

CONSULTATION REPORT

PELHAM SPRING SOLAR FARM

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ON BEHALF OF LOW CARBON SOLAR PARK 6 LTD

Pegasus Group

First Floor | South Wing | Equinox North | Great Park Road | Almondsbury | Bristol | BS32 4QL

T 01454 625945 | **F** 01454 618074 | **W** www.pegasusgroup.co.uk

Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | East Midlands | Leeds | Liverpool | London | Manchester

PLANNING | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Consultation Report sets out a summary of the pre-application consultation and communication undertaken by Low Carbon Solar Park 6 Ltd (“the applicant”) with the local community and stakeholders for a proposed renewable led energy scheme on agricultural land located near Pelham Substation, Maggots End. The proposal is referred to collectively as the 'Proposed Development' and the project is referred to as 'Pelham Spring Solar Farm'.

1.2 This report sets out the aims of the community engagement; the pre-application communication undertaken to date; its outcomes and how any feedback has been used to guide the proposed development.

1.3 Low Carbon Solar Park 6 Ltd have considered and taken into account the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) of Uttlesford District Council throughout the development of the proposal and the associated communications with the local and wider community. The focus for the public engagement has been towards the local community surrounding the site.

1.4 The programme of Pre-application consultation undertaken by the project team was split into the following stages:

Phase 1 – Primary formal online consultation with residents and stakeholders within the surrounding community;

Phase 1a – Site visit opportunity for the nearest of neighbours

Phase 2 – Secondary formal online consultation with residents and stakeholders within the surrounding community

Phase 2a - Online Webinar/Q&A session and Formal public exhibition event at Manuden Village Community Centre

1.5 The formal public consultation was comprised of two phases, starting with a first round of formal public consultation on the 5th March 2021, with the local community asked to submit any observations by 26th March. The primary round of consultation was closed early on 23rd March 2021, in recognition that there was further work to undertake and additional options to explore. Following the primary consultation, a phase of informal site meetings was offered to the immediate neighbours to the site before a second round of consultation on a revised site area

commenced on 12th July, ending the 9th August. Alongside the second round of formal public consultation an online Webinar/Q&A session was held with local residents on the 19th July before a public exhibition event was held at Manuden Village Community Centre on the 2nd August. The consultation strategy was designed to take account of the COVID-19 restrictions on physical gatherings in place at the time of the events.

1.6 The Applicant listened to the views expressed by consultees and has made several changes and additions to the proposals as a result, including, amongst other things:

- The exclusion of proposed PV arrays from the development zones previously denoted 7, 6 10 and 11;
- Increased offsets between the proposed development and surrounding designated heritage assets;
- Removal of proposed PV arrays from fields bisected by PRoW 5_14;
- Revision of the proposed construction traffic routing, with construction traffic now to be instructed to access the site from the north, avoiding travel through Manuden; and
- Detailed landscaping strategy designed to:
 - Retain, enhance and strengthen existing boundary features (hedges and trees);
 - Introduce extensive swathes of new hedgerow and tree planting to enhance the natural containment of the site and provide visual screening along previously open boundaries of the site;
 - Provide 9-10m development buffer zones along boundary features including hedges, and 30-50m adjacent to the Ancient Woodland;
 - Retain corridors for animals to move freely around the site and surrounding area;
 - Conversion of arable fields that will form site boundaries adjacent to solar arrays to wildflower meadow; and

- A blend of on-Site and off-Site measures will be provided in order to mitigate for the loss of 11 skylark breeding territories identified on site.
- 1.7 The above changes and additions were consolidated within the proposals prior to the submission a full planning application to Uttlesford District council in November 2021 (Ref: UTT/21/3356/FUL) which was subsequently refused on 24 January 2022. The application was determined by the Council within the statutory 13-week period. A number of holding objections subject to requests for further information were raised by statutory consultees during the determination period, however, the Council did not allow an extension of time to provide the requested information.
- 1.8 Following the refusal of the previous planning application, the applicant has undertaken further pre-application consultation with both Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council Highways (Phase 3) through the submission of formal pre-application advice requests to obtain constructive feedback on a redesign of the proposals. Following detailed engagement from the Council's planning, conservation, landscape and archaeology officers, it was considered that a revised design which removed PV arrays from the southern, south eastern and northern part of the eastern parcel of the site could be considered appropriate when one applies a tilted planning balance. These changes have subsequently been addressed in the revised development proposals submitted as part of this planning application and are noted to also further address a number of the comments raised by the public during Phase 1 and 2 of the public consultation exercise.

2. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 The main planning policy references for pre-application community consultation relevant to the proposals are:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published July 2021;
- The National Planning Practice Guidance web-based resource (NPPG), first published 6th March 2014, with updates.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021)

2.2 The NPPF sets out the national planning policy for the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.

2.3 In addressing the need for pre-application consultation, paragraph 39 of the NPPF states:

“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.”

2.4 Paragraph 40 sets out the roles of local planning authorities, stating:

“(Local planning authorities) should, 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.”

2.5 The applicant is therefore encouraged to provide evidence of how the community have been involved in pre-application discussions concerning the proposed development.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

2.6 The NPPG web-based resource further raises the importance of consultation in the planning process, in particular the desire to “front-load” consultation in the form of pre-application discussions.

2.7 The NPPG outlines in detail the consultation process which Local Authorities must follow during their determination of planning applications.

- 2.8 The UK Government has realised guidance for LPAs and applicants to follow during this national crisis. Temporary changes to the publicity requirements for certain planning applications have been introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to support timely decision-making, and avoid delays to development as a result of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, while maintaining public participation in the decision-making process. The UK government has been clear in its advice that the planning sector should carry on, despite disruptions caused by Covid-19.
- 2.9 These temporary changes give Local Planning Authorities (and in the case of certain applications for EIA development, applicants) greater flexibility in relation to the way they publicise the planning applications if they are not able to comply with a particular requirement because it is not reasonably practicable to do so for reasons connected to the effects of coronavirus, including restrictions on movement.
- 2.10 Paragraph 35 (Ref. ID. 15-035-20200513) of the Coronavirus and Pre-Decision Matters Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states the following:
- "Temporary changes to the publicity requirements for certain planning applications have been introduced through the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to support timely decision-making, and avoid delays to development as a result of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, while maintaining public participation in the decision-making process. These temporary changes give local planning authorities (and in the case of certain applications for EIA development, applicants) greater flexibility in relation to the way they publicise the planning applications if they are not able to comply with a particular requirement because it is not reasonably practicable to do so for reasons connected to the effects of coronavirus, including restrictions on movement".*
- 2.11 The Amendment and Planning Practice Guidance is clear that the government "do not intend to change the determination timescales for planning applications set out in the Development Management Procedure Order 2015". Planning applications are to proceed through the determination period regardless of the ongoing pandemic.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 3.1 The applicant is committed to best practice in community consultation and communication throughout the planning process, as recommended by Uttlesford District Council's SCI and Government guidance. Having extensive experience in community communication; Low Carbon recognise the importance that the local community and key stakeholders can bring to the process through appropriate inclusive pre-application consultation and communications.
- 3.2 The applicant acknowledges the requirement for community engagement as set out within the Localism Act 2011. As this Consultation Report sets out, the applicant has proactively contacted the local community and given them the opportunity to give feedback before any planning application is submitted, affording community members and local Parish Council members the chance to influence the shape of the proposed development before it was finalised.
- 3.3 The applicant also recognises that local people can contribute their knowledge and understanding of the locality, its past and its distinctive and valuable features that they deem worthy of protection that might otherwise be overlooked.
- 3.4 A proportionate programme of public and stakeholder engagement was adopted from the earliest opportunity for the proposal.

Aims and objectives

- 3.5 The aims and objectives of the programme to date have been to inform and engage with communities and stakeholders across the administrative area with a strong focus on the local communities surrounding the application site.
- 3.6 The key objectives of the communications undertaken so far include: -
- To ensure, as far as possible, that local people are aware of the proposals and have every opportunity to express their views and constructive feedback to the project team.
 - To provide the community and stakeholders with the opportunity to feed into the scope of the assessments being undertaken in support of the proposal.

- To inform and engage with local communities about the need for the proposal.
- To understand views of the local community towards the proposal.
- To understand and to attempt to address any concerns in the community.
- To ascertain views from the wider area.

3.7 Through implementing these objectives, the applicant has aimed to effectively communicate and clarify information and allay concerns as far as is reasonably practicable.

3.8 Whilst the formal, pre-application phase has now closed, all of the comments have been reviewed and then weighed against the technical considerations and environmental reports undertaken on the site. The conclusion has been to produce a significantly amended scheme that, on balance, is a site which is as considered as can be and, that the applicant feels merits a planning application.

4. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT METHODS

- 4.1 To ensure that the widest local stakeholder audience has been informed about the proposal, and given the opportunity to engage, proportionate consultation measures have been used throughout the planning process up to the point of this submission.
- 4.2 Importantly, the strategy for community consultation was modified to reflect the COVID-19 movement restrictions. Low Carbon Ltd's (the parent company of Low Carbon Solar Park 6 Ltd) usual strategy involves a posted consultation pack followed by a community exhibition. However, it was not possible due to government restrictions to hold this exhibition during the first phase of formal public consultation. The exhibition for the first stage of the consultation was subsequently replaced by a project website hosted on the Commonplace platform.
- 4.3 Details of the various methods are summarised below.

Consultation Pack

- 4.4 The consultation pack is a fundamental component of the engagement process, allowing information about the project to reach a targeted audience.
- 4.5 The first stage of the consultation process involved writing to the 34 neighbours within close proximity of the site. Residents, were sent a letter in February 2021 to introduce the draft development proposals of the site and invite them to engage with the project team prior to the commencement of the formal consultation exercise.
- 4.6 The wider distribution of the consultation pack comprised of a letter from Low Carbon, information leaflet about the project and feedback form. These were posted to 614 addresses in the area surrounding the application site to provide initial project information, to invite members of the public to view the proposed development on the project website and to provide the contact details of the project team which included a project specific email address.
- 4.7 For the 34 near neighbour addresses, a separate consultation pack was distributed, inviting local residents and stakeholders situated close to the application site to arrange a phone call with a member of the project team to brief them on the proposals and answer and questions they had.



