioned. The panels will be removed and recycled and the land returned to its original use with the addition of 40 years of biodiversity enhancements and significant soil improvements by virtue of not being intensively farmed throughout the operational phase of the development.

Visual impact

We recognise that views around the solar farm site are important to local residents. As mentioned under 'site selection' above, the site is well-screened with opportunities to provide further landscape and biodiversity enhancements and is a suitable distance from nearby homes. To mitigate visual impact upon the surrounding area, the proposal includes a range of additional screening such as tree planting and hedgerow infill, as set out in the Landscape Strategy Plan that has been submitted with the planning application.

'Type 1' visualisations were created to show the extent of the solar farm that would be visible from a number of viewpoints agreed with the Local Authority. Two of these visualisations were shared on the project website and were printed onto banners for display at the drop-in events. Furthermore, to help local residents understand the anticipated view of the solar farm from any location of their choice in the vicinity of the site (not just those selected for the purposes of the visualisations), the applicants created a 3D fly-through. This enabled residents to move around the local area and view the solar farm from their chosen location via a laptop at the drop-in events.





In response to feedback regarding potential landscape and visual impacts, we have made the following changes to the layout of the proposal, reducing the overall size of the site:

- Moved proposed panel areas away from Rookery Farm Road.
- Removed land adjacent to the A339 (Kingsclere Road) that was originally being considered for the solar farm, on the grounds of its proximity to the North Wessex National Landscape.
- Removed the most northerly part of the north eastern field due to proximity to All Saints Church.

Further to this, to address feedback received and reduce potential impacts on the closest neighbours to the site at Queens Cottages, we have revised the design to add a 100m buffer between the site and Queens Cottages, plus additional proposed screening.

Consultation process

We fully acknowledge that an additional leaflet for another project was distributed in error to local residents. This was down to human error. To rectify this, we responded to enquiries and the correct leaflet was sent to residents via Royal Mail.

Potential impact on wildlife / Biodiversity of the project

Potential impacts on wildlife have been a key consideration as we have developed the solar farm proposal. Areas of the site will be set aside for ecological and biodiversity enhancement measures as well as screening as set out in the submitted Landscape Strategy Plan. In addition to generating clean energy, we are proposing a suite of features to benefit the local environment and encourage wildlife:

- The solar panels themselves will be enclosed within a deer fence for safety and security.
- Sheep will be allowed to graze beneath the panels if this is what the landowner/farmer chooses.
- We are exploring the provision of beehives to help biodiversity, increase the bee population in the UK and produce local honey which is found to have health benefits. This was requested in one of the written feedback submissions.

Improving the biodiversity of the site is a key element of the proposal. Wildflower meadow planting will be proposed to attract birds and insects, whilst enhancing the biodiversity of the wider area. Under The Environment Act (2021), all major developments are required to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. However, we aim to achieve a significantly greater gain. Reserving the land from intensive farming will improve soil quality, while providing extensive hedgerow and wildflower planting will enhance local wildlife habitats. A Biodiversity Net Gain report has been submitted with the application.

Impact on the community

The proposal includes measures to reduce any potential impacts on the local community, such as screening to reduce visual impact; and a Construction and Environmental Management Plan to outline how we plan to minimise disruption during the construction process. Any potential impacts of cumulative development will be considered by the local authority as part of the planning application process.

We want the community to benefit from the solar farm. The development will provide tangible benefits for local people, enhance the landscape for local wildlife, and could generate funds to be spent on local projects.

- Considerable investment in landscape enhancements, including planting, and new hedgerows.
- Improvements to local footpaths, making it easier, more convenient, and more enjoyable to use.





• Using local materials and labour where possible. Construction staff are also likely to use local accommodation and shops, providing a boost to the local economy.

Support

We are pleased to receive supportive comments about the proposal from local people.

Access road

The nature, timings and duration of the construction period are set out in the Transport Statement submitted as part of this planning application. The construction traffic route and proposals to manage traffic will be agreed with the Council's highways department and planning officers as part of any planning permission and/or subsequent planning conditions.

In response to the feedback from the community, the access and delivery of construction materials will come from the south of the site instead of from the north, avoiding Monk Sherborne and Sherborne St John.

Questions raised at the follow-up meeting

Several questions were raised in advance of the follow-up meeting and we answered these in our presentation, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix.

Project name

Verbally, local people told us that they would prefer the project to be named something other than Monk Sherborne Solar Farm. In response to this feedback, the project was re-named 'Stokes Lane Solar Farm'.





