



STONESTREET GREEN SOLAR Community Newsletter June 2022

Introduction

Evolution Power is intending to develop a renewable energy generating project, together with on-site energy storage, associated infrastructure and an underground cable connection, on land at Aldington, near Ashford in Kent.

Known as Stonestreet Green Solar, the project will generate renewable energy through solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. The project will have an export capacity of up to 99.9MW and will connect to the national grid at Sellindge.

Prior to submitting an application to the Planning Inspectorate for a development consent order (DCO) for the project, Evolution Power will be carrying out pre-application consultation.

A first round of non-statutory consultation was held between 25 March 2022 and 29 April 2022 to provide members of the local community and key stakeholders with the opportunity to view the initial proposals and submit feedback to help shape the proposals for Stonestreet Green Solar.

This Community Newsletter provides a summary of the views expressed in the feedback we've received during the non-statutory consultation period and provides an update on next steps.

Non-statutory local information events held:

Location	Date
Sellindge Village Hall	Friday 8 April
Aldington Village Hall	Saturday 9 April
Bilsington Village Hall	Tuesday 12 April
Mersham Sports Club	Wednesday 13 April

Consultation timeline



90
people attended the information events



21
feedback forms were received

Our information events

Local information events were held at four different venues, in accordance with the Statement of Community Consultation published in March 2022

(https://www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/files/image/consultation/SoCC_March_2022.pdf)

At the events we presented the initial, outline details of the project, which will evolve as we continue the development of the project design.

This first stage of consultation was undertaken to gather feedback from key stakeholders and the local community that we will use to inform the project design going forward.

At the events the developer and other specialists were on hand to answer questions and explain the current status of the proposals. There were also feedback forms available at the events for visitors to fill in on the day or take away and post back.

The feedback forms were also made available on the project website for the duration of the non-statutory consultation period.