Figure 1: Consultation Pack postal boundary, shown in red

- 4.8 The leaflet and letter were distributed on 2nd March 2021. A copy of the leaflet and supporting letters is provided at Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1 – PHASE 1 LEAFLET, LETTERS TO RESIDENTS & FEEDBACK FORM

- 4.9 The size of the letter drop area was determined by the location of nearby residents who could be affected by both the build and operational phase of the development, in this instance it was set at approximately 2km from the the site, however, where the consultation radius has intersected built up areas or narrowly excluded properties, the consultation area has been appropriately extended to include all affected parties.

- 4.10 A social media campaign was also used in Phase 1, targeted advertising on both Facebook and Instagram to the postcodes within the consultation area to assist advertising the project and drive traffic to the website to provide feedback.
- 4.11 Following several comments relating to the visual elements of the scheme and the closeness of the scheme to the scheduled monument, the decision was made to close the first stage of formal public consultation at the end of March 2021 to allow the project team to review the comments received and consider the options.
- 4.12 Following the closure of the first round of public consultation, but to continue with engagement with the community, a letter was issued to the very near neighbours on the 6th April 2021 inviting them to a socially distanced site visit to discuss the proposal, receive feedback and any concerns.

APPENDIX 2 – PHASE 1A LETTERS TO NEAR NEIGHBOURS

- 4.13 Having explored various options for the proposal and having looked at any other land that may be available, a second phase of formal public consultation (Phase 2) was commenced 12th July 2021 for 4 weeks, consulting the local community on a revised site area and design of the proposal. The second formal consultation process, similarly to the first, involved the distribution of a consultation pack including a letter, information leaflet and feedback form to 614 addresses in the area surrounding the application site to provide revised project information, to invite members of the public to view the proposed development on the project website and to provide the contact details of the project team. In addition to the above, the letters issued for the public consultation also invited residents to attend an online webinar and Q&A session held with the project team on Monday the 19th July 2021 in addition to a public consultation event at Manuden Village Community Centre on 2nd August 2021 (Phase 2a).
- 4.14 As part of the consultation pack for the primary and secondary stages of formal consultation, local residents were also provided with a freepost address to return the feedback form to the project team without the need for a stamp. Two differing feedback forms were used for the first and second phases of consultation to correlate with the two differing Commonplace websites that were set up. A copy of both feedback forms is provided with the relevant appendices of this report.
- 4.15 Consultation emails were also issued to the Parish Councils located in or in close proximity to the boundary of the application site, namely: -

- Maunden Parish Council
- Berden Parish Council
- Stocking Pelham Parish Council
- Furneux Pelham Parish Council

4.16 Introduction emails were issued to the Local Ward Councillors as well as the MP for the constituency, namely: -

- Cllr Janice Loughlin, Stort Valley Ward
- Cllr Geoffrey Williamson, Little Hadham Ward
- Kemi Bedenoch MP, Saffron Walden Constituency

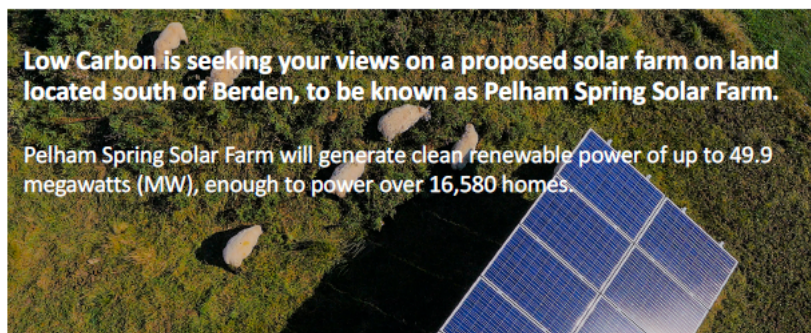
4.17 In addition to the above, an introductory letter and consultation leaflet was circulated to a number of identified active interest groups in the area, including:

- Essex Wildlife Trust
- West Essex Ramblers
- East Herts Ramblers
- Stort Valley Ramblers
- RSPB Stort Valley Local Group

Press

4.18 The Bishop Stortford Independent was utilised to promote awareness of the project and website for both the primary and secondary stages of formal public consultation. An advert was placed in the 10th March 2021 and 14th July 2021 publications.

4.19 A copy of the adverts are set out below:



To find out more about the proposal please visit the consultation website [\[redacted\]](#) or scan the QR code below. Owing to current health risks associated with COVID-19, public drop-in events are not longer appropriate, but we are still committed to hearing the views of the community on our proposals before we submit a planning application.

To submit feedback click on the 'Have your say' icon within the consultation website.

You can also find out more and provide your views through our freephone line, freepost address, and dedicated project email address, listed below.

Please note that the deadline for submitting comments is **Friday, 26th March 2021**.

@ pelhamspring@pegasusgroup.com

📞 0800 048 7285, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

✉️ Freepost LOW CARBON UK SOLAR DEVELOPMENT



📱 SCAN ME

Figure 2: Copy of press advert 10th March 2021



Following our initial consultation and the feedback provided earlier this year, we are now consulting on a larger area of land in order to provide some flexibility over the options for development. Not all land is required for the final design and we are committed to hearing the views of the community on this proposal before we look to submit a planning application.

To find out more about the proposal please visit the consultation website <https://pelhamspringsolarfarm.commonplace.is/> or scan the QR code below.

<p>Join our Community Webinar Date: Monday 19th July Time: 7pm Please register on project website</p>	<p>Meet with us: Manuden Village Community Centre Date: Monday 2nd August Time: 2pm until 8pm</p>
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@ pelhamspring@pegasusgroup.com
☎ 0800 048 7285, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
✉ Freepost LOW CARBON UK SOLAR DEVELOPMENT



Figure 3: Copy of press advert 14th July 2021

Project Website

4.20 The project website [REDACTED] contained all the information that would usually be displayed at a consultation event. The website was available for both consultations:

- Phase 1 Consultation: 5th March 2021 – 26th March 2021 (closed 23rd March 2021)
- Phase 2 Consultation: 12th July 2021 – 9th August 2021

The Commonplace platform was designed to clearly display key information relating to the Proposed Development online, in the same way that consultation boards would ordinarily be used at a public exhibition event. The project website was subsequently updated for the secondary stage of public consultation.

4.21 The Commonplace website was made up of the following pages:

- Home – from here users can advance to ‘Have your say’ and ‘Learn more about the project’ or share the page via WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter or email.
- About the project – this page provided a brief introduction to the project and the operation of the solar farm, as well as, ‘Introducing Low Carbon’ and asking ‘Local suppliers’ to provide details for potential future work. Users could then click a link to advance to the ‘Have your say’ page.
- Meet the Engagement Team – this page introduced the main organisations within the project team and provided links to both Commonplace's and Low Carbon's privacy policies.
- News – this page provides a placeholder for any project updates over the course of the project lifecycle. Up to now, no significant updates have been posted.
- Community Engagement – on this page viewers were linked to a number of different pages providing further information on the project and providing a facility to leave feedback, including:
 - ‘Construction, Access and Connection Information’
 - On this page visitors could view key technical information regarding the proposed construction and access details of the proposal.
 - Proposed design
 - This page provided visitors the opportunity to view the draft indicative site layout for the project.
 - ‘Development Process, Timeline and Other Key Topics’ (Phase 1)

- This page provided visitors with an overview of the development process, providing an understanding of the documentation required, as well as an overall project timeline and the anticipated key dates for the progression of the proposals, through the planning process and upto the build out of the site. The page also provided visitors with answers to a number of commonly asked questions on solar farm development.
- 'Development Process & Timeline' (Phase 2)
 - This page provided visitors with an overview of the development process, providing an understanding of the documentation required, as well as an overall project timeline and the anticipated key dates for the progression of the proposals, through the planning process and upto the build out of the site.
- 'FAQs' (Phase 2)
 - This page provided visitors with the answers to a number of commonly asked questions on solar farm development.
- 'Biodiversity & Public Rights of Way'
 - This page provided visitors with key information regarding how Low Carbon Solar Park 6 Ltd plan to manage to protect and enhance biodiversity within and around the site as part of the proposed development. The page also provided information on how the proposals would look to retain and enhance existing rights of way where they are likely to be affected by the proposals.
- 'Views of Pelham Spring Solar Farm' (Phase 1)
 - This page provided a number of photos showing existing key viewpoints into the site and what the site would look like once the proposals were constructed and associated planting implemented.

- 'Comment or Provide Feedback via the Red Line Map'
 - on this page users chose a point on a map of the Site and surrounding area and were then prompted to answers questions which are outlined, along with responses, in Section 5 of this report.

- 4.18 Prior to the commencement of the second consultation, the Commonplace website was updated to reflect the revised proposals and include additional information which was not previously published as part of the primary formal consultation. In addition to this two new pages were added to the Community Engagement section of the website:
 - 'Come and Meet With Us'
 - On this page users were invited to attend the public exhibition arranged at the Manuden Village Community Centre for the Monday 2nd August between 2pm and 8pm.

 - Pelham Spring Webinar
 - This page was introduced on the website to provide users the opportunity to view the recording from the online webinar and Q&A session arranged on the 19th July 2021.

Individual Letters & Meetings

- 4.22 The applicant emailed the local Parish Councils as mentioned above to introduce the proposal over email inviting them to a video meeting where they could present the proposals, introduce Low Carbon, and brief them on the consultation process.

- 4.23 Video meetings were held as detailed below were Low Carbon presented the proposal followed by an 'open floor' Q&A session.
 - Berden Parish Council – 1st March 2021

 - Stocking Pelham Parish Council – 9th March 2021

- 4.24 Further to the individual meetings with the Parish Councils listed above, a virtual meeting with local ward councillors and committee members at Uttlesford District Council was arranged on the 11th May 2021 to introduce councillors to the draft

proposals, discuss the process of site selection for the development and answer any any questions they had.

Local Advertisement of Proposals

- 4.25 Each of the aforementioned Parish Councils were emailed on the 2nd March 2021 for the first consultation and again on the 11th July 2021 for the second consultation to provide an update on the public consultation with the community and requesting assistance to help advertise the proposal via printed posters and via their social media channels.