7. Conclusion and next steps

We have taken an inclusive, meaningful and early-stage approach to engaging with the local community and stakeholders in the development of the proposal, which has complied with the requirements of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement and follows the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework. We are grateful for the valuable feedback received.

The feedback received from local residents and stakeholders during the community engagement process has been listened to and addressed in the planning application where possible to ensure that local views are heard and responded to.

As detailed in Section 6, we have changed the site boundary and size, the proposed construction traffic route and the site layout in direct response to community feedback.

Next steps

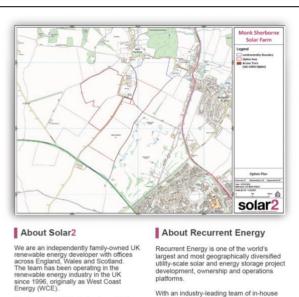
The applicant will inform the local community and stakeholders that the application has been submitted by sending email notifications to all stakeholders listed in Section 3 and by updating the project website.





Appendix 1: Leaflet to local residents and businesses





The founders of Solar2, together with the wider team, have a strong track record in the successful development of renewable projects throughout the UK, being responsible for the delivery of in excess of 1GW of renewable energy.

It is important to us that our sites maintain an agricultural use and enhance the local environment, and that we engage and listen to the local community throughout the planning process.

We are a responsible, considerate developer. As such, we are proposing a suite of measures to improve the local environment, by providing wildflower meadow planting, upgraded animal habitats, and achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain, for the Monk Sherborne site.

With an industry-leading team of in-house energy experts, we are a wholly owned subsidiary of Canadian Solar Inc. and function as Canadian Solar's global development and power services business. Recurrent Energy has completed the development of 9 gigawatts (GWp) of operating utility-scale solar projects and 3 gigawath hours (GWh) of energy storage projects across six continents. Recurrent Energy have more than 25 GWp of solar and 47 GWh of battery storage projects under development.







Appendix 2: Email to stakeholders (NB. versions of the below email were tailored according to the recipient)

Dear [stakeholder name],

I am writing to you about plans Solar2 is bringing forward for a 28MW solar farm on land south of Monk Sherborne. Agricultural use of the land would continue throughout the lifetime of the solar farm.

The solar farm would generate enough clean energy to power approximately 11,000 average UK homes and would offset 17,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, supporting Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Climate Action Plan and contributing to the UK's Net Zero Ambition.

We are ready to share our proposals with the local community and invite their feedback, which we will consider before finalising the plans and submitting our planning application. We are holding a drop-in community consultation event, and I would like to invite you to a preview session:

Thursday 6th March 2025, 3:00PM to 4:00PM, Monk Sherborne Village Hall

We have written to local residents to invite them to the event - between 4:00PM and 7:00PM - please see the leaflet attached. You are very welcome to attend this later session if it is more convenient. We have also launched a website with further information about the project: www.monksherbornesolarfarm.co.uk

We hope you are able to join us at the preview session on the 6th of March. If you would prefer to meet with us before this, or have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me.





Appendix 3: Website homepage



Solar2 has developed proposals for a solar farm on land to the south of Monk Sherborne. The site area is c. 82.9ha.

The site is located on a parcel of agricultural land set back from the A339. The site comprises open fields bisected by a minor road and track, benefiting from natural screening provided by hedgerows with intermittent trees.

The project will generate clean, renewable energy through photovoltaic (PV) solar panels.

The project will be temporary whilst also providing an enhanced bio- diversity benefit to local wildlife during the life of the project.





Appendix 4: Drop-in event pull-up banners

Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Why We Need More Solar

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council Climate Emergency

On the 10th of September 2019, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council declared a climate emergency and set ambitious targets for the council to become carbon neutral in its operations by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2030.

Energy Security and Cost of Living

Renewable energy is one of the most cost-effective and reliable sources of non-carbon power, reducing the UK's dependence on imported electricity and strengthening energy security.

According to the International Energy Agency, solar energy now provides the "cheapest electricity in history". Further to this, intelligence company Rystad state that developing new solar energy projects would be ten times cheaper than new gas-fired power stations in the long term. This means that new solar farms like Monk Shetbome can help drive down the cost of generating electricity and tackle the ongoing energy crisis.

Delivering Net Zero

The UK Government has made a legally binding commitment to achieve Net Zero, meaning a power grid with minimal carbon emissions and a transition away from fossil fuels. This requires a significant expansion of reliable renewable energy, including solar.