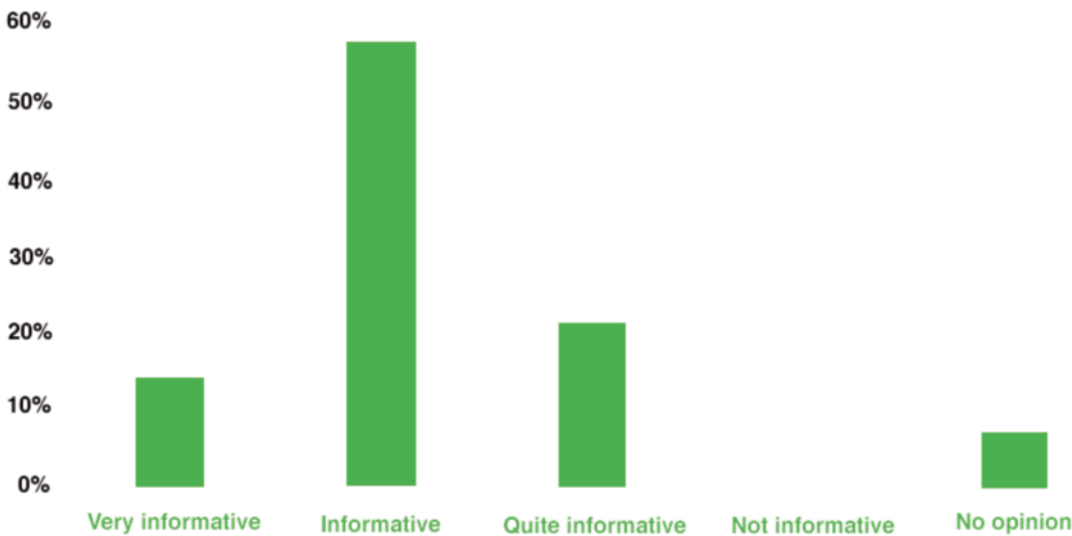


Feedback

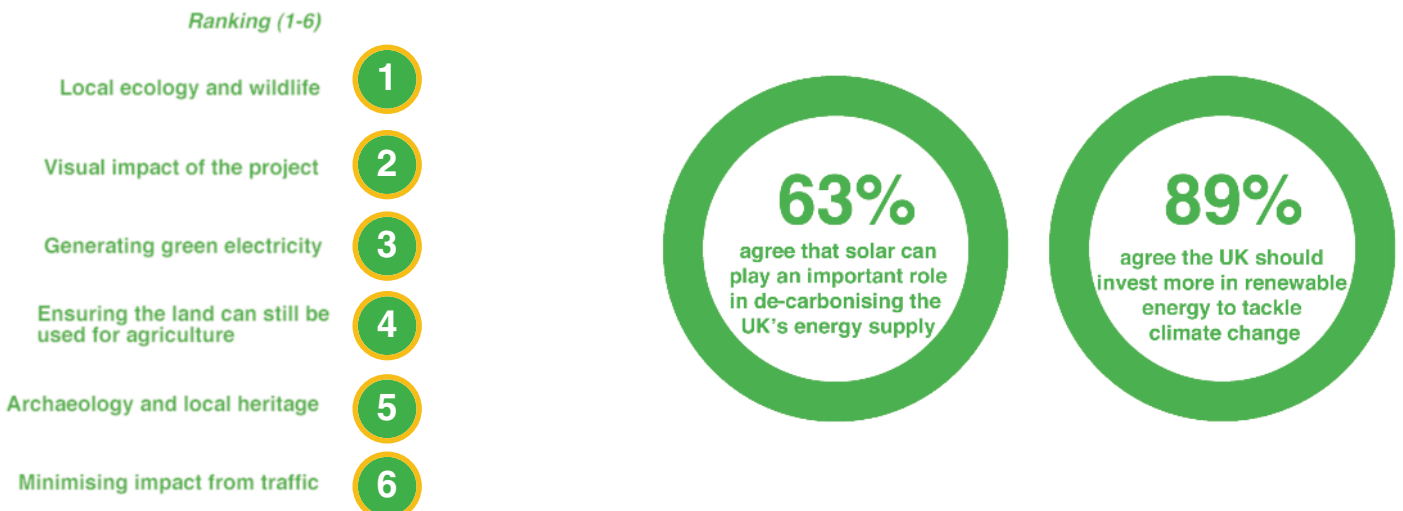
The non-statutory consultation was held between 25 March 2022 and 29 April 2022.

The feedback received during the consultation period included:

How informative did you find the event?



Which aspect of the project is most important to you?



*Aggregate scores from total feedback showing most important (1) to least important (6)

Emerging themes

From the feedback received, there were a number of key themes that emerged. Many of these will be assessed in full within the Environmental Statement (ES) we will be preparing to accompany our DCO application. The ES will report on the findings of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) undertaken for the project.

The preliminary findings of the EIA will be presented in a document known as the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) (further details provided below), which will be published during the statutory consultation period later this year.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Respondents commented on the potential visual impact of the project and the harm it may cause to the landscape character.

What we are doing: *A Landscape and Visual Impact assessment is being prepared which will include a consideration of the impacts on landscape character and people's views. The results will be presented in our PEIR and ES. More than 30 viewpoints have been agreed with Ashford Borough Council, which will be assessed to identify any potential visual impacts. A selection of photomontages of the proposed development within the landscape will also be prepared.*

Footpaths/Public Access

Respondents sought further detail on the potential impact on local walks and the loss of footpaths.

What we are doing: *We appreciate that there are a number of Public Rights of Way that cross the site which are important assets for the local community. In consultation with Kent County Council, we are reviewing the existing footpath network and will provide a clear strategy for addressing the impacts of the project on Public Rights of Way in the PEIR and ES.*

A number of respondents mentioned the ambition to provide an off-road route between Aldington and Mersham and we are keen to investigate whether this benefit can be delivered as part of this project.

Ecology and bird life

Respondents queried the impact on wildlife and also on bird life.

What we are doing: *Ecological surveys have been undertaken on the site for more than 18 months to*

identify the range of species and numbers of wildlife and birds on the site. These surveys will inform the biodiversity assessment within our PEIR and ES which is currently being prepared.