Webinar and Q&A session - 19th July 2021

- 4.26 As part of the second round of public consultation the local community were invited to attend an online Webinar and Q&A session to discuss the revised design and scope of the proposed development and raise any questions or concerns they had with members of the project team. A recording of the webinar was subsequently placed on the project website, making it available to watch back to anyone in the community who was unable to join that evening.

Public Exhibition - 2nd August 2021

- 4.27 As COVID-19 restrictions began to ease in Summer 2021, the project team arranged a public consultation exhibition for residents and interested parties to attend to come and view the project proposals and have an opportunity to raise any questions comments or concerns with members of the project team in person.

Similarly to the webinar, the exhibition was advertised through the second round consultation material circulated to the local community. The exhibition was held at the Manuden Village Community Centre on Monday 2nd August between 2pm and 8pm.

5. DETAILED RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

5.1 This section details the results of the community consultation.

Introduction

5.2 The salient points are set out below:

5.3 During **Phase 1** of the consultation, up to 23rd March 2021:

- The website attracted 1,712 visitors. The majority of traffic was following the social media campaign run through Facebook and Instagram.
- Of the visitors to the website, only 126 contributions were made to the website from 58 respondents.
- In total, 75 questionnaires were received during the public consultation period (via the website or freepost address).
- In addition, the applicant received 50 enquiries via the Freephone information number or project email.

5.4 A summary of the demographic of site visitors and respondents is detailed below:

Location

5.5 Commonplace provides a map to summarise the postcodes of respondents who submitted comments through the consultation website including those who posted a survey via the Freepost address. The map confirms that all responses received were from the local community who live in relatively close proximity to the site. The map shown below demonstrates the sentiment of those that responded towards the project (proportionally about 20% of the addresses within 2km of the site).

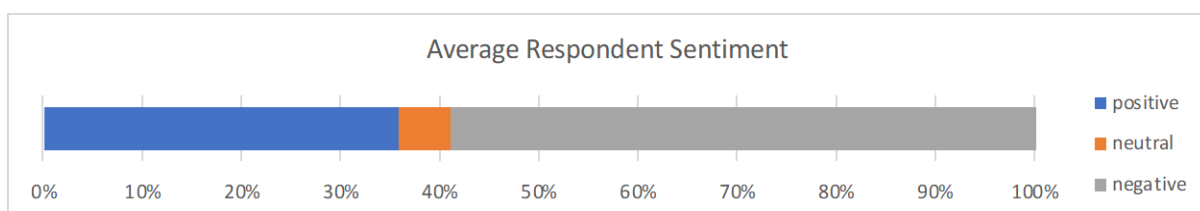


Map of responses received from Commonplace consultation website

Please note, Commonplace doesn't show the respondents on the above map who did not confirm their email address.

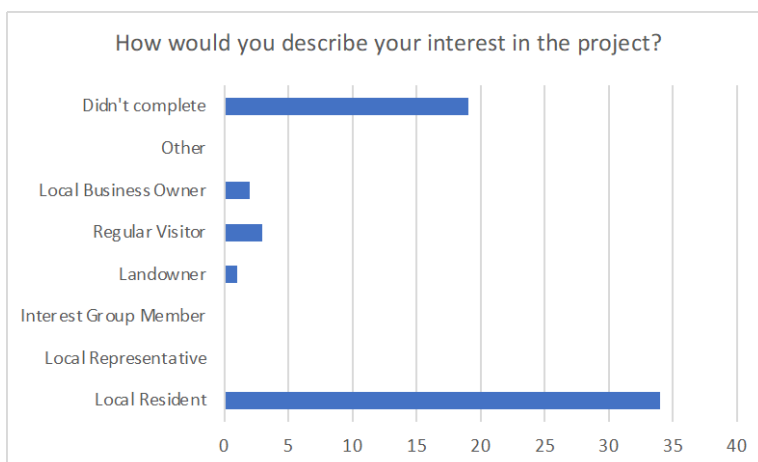
Sentiment

Overall, 36% of respondents were positive toward the proposals, 5% neutral and 59% negative.



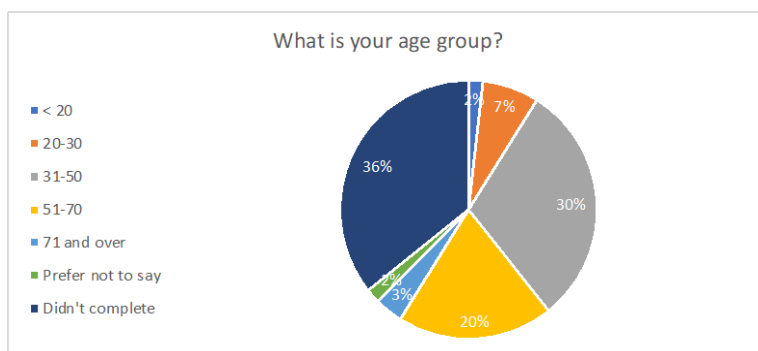
Interest in the Project

The vast majority of respondents described themselves as local residents. Some respondents chose more than one option.



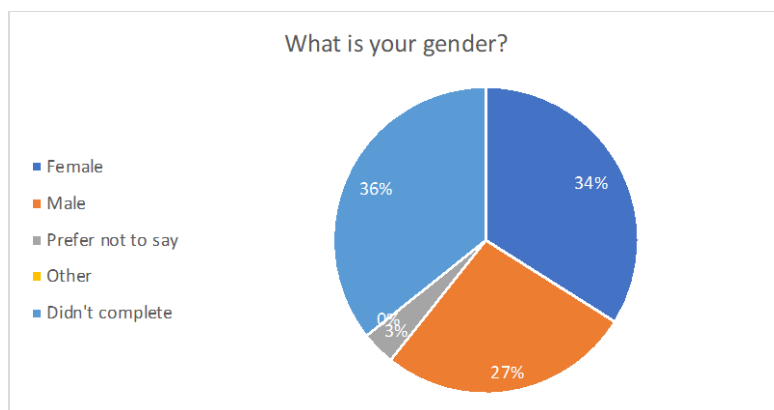
Age Group

The majority of respondents commenting on the proposals were between the ages of 31-50. However, 43% of residents did not provide this information.



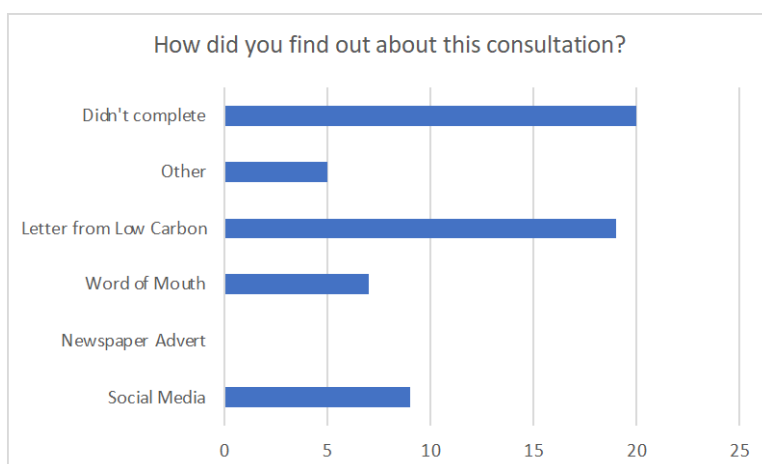
Gender

There was a relatively even split of genders providing contributions on the proposals, however, 36% of respondents did not provide their gender.



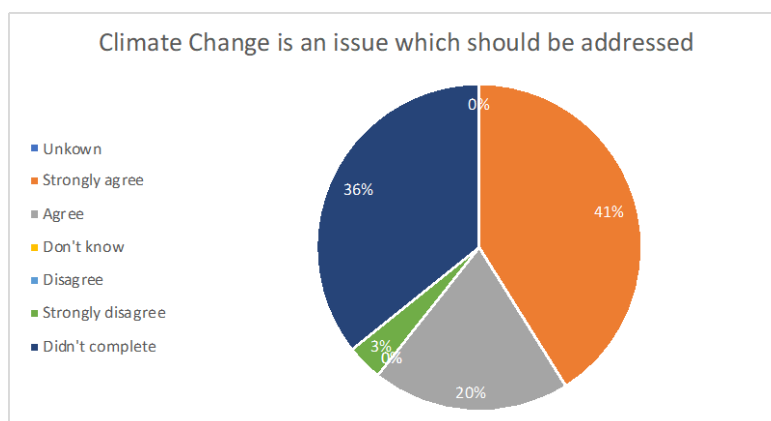
Method of Discovery

From the data that was completed, the vast majority of respondents stated that they were informed about the project consultation through the consultation pack posted to the community followed by the targeted social media campaign that was conducted.



Views on Climate Change

The vast majority of people either strongly agreed or agreed that climate change is an issue which should be addressed. A total of 36% of respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

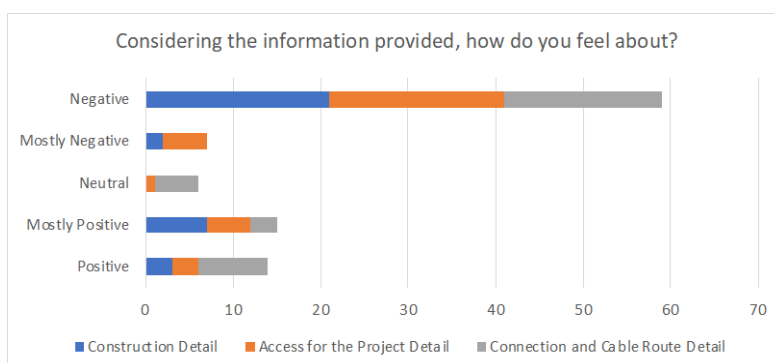


Do you think there is anything we can improve about our consultation?

A total of 26 comments were left for this questions, suggestions included:

- Tell the truth about fencing/lighting
- Provide a platform for discussion like a zoom / teams meeting / putting the argument both for and against. We are "for" the project but "against" the proposed location.
- Build next to m11 away from countryside
- I appreciate reaching out on social media, I probably would not have had the chance to say anything at all without this platform.
- Partially rewild this area instead - turn it into a nature reserve or wildflower meadow and make sure it is well maintained.
- You could remind people that environmental destruction is happening all around them all the time and this is part of the solution not the problem.
- Publicise more widely

Considering the details for Construction, Access and Connection and Cable Route for the project, how do you feel?