The Clean Power Action Plan set out by energy secretary Ed Miliband on Friday 13 December 2024 sets the objective of reaching 45GW-47GW solar generation capacity by 2030. This goal is part of a broader strategy to develop cleaner, more affordable, and secure energy sources—an essential step toward Net Zero and greater energy independence.

Renewable energy projects, such as our proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm, will make a significant contribution towards these goals.

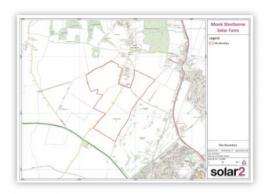
¹ According to the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2020. ² "New solar capacity 10 times cheaper than gas, says Rystad", PV Magazine



View this information via the QR code below:



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm



The Site

The proposed location for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm is approximately 500m south of Monk Sherborne, 700m northwest of Basingstoke and 400m west of Sherborne St John and is wholly within the planning authority area of the Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

The site is approximately 57 hectares (140 acres) which is denoted by the red line on the map above. The red line is the development boundary and will not be entirely used for panels.

The site has been chosen because

- It is close to a distribution grid connection with available capacity. Options for the grid connection route are being investigated.
- The orientation and topography of the site is suitable for solar panels
- It is well-screened with opportunities to provide further landscape and biodiversity enhancements and is a suitable distance from nearby homes. This means the development will have a minimised impact on local residents and the wider surrounding areas.
- The site is not within any areas designated for landscape, ecology or heritage sensitivity, including Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).
- It is well-located for construction and maintenance access
- There is sufficient land to accommodate the development alongside significant biodiversity enhancements.

View this information via the QR code below:









Proposals

The proposal is for a 28MW solar farm. Our conservative calculations show that Monk Sherborne Solar Farm will generate enough clean energy to meet the needs of approximately 11,000° homes, whilst offsetting around 17,000° tonnes of CO2 per year.

Areas will be set aside for ecological and biodiversity enhancement measures as well as screening as set out in the above Indicative Landscape Strategy Plan.

In addition to generating clean energy, we are proposing a suite of features to help the local community and environment.

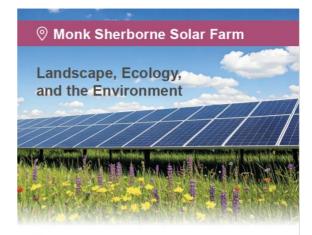
- The solar panels themselves will be enclosed within a deer fence for safety and security.
- Sheep will be allowed to graze beneath the panels if this is what the landowner/farmer chooses.
- We are exploring the provision of beehives to help biodiversity, increase the bee population in the UK and produce local honey which is found to have health benefits.
- Wildflower meadow planting will be proposed to attract birds and insects, whilst enhancing the biodiversity of the wider area.

At the end of the project's lifespan, the solar farm will be decommissioned. The panels will be removed and recycled and the land returned to its original use with the addition of 40 years of biodiversity enhancements and significant soil improvements by virtue of not being intensively farmed throughout the operational phase of the development.

* Based on the 2021 UK Average Annual domestic electricity consumption (BEIS).

** Based on DESNZ all sources of electricity emissions statistics of 266 T CO2 eq per GWh of electricity supplied in 2022.





Landscape

To mitigate visual impact upon the surrounding area, the proposed development includes a range of additional screening such as tree planting and hedgerow infill, as set out in the Indicative Landscape Strategy Plan.

Biodiversity

Under The Environment Act (2021), all major developments are required to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. However, we aim to achieve a significantly greater gain. Reserving the land from intensive farming will improve soil quality, while providing extensive hedgerow and wildflower planting will enhance local wildlife habitats.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The site is designated as Flood Zone 1, indicating the lowest flood risk. Our proposals will offer an improvement on the existing drainage system through a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) design, supported by a Flood Risk Assessment as part of our planning application.

Archaeology

Trial trenching, along with a Desktop Assessment and Geophysical Survey, has been conducted to identify potential archaeological assets within the site boundary. A full Heritage Impact Assessment will be submitted in support of the planning application.

Construction

A Construction and Environmental Management Plan will be submitted to the Council as part of the planning process. This plan will outline how and when construction will occur to minimise disruption. Once operational, the solar farm will generate minimal traffic, primarily consisting of maintenance visits by car or van.

View this information via the QR code below:







Community Benefits

We want the community to benefit from Monk Sherborne Solar Farm. The development will provide tangible benefits for local people, enhance the landscape for local wildlife, and will generate funds to be spent on local projects.