Fire Risk from energy storage facilities

Respondents raised the potential issue of fire from the energy storage facilities.

What we are doing: *An Outline Battery Safety Management Plan is being prepared which will set out the measures to be implemented to mitigate any potential fire risk. This will be submitted with the DCO application.*

Traffic

Respondents sought clarity on how the project would impact on traffic in the local area and whether it would result in further disruption of journeys from the A20/M20 to the local area.

What we are doing: *Our PEIR and ES will include a chapter assessing the potential impacts of the project on the highway network. Additionally, an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan will be submitted with the DCO application.*

Noise and Light

Respondents queried the potential for noise from the energy storage facilities and whether there would be light spill from the project.

What we are doing: *Potential impacts from both noise and light are being assessed as part of our PEIR and ES.*

Loss of agricultural land/food security

Respondents expressed concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land.

What we are doing: *A detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey has been undertaken to determine the quality of the agricultural land within the project site, and the project has been designed to ensure that the land can still be used for grazing, thus continuing in agricultural use.*

Community benefit

Respondents provided feedback that they were unsure if there would be any benefit for the local community.

What we are doing: *In advance of launching the statutory consultation, we will be firming up details of the community benefit and engaging with key local stakeholders to determine how funding could be used.*

Next steps

Evolution Power is very grateful to those people who took the time to submit feedback to the non-statutory consultation. We have carefully considered that feedback and will use it to inform the evolution of the proposals. The next steps prior to the submission of the DCO application are as follows.

Community Liaison Panel

Membership of the Community Liaison Panel (CLP) has been agreed and the first meeting was held on 9 June 2022. The CLP will be a forum to share information between Evolution Power and the community and will act as an additional channel of communication about the project. Notes from the CLP meetings will be available to view on the project website:

www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

Scheme Design

Evolution Power is continuing to develop the design of the scheme, taking into consideration feedback received from the first round of consultation. The DCO application will show where the solar arrays are proposed to be sited, along with inverters and the energy storage facilities, and will also show proposed changes and enhancements to Public Rights of Way on the site. The preliminary proposals for the design will be included in the consultation material for the forthcoming statutory consultation (see below).

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

The project is EIA development, as defined in the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. We are therefore required to undertake an EIA for Stonestreet Green Solar.

The purpose of the PEIR is to provide an early summary of the known information at the time that will be part of the EIA to allow stakeholders and the local community to develop an informed view of the potential impacts of the development. This

process involves identifying likely significant adverse effects on the environment resulting from the project, and mitigation measures to avoid or minimise those adverse effects where possible, as well as identifying likely significant beneficial effects on the environment.

We have been undertaking environmental surveys for more than 18 months to gather data to inform this process, and in April 2022 we submitted a Scoping Report which set out the approach we propose to take to the EIA of the project. A Scoping Opinion was issued by the Planning Inspectorate in May 2022. Both documents can be accessed on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/stonestreet-green-solar/?ipcsection=docs>

The PEIR will present the preliminary findings of the surveys and assessments that we have been carrying out as part of the EIA process.

The PEIR will include a number of different chapters covering different topics for example: Climate Change, Cultural Heritage, Ecology, Landscape and Visual, Noise, Socio-economics, Transport and Water Environment. The PEIR will be accompanied by a Non-Technical Summary.

The PEIR will be published as part of the statutory consultation and feedback will be sought on it as part of the consultation.

Statutory Consultation

The statutory consultation will be undertaken for at least four weeks during summer/autumn 2022. Residents and businesses within the core consultation zone (as shown in the Statement of Community Consultation) will be sent a further newsletter with details of the consultation dates and events in advance. The consultation details will also be advertised in the local press as well as on the project website. Consultation events will be held in Aldington, Bilsington, Mersham and Sellindge.

Contact details

Anyone with an interest in the project can contact us by:

Emailing: info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

Calling our Freephone information line: 08081 698335

Writing to: FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar

You can also follow us on Twitter: @SGS_solar