Response to We are considering a number of initiatives as part of this proposal. Please rate which you consider the most important [1 being the most important and 9 being the least important]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
New habitats for wildlife	7	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Beehives	0	3	3	6	2	0	0	0	0
Educational areas on edge of site	0	0	1	0	2	4	4	2	1
Wildflower meadows/strips	1	5	5	0	1	0	2	0	0
Screening Planting	4	0	3	1	2	1	0	2	13
Sheep grazing	0	1	2	2	4	2	2	1	0
Education packs for schools	1	0	0	1	0	4	5	3	0
Site tours for the community and/or schools	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	5	2
Other, please specify	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	10

The following question asked respondents to "Please specify any other initiatives". Suggested initiatives included:

- Set up a community fund to benefit the local community;
- Two way gates for badger use for foraging;
- Minimal disturbance to biodiversity;
- Consider the local deer.

5.6 During **Phase 2** of the consultation, between 12th July and 9th August 2021:

- The website attracted 833 visitors.
- Of the 833 visitors, a total of 231 contributions were made to the website from 164 respondents.

- In total, 155 questionnaires were received during the second public consultation period (via the website or freepost address).
- In addition, the applicant received 74 enquiries via the Freephone information number or project email.

5.7 A summary of the demographic of site visitors and respondents is detailed below:

Location

5.8 Commonplace provides a map to summarise the postcodes of respondents who provided their post code while submitting comments through the consultation website including those who posted a survey via the Freepost address. The map confirms that whilst most responses received were from the local community who live in relatively close proximity to the site, there were a number of comments from residents located further away from the development and in some case some considerable distance from the site, including addresses from near Manchester, Ipswich, Letchworth and Bishops Stortford. The maps shown below demonstrate the sentiment of those that responded towards the project (proportionately about 37% of the addresses within 2km of the site).

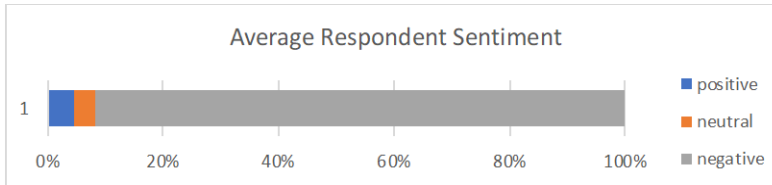


Map of responses received from Commonplace consultation website

Please note, Commonplace excludes respondents who did not confirm their email address.

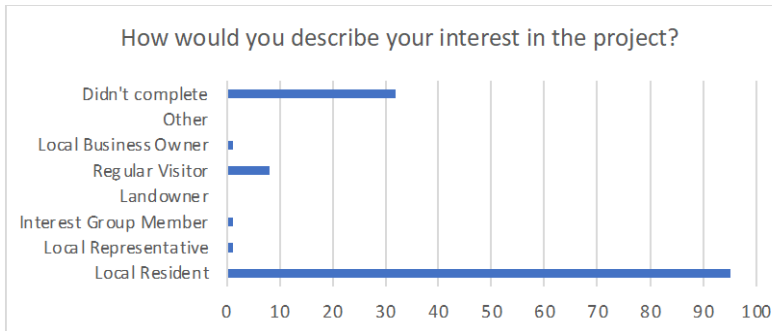
Sentiment

Overall, 5% of respondents were positive toward the proposals, 4% neutral and 92% negative.



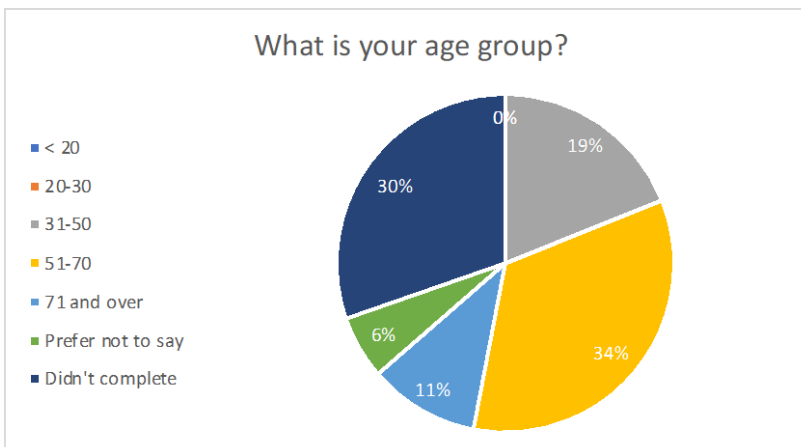
Interest in the Project

The vast majority of respondents described themselves as local residents. Some respondents chose more than one option.



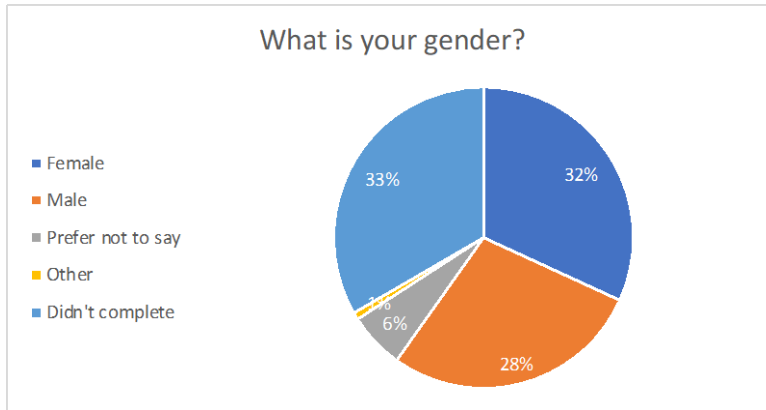
Age Group

The majority of respondents commenting on the proposals for the second consultation were between the ages of 51-70. However, 30% of residents did not provide this information.



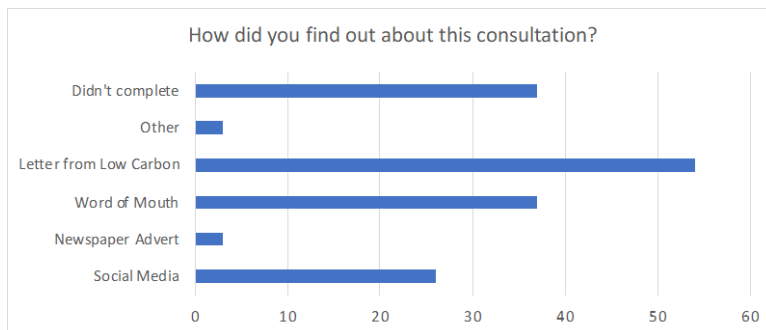
Gender

Slightly more “Females” providing feedback compared to “Males” compared to the previous consultation. The largest portion of 33% did not provide their gender.



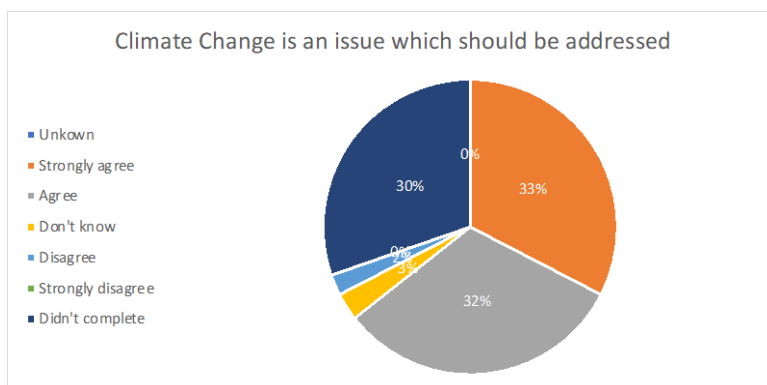
Method of Discovery

The vast majority heard about the consultation through the consultation pack which was posted out by Low Carbon. As the consultation was now familiar with the community, just over 20% heard about the consultation through “Word of Mouth”.

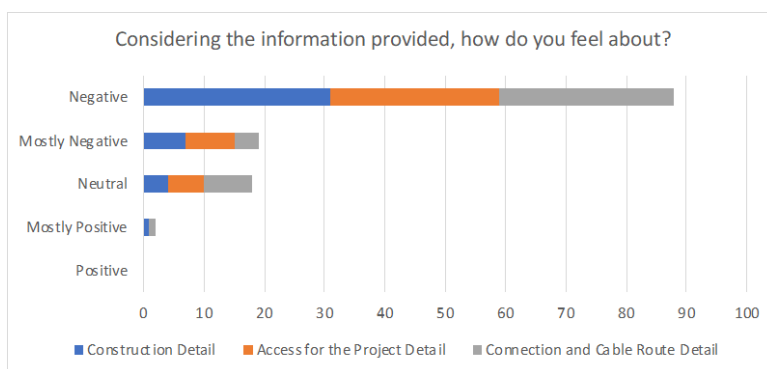


Views on Climate Change

The vast majority of people either strongly agreed or agreed as per the first consultation that climate change is an issue which should be addressed.



Considering the details for Construction, Access and Connection and Cable Route for the project, how do you feel?



We are considering a number of initiatives as part of this proposal. Please rate consecutively which you consider the most important. [1 being the most important and 9 being the least important]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
New habitats for wildlife	16	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Beehives	1	0	4	7	8	0	1	0	0
Educational areas on edge of site	1	0	1	5	4	3	2	2	2
Wildflower meadows/strips	3	7	9	2	0	0	1	0	0
Screening Planting	3	2	2	2	4	5	2	0	0
Sheep grazing	1	0	1	3	2	3	5	3	1
Education packs for schools	1	0	1	0	1	3	6	6	1
Site tours for the community and/or schools	0	5	0	0	1	3	3	4	3
Other, please specify	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	14


The following question asked respondents to "Please specify any other initiatives". Suggested initiatives included:

- Topsoil must not be removed from the site at all. This is a key issue for biodiversity and for future replacement. Why is this not listed and confirmed? Grassland around the solar arrays is essential;
- To not do the site at all;
- Whilst we appreciate the need for the development of solar farms, the use of Grade 2 agricultural land is inappropriate;
- Integrate with local community, preserve rural life and maintain well screened footpaths, but keeping them inviting enough and well maintained to be pleasant. From my understanding at the moment it is barbed wire etc which excuse the comparison but reminds me of prisons/ concentration camps;
- Leave our green spaces alone giving people the freedom to experience nature and enjoy the countryside as it always has been, most of the above already exist.