- A community benefit payment of £500/MW will be paid, which can be spent on projects important to local residents
- Considerable investment in landscape enhancements, including planting, and new hedgerows.
- Improvements to local footpaths, making it easier, more convenient, and more enjoyable to use.
- Using local materials and labour where possible. Construction staff are also likely to use local accommodation and shops, providing a boost to the local



View this information via the QR code below:



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

FAQs?

What are the benefits of solar energy?

Solar energy is the most cost-effective way to generate electricity and a well-established form of carbon-free energy. Solar farms generate energy from a secure and renewable source and will help drive down the cost of electricity, which will be reflected in people's energy bills in the future. They are also crucial to delivering on the Government's response to the climate emergency.

Why have you selected this site?

We have a careful site selection process where we consider the following:

- A local grid connection in close proximity to the sife to maximise efficiency
 A willing landown servers
 Sulfabe irradiance levels
 Safe and secure access
 Distance from residential properties
 Distance from landscape, heritage or ecological designations
 Opportunities for bloodversity and ecological enhancement

Will I benefit from this development?

The intention is to invest in improving the local environment and upgrade the foolpaths using local materials and labour where possible, helping the local economy A community benefit payment of £500/MW, to be spent on local community projects will be made available.

Why are most solar farms built on agricultural land?

Rooflop solar installations are an important element in helping reduce carbon emissions, but many roofs are not suitable and rooflop solar alone will not deliver the expansion of renewable energy needed to deliver energy security, drive down bills and address clinicarchange. To advise the Government's commitment to delivering 70GW of energy from solar, we will need BOTH rooflop solar installations and standation utility scale solar farms. There is also significant policy support for farm diversification.

Will there be disturbance from construction?

Traffic will be managed to ensure there is as minimal impact and disruption to local residents as possible. A plan will be designed and agreed in consultation with the Council to ensure that it is effective. Construction is anticipated to take around 6 to 12 months.



If you have questions which are not answered here, please ask a member of the team, who will be able to answer it for you. Alternatively, the answer may be on our website, which you can visit using the QR code:







About



We are an independently family-owned UK renewable energy developer with offices across England, Wales and Scotland. The team has been operating in the renewable energy sector since 1996, originally as West Coast Energy (WCE).

The founders of Solar2, together with the wider team, have a strong track record in the successful development of renewable projects throughout the UK, being responsible for the delivery of in excess of 1GW of renewable energy.

It is important to us that our sites maintain an agricultural use and enhance the local environment, and that we engage and listen to the local community throughout the planning process.

We are a responsible, considerate developer. As such, we are proposing a suite of measures to improve the local environment, by providing wildflower meadow planting, upgraded animal habitats, and achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain, for the Monk Sherborne site.

RECURRENT ENERGY

A subsidiary of Canadian Solar

Recurrent Energy is one of the world's largest and most geographically diversified utility-scale solar and energy storage project development, ownership and operations platforms.

With an industry-leading team of in-house energy experts, we are a wholly owned subsidiary of Canadian Solar Inc. and function as Canadian Solar's global development and power services business.

Recurrent Energy has completed the development of 10 gigawatts (GWp) of operating utility-scale solar projects and 3.9 gigawatt hours (GWh) of energy storage projects across six continents. Recurrent Energy have more than 26 GWp of solar and 56 GWh of battery storage projects under development.



View this information via the QR code below:



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Timeline and Next Steps



Public Consultation - March 2025



Analyse Feedback - Spring 2025



Submit Planning Application - Spring 2025



Planning Permission Approx - Spring 2026



Begin Construction - Autumn 2027



Solar Farm Operational - Autumn 2028

Feedback QR code:



Please take some time today to provide your feedback on the proposal. You can do this via the QR code, the tablet or by completing the Feedback Form provided.

Please note our pre-submission consultation period closes on Friday 28th March 2025. Please ensure that any feedback is sent in advance of this date to be included.