Community Feedback

- 5.9 Feedback could either be provided via the Commonplace website, via the freepost feedback forms which were sent out with the consultation pack (see details below), email or alternatively via the freephone information line.
- 5.10 The questions asked on both the Commonplace website and feedback forms are discussed in Section 4 and replicated in Appendices 1 and 4 of this report.

Feedback could be provided by the following means:

- Post: Freepost LOW CARBON UK SOLAR DEVELOPMENT
- Email: pelhamspring@pegasusgroup.com
- Freephone: 0800 048 7761
- Via the digital engagement platform:


- 5.11 The applicant has given meaningful consideration to the feedback received from the local community throughout the pre-application consultation exercise and has made a number of additions and changes to the design of the proposed development.
- 5.12 The table on the following pages sets out the key themes identified from analysis of the submitted feedback received through feedback forms, the project website, the project email or freepost address and sets out the applicant's response in respect of each matter, including where changes have been made.

Categories / Themes	Sub Themes	Example Comments	Applicants Response / Regard to the Comments / Issues	Changes Made to the Proposed Development & Relevant Documents
Negative Impact	Visual Impact on local rural character	<p><i>'This blot on the landscape should not be built here. Solar "farms" (it is green propaganda nonsense referring to them as farms) should be built on brownfield sites, not agricultural land.'</i></p> <p><i>'The distribution to a tiny village that doesn't even house a shop will be too much. We would be prepared to discuss it being smaller'</i></p> <p><i>'It will ruin the views of the countryside'</i></p> <p><i>'The development will ruin the countryside.'</i></p> <p><i>'A solar farm has no place in the beautiful countryside or high quality farm land'</i></p> <p><i>'The "deer" fence in the picture is 2m high (no scale on the artists impression), in the picture is coloured brown I believe to miss lead people into thinking it is a nice wooden fence, what will it be made of? I have seen "prison" like fences elsewhere with CCTV towers. The Hedgerow in front of it must be 3m tall based on scale vs "deer" fence and the fact that we know that the top of the solar panels are 3m, are you planning on planting 3m tall high hedges?'</i></p> <p><i>'This is an outrageous proposal, ripping straight through an area of outstanding beauty and historic interest.'</i></p> <p><i>'Generally I'm positive as we need to lower carbon emmissions but I am worried about the impact on the landscape'</i></p> <p><i>' DANGER OF DEATH signs, securirty cameras and paddlocked gates will totally indusrialise the landscape and make the many footpaths that are well used unattractive. The many battery storage units look like derelict metal</i></p>	<p>A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') has been produced (by a qualified landscape architect) and forms part of the planning application submission. The assessment considers the effects of the Proposed Development on both the landscape (landscape impact) and on representative viewpoints from around the Site (visual impact), including from public rights of way ('PRoW') and sensitive residential receptors.</p> <p>The Proposed Development has been designed to respect the character of the landscape and uses the strong field pattern, topography and existing surrounding woodland blocks to integrate the scheme as far as practicable. Existing landscape features would be retained, protected and strengthened; including the retention of all existing field margins (hedgerows and ditches), standoffs from boundary habitats and new tree belt planting where necessary. All trees on the Site would be retained and additional planting provided, where necessary, to create new and strengthen existing boundary planting both through and around the site.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that the proposed development has been effectively integrated and assimilated into the surrounding landscape. The combination of undulating topography and strong landscape framework around the site creates a discrete pocket of land characterised by a limited level of inter-visibility with its wider surroundings. The proposed planting would help contribute to the character of the local area partially offsetting the adverse effects, which only occur locally and affect a very limited number of visual receptors.</p> <p>Since the public consultation, the proposal has been substantially redesigned to remove significant areas of the site identified to be most sensitive to landscape, heritage and amenity constraints. Whilst the draft proposals presented during the public consultation measured c. 240 acres, the scheme has been redesigned to a smaller site area (c.185 acres) with the proposed PV arrays to cover an area of c.145 acres.</p> <p>It is considered that, on balance, the Proposed Development complies with the relevant planning policies relating to landscape and visual impact. This is on the basis that the vast majority of impacts are not significant, and the significant mitigation proposals have further reduced the anticipated degree of impact.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Design and Access Statement • Landscape and Visual Impact Aessment • Planting/Landscaping Plan <p>Following the comments received over the two rounds of public consultation, the proposed site layout and landscaping strategy have been carefully redesigned to remove significant areas PV arrays from the most visually sensitive parts of the site, peticularly from the southern parts of the site and where previously traversed by established PROWs. From the proposals presented during the second round of the consultation, the scheme has been redesigned to remove development zones 6, 7 10 and 11, following feedback from the loal community and technical specialists and the detailed technical studies conducted on site. Overall, the proposed development now incorporates a significant offset from existing development in Maggots End and at Battles Hall and from the established public footpaths which run in close proximity to the proposed development.</p> <p>The proposed landscaping strategy has been been designed to not only enhance and strengthen the existing hedgerow field boundaries around the site, but to also introduce estensive swathes of new hedgerow and tree planting along the boundaries of the site to enhance the natural containment of the site and provide visual screening. New hedgerow and tree planting has been particularly focused around the open</p>

		<p><i>containers or small houses they are totally unsuitable for the landscape and the area.'</i></p> <p><i>'This is a blight on the beautiful countryside and of no benefit to the communities that it impacts.'</i></p> <p><i>'To turn the countryside into an industrial area - which is effectively what you are trying to do is insane!'</i></p> <p><i>'I strongly object to the proposal, not only does it ruin agricultural land that should be farmed it is a total eyesore to the beautiful landscape'</i></p> <p><i>'You propose to turn useful farmland into an industrial park.'</i></p> <p><i>"This industrial installation (not a "farm") is entirely out of keeping with the surrounding countryside.'</i></p> <p><i>' I object to this it would be completely out of character with the local area and stand out like a sore thumb. The area is visible being on a hill and will blight the homes overlooking it and be detrimental to the village.'</i></p> <p><i>'We all recognise that there is a need to tackle climate change but industrialising the countryside is not the way to achieve it.'</i></p> <p><i>'The negative visual implications on our surrounding countryside are immense, we moved to Berden to settle in a village surrounded by beautiful countryside with walks to enjoy etc, we did not move here to look at Solar Farms ! We already have the power station, grid and battery storage facility within a mile, this is enough for our small community.'</i></p> <p><i>'I wish to express my extreme concern regarding the proposals to construct THREE solar farms and additional lithium battery units in the residential areas of Stocking</i></p>		<p>boundaries of the site which do not benefit from strong natural containment, including along the eastern and northern edges of the western part of the site and along the site's southern boundaries.</p>
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		<p><i>Pelham, Furneux Pelham and Berden. The lack of a coordinated and strategic approach across different companies proposing these developments is appalling.'</i></p> <p><i>'Too big. Overpowering. Wrong place'</i></p>		
	<p>Impact on Visual Outlook</p>	<p><i>'The panels are the height of bungalows we will see them from our house it totally blocks the view'</i></p> <p><i>'It is very close - too close - to the houses at Brick House End. Can the proposed siting of the panels be moved further away from these houses in particular?'</i></p>		
	<p>Scale</p>	<p><i>'180 acres is a larger area to cover with solar panels so I think proper screening and hedge/trees are very important. Ironically many hedges have been destroyed to access crops more easily. Perhaps you can redress this!'</i></p> <p><i>'This site will leave a long lasting negative impact on our communities. The size of the development is ridiculous and completely consumes the local area.'</i></p> <p><i>'Its far too big and major impact on small villages'</i></p> <p><i>'The battery storage building are the size of small houses or metal containers, and look completely derelict, sterile, creating a feeling similar to a prison or some scary high security no go zone.'</i></p> <p><i>'This is absolutely totally out of proportion for the area.'</i></p> <p><i>'I believe the project is disproportionate in size and should it go ahead be sited significantly further away from residential areas.'</i></p>		

		<p><i>'This scale of this is horrendous for the amenity of the people who like around here'</i></p> <p><i>'I think that the sheer scale of the proposed site is ridiculous in an area of beautiful traditional historical villages.'</i></p> <p><i>'The scale and location of this proposal is inappropriate, and is of no benefit to the local community or locality which features many heritage areas, buildings and ancient woodland.'</i></p> <p><i>'The land area taken is too large and unsightly.'</i></p> <p><i>'The scale of the proposed developments are completely not in keeping with the local environment. The area of development is half the size of Bishop's Stortford. This is totally unacceptable on every level.'</i></p> <p><i>'Too large, covering too much space making it impossible to integrate. Access routes and construction will be a major disruption - noise, dirt, traffic'</i></p>		
Heritage	Impact on Setting of Heritage Assets	<p><i>'it's too close to ancient protected woodland and buildings.'</i></p> <p><i>'This area is surrounded by historic sites, listed properties and the land is on a rising slope, no amount of screening is going to hide it. This has no backing from the local community.'</i></p> <p><i>' this is an inappropriate and disproportionate invasion of a heritage asset.'</i></p> <p><i>'Even if the site was flat, building a huge solar development next to an ancient woodland on the doorstep of so many listed buildings cannot be justified.'</i></p> <p><i>'The majority of the land selected either has (a) unacceptable harm by way of visual</i></p>	<p>A detailed Heritage Statement has been produced and forms part of the planning application submission. The statement provides an assessment of the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the designated heritage assets in proximity of the site, along with the archaeological potential of the site.</p> <p>There are a number of designated heritage assets located within the vicinity of the site including the Scheduled moat at Battles Hall to the south east of the site. Overall, the proposed layout has been carefully designed to respect the historic setting of the surrounding heritages assets and their historic relationship with the surrounding agricultural land where possible and includes a detailed and extensive landscaping strategy to provide natural screening to the development where appropriate.</p> <p>The detailed heriatge assessment, identifies that the proposed development is anticipated to result in less than substantial harm at the lower end of the spectrum to the heritage significance of the Grade II Listed Battles Hall, the Grade II Listed Dovecote and the Grade II Listed Cart lodge, with regards to setting.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Design and Access Statement • Heriatge Statement • Landscape and Visual Impact Aessment • Planting/Landscaping Plan <p>As set out above, since the second round of public consultation, the proposed development has been significantly redesigned to exclude significant areas of PV arrays from the layout identified to be most visually sensitive to the</p>

		<p><i>impact or detrimental impact on the openness of the countryside and/or (b) impact of valuable heritage assets (listed buildings, scheduled monuments and ancient woodlands).'</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to result in less than substantial harm at the lowermost end of the spectrum to the heritage significance of the Scheduled moated site at Battles Manor, with regards to setting.</p> <p>The Proposed Development within the site is anticipated to result in no harm to the heritage significance of the Scheduled The Crump, the Grade II Listed The Crump and former barn (now room) adjoining to north-west, the Grade II Listed Brick House, the Grade II Listed Rose Garth, Grade II Listed Peyton Hall and the Grade II Listed Barn to south-east of Peyton Hall, with regards to setting.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will result in significant public benefits that outweigh the less than substantial harm, and is therefore in accordance with the obligations of Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act) 1990, Section 16 of the NPPF and the heritage provisions of policies ENV2 and ENV4 of the Uttlesford District Council Local Plan.</p>	<p>significance and setting of neighbouring designated heritage assets.</p> <p>As a result of this, significant areas of panels have been removed from areas of the site to maintain appropriate offsets from the proposed development to nearby designated heritage assets to protect their historic settings and their relationship to the surrounding agricultural land. In addition to this the proposed landscaping strategy has been designed to enhance and strengthen the natural screening of the development to reduce intervisibility between the development and the neighbouring assets.</p>
	Impact on Historic Character	<p><i>'The parishes of Berden, Stocking Pelham and Manuden would cease to exist as rural communities of traditional historical villages becoming just one big industrial area.'</i></p> <p><i>' I am absolutely appalled that our beautiful and historic landscape is being violated in such a way.'</i></p>		
Development Zones	Preference on Development Zones	<p><i>'Please at least remove fields 1, 2, 7 and 10 - these are too impactful to local residents and there is no need for it.'</i></p> <p><i>'Fields 10 and 11 have always been the biggest issue with this proposal - Maggots End is a protected lane, Field 11 can be viewed from all over Manuden and Field 10 affects the setting of a designated heritage asset protected by the National Planning Policy Framework.'</i></p> <p><i>'avoid using Zones 1, 2, 6, 7 and maybe 4 (because I can see why some residents wouldn't want panels installed right at the end of their gardens)'</i></p> <p><i>'Anyway, with relation to the actual proposal, I fully agree with the previous poster that Zones 1, 2, 6, 7 and 4 should not be used for panels and instead returned to a meadow or farmland state.'</i></p> <p><i>' My preference is that you avoid using the areas 1,2,6,7,16 marked on your map.'</i></p>	<p>As stated above in this report, following the closure of the first round of consultation, the draft development proposals were rethought to identify additional land within the immediate area which may be suitable to accommodate the proposed development.</p> <p>A second round of public consultation was then conducted with a revised site area including additional land to the west of the site. The revised site area was subsequently split into separate 'development zones' for which the project team have sought public comments on, to determine the most sensitive areas of the site for the local public. The comments received by the public on the proposed development zones have been considered alongside the advice of the team of technical specialists and studies conducted on site to inform the final layout of the development and identify the least sensitive areas of the site to locate the proposed development.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Design and Access Statement • Proposed Site Layout <p>Following the comments received from the local community during the second round of consultation, the scheme has been significantly redesigned to exclude proposed PV arrays from the development zones previously denoted 7, 6 10 and 11. Whilst development zone 1 has been substantially reduced in size to incorporate a substantial offset from the Crump to the west.</p>

		<p><i>'All zones are completely 'unfavourable!' We do not want this huge industrial development in our peaceful rural community, thank you. It may be 'NIMBIYsm,' as one of the earlier comments on here suggested, but if we don't look after and care for our own 'back yards,' who will?'</i></p> <p><i>'Sections one and three border ancient byway called Blakings lane. This is regularly used by walkers, often with dogs and this would be spoilt by an industrial site so close.'</i></p>		
<p>Local Ecology and Birdlife</p>	<p>Impact on Biodiversity</p>	<p><i>'I have issue with this as around this area we have owls, birds of prey plus other magnificent birds and wish them no harm in their natural habitat. Also why would anyone want to disrupt the microbiology of the soil of high quality farmland!'</i></p> <p><i>'Think of all the wildlife killed in the construction and under the panels What about all the birds that dies near solar farms'</i></p> <p><i>'This land has fantastic wildlife already, amazing fallow deer free to roam accross, rare hares, rabbits, badgers and amazing birds. This area is not short of wildlife. The introduction of this solar farm will remove many of these animals from their natural habitat.Low Carbon have confirmed they will create 15 metre wide spaces/zones for the fallow deer. How can that been acceptable for an animal that has been free to roam this land for 100's of years.'</i></p> <p><i>'With all due respect to some of the other comments here, I see no evidence that converting land use from industrial agriculture to solar panels is going to be bad for the local ecology.'</i></p> <p><i>'This weasly proposal is typical of your industry. If you get the go ahead, you will remove all the topsoil, pack in the panels to generate as much power as possible, and kill</i></p>	<p>This planning application is accompanied by a series of technical studies including an Ecological Impact Assessment undertaken by Clarkson and Woods. The supporting Impact Assessment discusses the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the ecology of the Site using information collected during a suite of surveys by Landscape Science Ltd. and Clarkson and Woods Ltd. in 2021.</p> <p>The landscaping and planting proposals associated with the Proposed Development would bring about significant ecological benefit when compared to the present situation at the Site, including upgrading lower value agricultural land to higher value habitats. The cessation of intensive farming is often an inherent beneficial ecological impact of solar farm developments, resulting in more diverse grassland swards and associated invertebrates with their predatory species across a range of wildlife. The development may therefore have beneficial effects for a wide range of species.</p> <p>The Proposed Development includes the following habitat creation, some of which has been added to address and complement comments made by the local community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of 9-10m development buffer zones along boundary features including hedges, and 30-50m adjacent to the Ancient Woodland provide a buffer to areas that support greater biodiversity and retain corridors for animals to move freely around the site and surrounding area; • Conversion of arable fields that will form site boundaries adjacent to solar arrays to wildflower meadow; • A blend of on-Site and off-Site measures will be provided in order to mitigate for the loss of 11 skylark breeding territories identified on site. This will include on-site skylark mitigation areas managed as hay meadow or set aside and provision of off-site 'skylark plots'; 	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Ecological Impact Assessment • Planting/Landscaping Strategy

		<p><i>the wildlife underneath to make maintenance of the wires easy. If in the unlikely you were made to fulfil your promises of spacing the panels and promoting biodiversity, it is still a terrible idea.'</i></p> <p><i>'A solar factory will not increase biodiversity in the area and in my opinion there are no measures that can mitigate the impact on existing wildlife.'</i></p> <p><i>'These 'initiatives' would not be necessary if the solar farm was not being proposed. The farm would be a blight on the environment, adversely impacting existing wildlife - we regularly see deer, muntjac, bats, many different species of bird, rabbits, hares, badgers'</i></p> <p><i>'Serious effect on wildlife – deer, hare (this is the biggest plea I have ever seen on them, disruption right across the country). Fox's, badges, other small mammals and birds. Impacts a wildlife food chain.'</i></p> <p><i>'I am concerned that the proposed secure fencing will adversely impact on badger trail routes. There are numerous badger sets in the locality and the animals patrol their territories using discreet trails which have often been in one for many decades or even centuries. Any obstruction of these long established routes will severely disrupt the habitats of these animals and probably increase the risk of disruption leading to perturbation of the various badger families settled in the area'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The retention, enhancement and strengthening of boundary features (hedges and trees) to provide an improved connective habitat resource post-development; • Extensive new tree and hedgerow planting across the site, which ensure that the scheme will have a net positive impact upon biodiversity within the local area. The provision of locally appropriate ecological enhancements also ensures that the scheme is consistent with the requirements of the NPPF. <p>It is proposed that a planning condition to secure a detailed Biodiversity Management Plan is added to any planning permission, which may secure additional measures, such as bird boxes.</p> <p>Prior to the construction of the proposed development, a Construction Environmental Management Plan will be prepared and submitted for approval to Uttlesford District Council to set out the measures which will be implemented during the construction of the development to avoid any unnecessary harm to or valued habitats or wildlife on the site during the temporary construction period.</p> <p>Overall, the proposed suite of ecological and landscape enhancements across the site will result in a net gain of 103.14% in Habitat Units and a 120.72% net gain in Hedgerow Units, thus demonstrating a significant biodiversity net gain across the site.</p>	
	<p>Biodiversity enhancements</p>	<p><i>'We have here an opportunity to redress the balance in our area, and provide acres of largely undisturbed habitat. The larger network of hedgerows will form vital wildlife corridors to link what little natural space we have left'.</i></p>		