View this information via the QR code below:







Viewpoint 1







Viewpoint 5

Baseline photo



Photomontage



View this information via the QR code below:







Appendix 5: Follow-up meeting presentation





Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Monk Sherborne Solar Farm - Overview

Proposals for:-

- · Up to 28MW solar farm
- 82.9 hectares (204 acres)
- · In excess of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain
- Community Benefit Fund











Monk Sherborne Solar Farm – Site Boundary



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Public Consultation

- 6th March 2025 public exhibition at Monk Sherborne Village Hall
- · 2006 notification leaflets sent to local residents
- 66 local residents attended the public consultation
- · 59 feedback forms received

49% either quite of very dissatisfied with the information received



20% either very or quite satisfied with the information received











Public Consultation - Feedback Results

79% either strongly or somewhat opposed



12% either strongly or somewhat supportive



36% raised concerns regarding the impact on rural views and wildlife



32% requested an additional meeting with Solar2



17% raised concerns regarding food security



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Monk Sherborne Solar Farm – Community Benefit Fund

- Other UK solar farm operators have apparently offered considerably more community benefit than the value you propose.
- · How is the Community Benefit Fund agreed?

At present, there is no industry standard for the community benefit fund. Recurrent Energy are currently working with the steering group at Solar Energy UK, to achieve an industry standardised approach across all solar projects. Once this is established, the proposed development will provide a community benefit fund in line with this approach.

Rest assured; we are fully committed to providing a fund should Monk Sherborne Solar Farm be successful in securing planning permission.

This would then be secured through a separate legal agreement, post-planning consent.









Landscape Mitigation Plan

Q. What have you allowed for in your budget for planting/screening works?

A. Planning condition will secure the agreed landscape mitigation plan. The placement of panels is designed to sensitively maximise the land whilst respecting heritage, wildlife, public right of ways and other aspects of the land whilst creating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Questions

Q. How is the Biodiversity Net Gain calculated and what biodiversity measures will be executed on site?

A. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is measured using a standardised metric, the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which calculates biodiversity value in "biodiversity units" based on habitat size, quality, location, and type, both before and after development.

For further information see: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain#measuring-biodiversity-



Q. Post construction, how will maintenance be carried out (including the land under the panels)?

A. Maintenance and management will be secured via a planning condition (Landscape, Ecological Management plan) which will detail regular maintenance and include a monitoring schedule.

Panels will be high enough to allow for sheep grazing, however if there is no desire for this the site could be managed mechanically.

Post construction, on-site traffic will be minimal, approx. once a month, by a small light good vehicle (LGV).









Proposed Grid Access Route

How will the solar farm be connected to the grid (route and method i.e. cabling underground?

There will be a small substation that the generated energy will be connected to (PoS – Point of Supply), via a cable route, this will feed into the Distribution (DNO) infrastructure (in this case an overhead line at Morganston Road (PoC – Point of Connection).



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Proposed On-site Infrastructure

In addition to panels, what other infrastructure will be on site?

- On-site substation
- Inverters
- Switchgear containers
- Spare parts containers
- CCTV
- Transformer
- Agricultural fencing









solar2

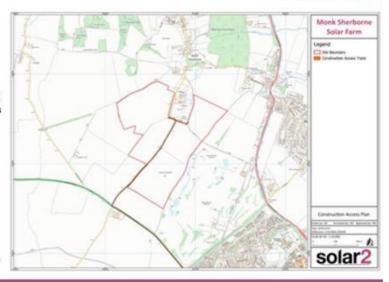
Construction Route

Q. May we have a copy of the Solar Farm Traffic surveys? If not, please can you share details of how access to the construction sites will be managed (esp. safety)?

A. Proposed vehicle numbers will be submitted with the formal planning submission. The Local Highways Authority will review this and provide their comments accordingly. A detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be secured through planning condition. This will include details of any required mitigation/management.

Q. Where will the panel assembly and parking be situated for the site during the construction period. What will happen to this plot of land after the solar farm is built?

A. The layout will include a construction compound area within the red line boundary of the site which will include a laydown area and off-road parking. Likely this will be the last area to be developed within the site boundaries.



Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Questions

Q. We understand that the tenancy transfers from Solar2 to Recurrent Energy following the application approval. How can you guarantee that any agreements are honoured by Recurrent Energy?

A. Recurrent Energy own the SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle) for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm and are working with Solar2 on the project. Both parties are in full agreement of all commitments which will be a part of the planning application. All requirements and conditions of the agreed planning approval (if gained) must be fully complied with.









Feedback - Leaflet

- We fully acknowledge that an additional leaflet for a Welsh project was distributed in error to local residents. This was down to human error.
- Issues have been raised by residents reporting that they did not receive notification of the consultation. This has been investigated and both Royal Mail and the distribution company, have confirmed all leaflets were delivered.