		<p><i>'We might not like the look of it, at least initially, but the result will be a net gain in biodiversity.'</i></p> <p><i>'It is vital that solar farms help to redress the recent disastrous effects on wildlife. I really hope you fulfil your intention to do this.'</i></p> <p><i>'Sheep grazing, this area of the country does not have sheep farmers, if sheep were introduced to this area, they need management, more trucks and cars on the already over crowded narrow lanes.'</i></p> <p><i>'Nature and animals are already abundant here. It is teeming with life. We do not want you to come here and devastate this natural and beautiful environment. Then pretend you are doing us all a favour by installing some beehives, sheep or putting on some ridiculous tours for schools.'</i></p> <p><i>'Seriously - do you honestly think that some branded bee hives are going to keep the biodiversity of the area or make this in the least bit kind to the natural environment or the health and well being of the local community.?!'</i></p> <p><i>'In truth, the landscape relating to this proposal is anything but natural - sprayed with pesticides and herbicides to kill anything living that isn't the intended crop. It is artificially fertilised then ploughed up or cut down every few months by heavy machinery. It isn't natural, and it certainly isn't ancient. The map clearly shows that the land which actually is ancient (the woodland) is untouched by the solar farm. It will surely benefit from having meadowland and more hedgerows nearby to form natural corridors for wildlife.'</i></p> <p><i>'Topsoil must not be removed from the site at all. This is a key issue for biodiversity and for future replacement. Why is this not listed</i></p>		
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		<p><i>and confirmed? Grassland around the solar arrays is essential.'</i></p> <p><i>"I am the local bee keeper, and we certainly don't need Low Carbon 'to look' to bring bees to their Solar Factory using local beekeepers to maintain them. We already have plenty of lovely bees working this area. '</i></p>		
Traffic Access and Construction	Construction Traffic	<p><i>'Having very narrow roads are already an issue for some vehicles. Now in addition to this issue will bring additional traffic to and through quiet villages and causing more potholes to form on the roads.'</i></p> <p><i>'The narrow access road is not ideal for lorries coming in and out. However 6-8 per day will hardly be noticeable and it is only for the short construction period anyway. Long term the project will bring no extra traffic to the area.'</i></p> <p><i>'The lanes are not suitable for large construction vehicles. They are narrow and the verges get very churned up. I would like to see that rectified preferably by using small vehicles where possible.'</i></p> <p><i>'Maggotts End Road is a single track rural road and is totally unsuitable for frequent large lorries as required during the construction period. These lorries are also likely to come through Manuden village and we already have problems with traffic volumes and pinch points.'</i></p> <p><i>Access via a single track, undulating country lane in a beautiful location is inappropriate.</i></p> <p><i>'Totally unsuitable for this area- roads unsuitable for large amounts of construction traffic'</i></p> <p><i>'The access will be through a small rural village with a school on the route. HGV traffic</i></p>	<p>Construction traffic was a commonly raised issue, with a number of respondents being concerned about the narrow nature of the road and the potential for construction traffic to be routed through Manuden Village.</p> <p>During the temporary construction period it is proposed that vehicles will access the site from an existing agricultural and commercial access from Manuden Road which will be improved and widened to provide temporary construction access to the site. From here a temporary haul road will be constructed extending westwards towards the site following the route of an existing agricultural track through fields located to the north of Maggots End Road and Mill Cottage No construction traffic will access the site from Maggots End Road.</p> <p>The applicant is proposing that construction traffic is routed to access the site from the north such that construction traffic avoids travelling through the village of Manuden.</p> <p>A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) had been prepared by Pegasus to support the planning application and provides a swept path analysis for a 15.4m articulated lorry, the largest HGV associated with this development. The supporting CTMP also sets out that construction traffic and delivery vehicles will be programmed to arrive and depart outside of peak hours.</p> <p>Temporary signage will be erected in the vicinity of the site and temporary access track during the construction phase to indicate that heavy construction vehicles are turning. In addition to this, during construction, the contractor will employ banksmen with walkie-talkies along Manuden Road to hold background traffic when an HGV needs to enter or exit the site, if considered necessary by the local highway authority.</p> <p>An average of 50 construction workers are forecast to be on site during peak times during the construction period. A temporary car parking area will be provided on the site within a contractor's compound. Parking will therefore be contained within the site and no unnecessary parking will occur on the local highway network.</p> <p>Once operational there is anticipated to be few visits to the site, for equipment and site maintenance. This would typically be made by a small 4x4 or van type vehicles</p>	<p>The access options that are considered most suitable have subsequently been chosen.</p> <p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Design and Access Statement • Construction Traffic Management Plan

		<p><i>should not be moving though a village setting'</i></p> <p><i>'You tell us there will be 6-8 heavy good vehicles per day to deliver 150,000 solar panels (made in China) and from your recent webinar you confirmed approximately 120 construction workers.</i></p> <p><i>'A temporary road is going to built (1.5kms) from Manuden Road at Pichpools across fields to access the site at Maggots End. All the large HGV vehicles will be travelling through from the M11 along the B1383 then onto the B1038 through Clavering to entrance and then along the temporary road. What about 120 construction workers and all their cars? This could easily been another 100 vans and cars travelling from all directions through the already crowded very narrow small lanes and villages.'</i></p> <p><i>'The local infrastructure is not able to support the daily 6-8 HGV vehicles and 120 workers and their vans and cars travelling through the small lanes and villages to construct the site over a minimum of 20 weeks .'</i></p> <p><i>'This proposal would be absolsuley devastating. We are small rural villages that are not able to accomadate this huge complex project, to install 150,000 solar panels, many battery packs and security fencing on a 180 acres of land. Our small narrow country lanes are just about able to cope with the current traffic levels. It would be completely unsafe that 6 to 8 HGV vehicles, and 120 cars per day would be needed to get this project started is unacceptable.'</i></p> <p><i>'Creating a project like this will cause absolute chaos & danger on the narrow protected lanes and country roads. The access does not work here to accommodate the 6 to 8 HGV vehicles, and 120 workers</i></p>	<p>at an average of 3-4 visits per week. Access for operational purposes will be provided off Maggots End Road to the south of the site</p>	
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		<p><i>cars that will be needed for this project. Our roads are not fit for that purpose.'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm very concerned with the volume of heavy traffic that will be coming along our very unsuitable roads, the roads can't take it when tractors go up and down, let alone the large lorries.'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm extremely concerned about the impact of traffic particularly the increase of lorries on our very narrow country lanes. It is already very dangerous. The environmental impact on wildlife will be disastrous.'</i></p> <p><i>' I am concerned about construction traffic being routed through Clavering. In particular the need to pass the school, which is busy, and already congested during the school day. The volume of vehicles, together with the noise and associated muck will greatly impact a rural village.'</i></p> <p><i>'All the heavy construction traffic and materials will have to come through Manuden or ancient listed homes which were not built for such high levels of heavy goods vehicles'</i></p>		
Public Rights of Way		<p><i>'Preserving or enhancing the beauty of public footpaths is essential.'</i></p> <p><i>'We make frequent use of the footpaths in this, our neighbourhood, and our enjoyment of these will be ruined.'</i></p> <p><i>'Totally unsuitable We often use the footpaths in this location and this area will be ruined!'</i></p> <p><i>' Claiming the footpaths will be unaffected is also ridiculous. Who wants to walk through an ugly, gleaming solar park stretching as far as the eye can see rather than the unspoilt rolling fields as they are now?'</i></p> <p><i>' The site covers footpaths that I thoroughly enjoy walking. I regularly enjoy and get</i></p>	<p>There are a number of public rights of way that cross the site, and in the surrounding area. Footpaths PROW 39_34, PROW 5_14, and PROW 39_4 pass through the site. A footpath also runs along the northern and western site boundaries.</p> <p>The proposed construction access track will follow the same alignment as PROW 39_4. However, the temporary access track will be separated from the PROW at all times.</p> <p>PROW 39_4 is an existing farm track, located around 826 metres to the west of the proposed construction access with Manuden Road. It is proposed to use PROW 39_4 at its existing junction for maintenance access during the future operational phase of the solar farm. The proposed permanent use of the access is considered appropriate due to the infrequency of operational vehicles accessing the site and that there is no evidence of a highway safety pattern or problem.</p> <p>The network of public footpaths stretches beyond the confines of the site boundary, with multiple footpaths existing within the sites immediate context. Further details are provided in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).</p>	<p>Existing Public Rights of Way have been retained.</p> <p>Following further pre-application engagement with Uttlesford District Council, significant areas of PV arrays have been removed from the south and south east of the site where existing PROWs had previously crossed and/or run in close proximity to the proposed solar compound. By removing these areas of panels and setting the development back from these PROWs, the revised scheme will limit views from the footpaths into the site and better help to conserve the amenity of users of the PROWs.</p> <p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement

		<p><i>peace and tranquility from this. It supports my mental health and I do not wish this connection with nature to change if a solar farm were built.'</i></p> <p><i>'As a keen rambler, I am gravely concerned that the views from the footpaths which cross the site of this proposed development will be completely lost. Who wants to walk along a corridor of security fences?'</i></p> <p><i>'The loss of public footpath access to extensive views over the local beautiful countryside represents a significant loss of local amenity which is highly valued by residents of the area. Walking between screening hedgerows is just not the same. Solar Panel Arrays are just a blot on the landscape in that they are singularly unattractive in appearance.'</i></p> <p><i>'I would like to register my distress at this proposal, particularly the effect it would have on the beautiful walks in that area and the close proximity to houses and country roads.'</i></p>	<p>Crucially, the Proposed Development will retain all rights of way, with new and strengthened planting proposed along the edges of the PROWs to screen the development from views along footpaths. The CTMP explains how they will be controlled through management, during the construction process, which confirms all Public Rights of Way will not be moved or closed during construction or operation of the solar farm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and Access Statement • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Flood Risk		<p><i>'Please ensure the flood risk associated with this build is thoroughly investigated and eliminated.'</i></p> <p><i>'Despite what you say, there is no way that covering most of the land in the area with solar panels will not have an impact on drainage, especially considering the areas flood enough at the sight of rain as it is.'</i></p> <p><i>'given that I am an Industrial and Civil Engineer and live on the terraced part of the Old Brewery, I am extremely concerned of the flooding that is likely to take place given the surface waters that will result from the rain that will slide down from the solar panels, and it is unlikely that it will be absorbed by the soil in the land as it becomes easily saturated for it consists essentially of clay and some limestone'</i></p>	<p>The proposed development is supported by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy which appropriately addresses any flood risk associated with the development proposals.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk Assessment