Monk Sherborne Solar Farm





Feedback



Feedback period - just over 3 weeks (22 days) from public consultation exhibition



Planning application will be submitted early to mid-May 2025



Additional opportunity to provide feedback, support or opposition for the project via the planning portal













THANK YOU





Appendix 6: Press release

Solar2 & Recurrent Energy Invites Local People to Exhibition to Learn about Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Solar2 on behalf of Recurrent Energy, is developing proposals for a solar farm located in Monk Sherborne and, as such, would like to invite local residents and business owners to view the plans for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm at Monk Sherborne Village Hall, **on Thursday, the 6th of March, from 4pm to 7pm.**

During the exhibition, visitors will be able to view plans and photomontages to better understand the proposals. In addition, there will be the opportunity for local people to speak to the project team and also give feedback on both the plans and the community benefit fund.

Harry Whittaker, Project Manager at Solar2, said, "As a team, we have been working on the plans for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm and are ready to present the proposals to local residents. It is very important to us that we get honest and open feedback."

The project, if planning consent is granted, will generate enough power for 11,000* homes, help the UK reach Net Zero, along with improving energy security and, in the long term, contribute to the reduction of consumer energy bills.

Richard Morgan, Solar2's Solar Development Director, commented, "Community engagement is very important to the team at Solar2, and we look forward to welcoming residents to the public exhibition. The Monk Sherborne Solar Farm Community Benefit Fund will be a minimum of £500 per MW, which will return a fund of £560,000 over the lifetime of the project. As such, it is important that we work with the community in order for the fund to deliver tangible benefits."

For further information regarding Monk Sherborne Solar Farm, visit www.monksherbornesolarfarm.co.uk.





Appendix 7: Comment form

Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Monk Sherborne Solar Farm - Feedback

It is very important to us that local communities have the opportunity to provide feedback to help inform design, construction and operation of the proposed solar farm.

To record your views and also help us improve future Public Information events we would be

grateful if you would answer the following questions.
1. About you
\square I am a local resident (living within approx. 10km/6 miles of the proposed solar farm site (please confirm which community you live within)
\square I am a local business owner (operating within approx. 10km/6 miles of the proposed solar farm (please confirm below which community your business is located within)
$\hfill \square$ I am a community council member (please confirm below which community council you are a member of)
\square I am a local council representative (please give further detail in the box below)
☐ Other
Please expand your answer here:
2. How satisfied are you with the information provided about Monk Sherborne Solar Farm?
☐ Very satisfied
☐ Quite satisfied
☐ Quite satisfied ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
□ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
□ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied □ Quite dissatisfied □
 □ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied □ Quite dissatisfied □ Very dissatisfied 3. Which of the following best describes your view of the proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Quite dissatisfied Very dissatisfied Which of the following best describes your view of the proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm?
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Quite dissatisfied Very dissatisfied Which of the following best describes your view of the proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm? Strongly supportive
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Quite dissatisfied Very dissatisfied Which of the following best describes your view of the proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm? Strongly supportive Somewhat supportive





Scan the QR code for the electronic verision of this feedback form **Solar2**





4. If proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm are approved, Solar2 is committed to providing a

would like to hear suggestions from the local community about local priorities and projects for this fund.
☐ Skills & Education
☐ Social Amenities
☐ Employment Opportunities
☐ Tackling Fuel Poverty
☐ Support for younger people
☐ A long-term legacy fund
☐ Reduced energy bills for local residents
☐ Financial contribution towards residential carbon reduction technologies
☐ Other (please specify below)
5 If you have other suggestions on how the community benefit fund can be used, please let us know in the box below.
6. Do you any further comments regarding Monk Sherborne Solar Farm you would like to share?



Scan the QR code for the electronic verision of this feedback form **Solar2**







We collect your email address for the sole purpose of providing you with further information about Monk Sherborne Solar Farm.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Please return completed hard copy surveys to:-Monk Sherborne Solar Farm Solar2

Linden House

Mold Business Park

Mold

CH7 1XP

Please find below information regarding our privacy policy.

The Personal Information that we collect are used for providing and improving the Service. We will not use or share your information with anyone except as described in this Privacy Policy.

The terms used in this Privacy Policy have the same meanings as in our Terms and Conditions, which is accessible at wind2.co.uk, unless otherwise defined in this Privacy Policy. Our Privacy Policy was created with the help of the Privacy Policy Template and the Terms and Conditions Template.





Scan the QR code for the electronic verision of this feedback form **Solar2**