Other	Impacts on Climate Change	<p><i>'Climate Change is actually destroying the countryside, AND livelihoods AND lives - just ask the victims of the recent extreme (and more frequent) weather events both locally and internationally. Rising sea-levels and more forest fires, floods and droughts through colder, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers will displace and kill more people and have a devastating impact on wildlife and food production.'</i></p> <p><i>'Yes, we probably do already import too much food - but if you are worried about our reliance on global supply chains we also import over 50% of our Natural Gas and 75% of our coal. Around one third of this is then burned to provide the energy for over 40% of our electricity demand with over 50% of that input energy wasted in conversion, distribution and transmission. That is definitely worth worrying about and not sustainable.'</i></p>	<p>The proposed development will deliver significant environmental benefits including providing a clean, renewable and sustainable form of electricity generation directly into the local electricity network. The Proposed Development would add to Uttlesford District's progress in meeting its renewable energy target and would also assist in meeting national targets for both energy supply and low carbon energy development. The principle of renewable energy, such as solar power, is supported by both local and national planning policy and is acknowledged to be key to achieving legal carbon reduction target to limit the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>It is estimated that the Proposed Development would generate up to 49.9 MW of renewable energy, which could provide approximately enough energy to power over 16,500 homes and displace up to 11,000 tonnes of CO2 per annum.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement
	Health & Safety	<p><i>'The Lithium battery sites are dangerous and emit toxic fumes if they catch fire. The battery sites are near houses and are noisy and cause mental health issues.'</i></p> <p><i>'The fire risks have not been tried and tested. We will be open to Grenfel style building disaster. People involved will be held to account and with Stansted Airport so close this could be expensive. Apart from the fact no one has lived next to these batteries for years we could also have a new style asbestos on our hands the NHS shouldn't be involved again in a test area for untested exposures'</i></p> <p><i>'Having the local grid station here already with apparently no health and safety risk assessments being sought already puts us at great risk of explosions and fire already and making it larger for more battery storage is definitely a health risk to residents and the</i></p>	<p>We can confirm that the battery technology proposed is likely to be Lithium based which is the basis for all manufacturers – the cells themselves are to contain materials in the event of a failure and sit within a wider containerised package providing added protection in the event a cell was to fail. All battery manufacturers have inherent electrical and fire suppression systems that prevent failure from leak, overheating and 'trips' which are automatically activated under circumstances which put the equipment outside of parameters. As well as electrical and fire control systems each cell module has a HVAC system that actively cools the batteries reducing the chances of issue under operation. The UK Government has widely recognised the use of this technology across its energy strategy which speaks about the practicality and safety of its widespread implementation in the UK. Health and safety of these sites are of paramount importance which is why there are numerous procedures and design features put in place to combat hazards.</p> <p>Should the council require a fire safety risk assessment and fire management strategy to support the proposals, it is considered appropriate that this is secured by way of an appropriately worded pre-commencement planning condition in the event the council are minded to approve the application.</p>	No changes made

		<p><i>local area. It would also destroy the beautiful landscape which is already being altered by more cars/buildings.'</i></p> <p><i>'I am concerned about the safety of this site.'</i></p> <p><i>'The modified proposals include battery storage within the solar arrays, this I don't think was part of the original proposal. I have considerable concerns over the safety of lithium battery banks, would access routes support the attendance of appropriate emergency services in the event of explosion, fire or toxic gas release. They are quite close to public rights of way which are said to be kept open throughout construction and operation of the proposed facility.'</i></p> <p><i>'The siting of such a 'farm' is a danger to local residents and wildlife due to the toxic fire risk from the battery storage units. The health and safety of local residents is also at risk due to flooding and you seem to have dismissed this out of hand.'</i></p> <p><i>'Encourages the leakage of toxic chemicals and fire risk and explosion risk in the locality thereby harming humans and the environment alike.'</i></p>		
	Property Devaluation	<p><i>'This will devalue homes in the area, sure the farmers whose land it is on will be making a clear profit, but everyone else will be making a monetary loss.'</i></p> <p><i>'I have very negative thoughts if approved this will give precedence to further construction and devalue our properties.'</i></p>	<p>Whilst this does not form a material planning consideration, the proposed development has been redesigned following the rounds of public consultation to include substantial offsets from existing residential properties in Maggots End to the south and properties in Berden to the north west, whilst a extensive planting strategy has been employed to strengthen and enhance the natural boundaries of the site to improve the visual screening of the site and limit the intervisibility between neighbouring dwellings and the proposed solar farm.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Design and Access Statement • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment • Landscape/Planting Strategy
	Inefficiency of Solar Technology	<p><i>'The panels are not sustainable, the batteries used to store the minuscule and infrequent energy are not sustainable and pose a real safety hazard to the community.'</i></p>	<p>The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), official advisor to the Government on Infrastructure, has published a report (Net-Zero Opportunities for the Power Sector, March 2020) setting out the key infrastructure requirements needed to meet the UK's 2050 net-zero target, including the amount of renewable energy development that would need to be deployed.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement

		<p><i>' "There is no doubt that wind is a far more efficient source of energy than solar. A wind turbines is cleaner than a solar panel (in terms of how much carbon dioxide is released) and can produce about forty-eight thousand times the amount of energy per kWh than a solar panel can. Last year, wind energy supplied 4% of the world's electricity needs, whereas solar energy provided just 0.5%. The reason for this is that wind farms, which are built offshore, can generate huge amounts of power thanks to the strong and constant supply of wind. Solar panels, on the other hand, have a very limited time frame in which they can produce energy."</i></p> <p><i>' Solar is inefficient in this country, just how much electricity will it generate on a typical gloomy day in winter, certainly not during the hours of darkness.'</i></p> <p><i>'This whole proposal is poorly thought out, short-sighted and I would like to know your cost benefit ratio because we all know solar farms are actually not that efficient!'</i></p> <p><i>' it is recognised that solar energy production is very inefficient. Why is Low Carbon not considering this option instead of solar panels?'</i></p> <p><i>'Offshore windfarms are a far more efficient way of creating electricity.'</i></p> <p><i>'Solar panels are highly inefficient tools for generating electricity. And during the winter months when daylight hours are at their lowest, no significant electricity is generated at all.'</i></p> <p><i>'Additionally, it is recognised that solar energy production is very inefficient. Why is Low Carbon not considering alternative, more efficient options like offshore wind turbines instead of solar panels?'</i></p>	<p>The NIC recommends that in meeting these targets, the UK's energy mix needs to be made up of around 90% renewables. At page 18 of the report, it is recommended that across all scenarios, significant levels of solar, onshore wind and offshore wind will need to be deployed with between 129 – 237 GW (gigawatts) of renewable energy capacity in operation by 2050. To achieve this, the report recommends the following split:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56-121 GW of solar; • 18-27 GW of onshore wind; and • 54-86 GW of offshore wind. <p>To achieve the above targets would require a significant increase in installed capacity across the UK, including over nine times the current installed capacity of solar technologies in the UK, which as of September 2021 is around 13.6GW according to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).</p> <p>Again whilst it is acknowledged that other forms of renewable energy maybe more efficient than solar, it is accepted by the Government that the required deployment of renewable energy cannot effectively be met by through one or two of these technologies alone and instead need to be delivered across a range of different technologies if we are to meet the required targets.</p>	
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	<p>Alternative Locations for Solar</p>	<p><i>'There are alternatives for example disused air fields, land adjacent to motorways where there is no housing. Why is it that new housing is not built with solar energy panels ?'</i></p> <p><i>'As others have said, PLEASE use disused airfields, or parallel to motorways where there is no local community to bother, and no scenery to destroy.'</i></p> <p><i>'There are numerous brownfield sites available to build your solar farm which will produce the same amount of green energy albeit possibly with a smaller return for Low Carbon.'</i></p> <p><i>'More renewable/solar power need putting on new housing/buildings - hundreds of houses have been built in the local area, making our area more urban than we have ever wanted. Just because we have a grid station does not mean we need solar factories automatically able to link into it.'</i></p> <p><i>'I would be interested to know what other locations have been considered and what criteria you use to decide on suitability based on impact to residents, the conservation areas, arable land etc. There are numerous brownfield sites available so I do wonder why these locations have been chosen and who will be the actual beneficiaries.'</i></p> <p><i>'There are other, FAR more suitable places you can put these ghastly, inefficient monstrosities.'</i></p> <p><i>"I find it particularly galling when there is land available alongside Stansted Airport and the M11 which would surely be more appropriate for this sort of development.'</i></p> <p><i>'There is a site along side the A11 at Six Mile bottom. This away from residents and on a site that is probably better suited. To the</i></p>	<p>One of the biggest constraints which has to be considered when developing a ground mounted solar scheme is gaining access to the local electricity grid. A site should be reasonably located to its point of connection to the electricity grid and this should be up to 4km to limit electrical losses and ensure the scheme is efficient and commercially feasible. Accordingly, all ground mounted solar searches start with grid proximity and capacity availability with the incumbent, as this determines where a solar park can connect to the Distribution Grid Networks. This was achieved by first working with the Distribution Network Operator (DNO), in this case UK Power Networks, to establish where it is possible to connect to the local grid network followed up with a grid application to secure connectivity.</p> <p>For this reason we are restricted to where there is available grid capacity and where a grid connection agreement can be secured, in this case Pelham Substation. Whilst we understand that there may be more preferential/less visually sensitive locations for solar farm development, i.e. land adjacent to motorways/airfields/main roads etc these are typically not located within suitable distances from available points of connection.</p> <p>Whilst we accept that brownfield land should be prioritised over larger greenfields sites, again there is an insufficient supply of brwnfield land within a suitable distance of a viable connection point within Uttlesford District which would be capable of supporting this scale of development. Further to this, where brownfield sites do exist, these are usually prioritised for commercial and residential development which solar developers cannot feasibly compete with.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement
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		<p><i>side of motorways and many A roads would surely make better sense.'</i></p> <p><i>'There are far better places to place solar fields on poor quality land, brown field sites and on the roofs of housing developments. This is profiteering and greenwash go and very sad'</i></p> <p><i>'There is huge scope for planting them alongside motorways and other major roads along with airports where the noise and air pollution has already made the area unattractive for humans to live and engage in recreation.'</i></p>		
	<p>Profit-seeking</p>	<p><i>'This is being considered purely as a source of profit for the land owner'</i></p> <p><i>'This is purely about money and not anything to do with renewable energy. There are much better sights that won't destroy the environment'</i></p> <p><i>'its just pure profiteering'</i></p> <p><i>'This is not about renewable energy it is about profit and greed for the few and to the absolute detriment of the local community.'</i></p> <p><i>'This site has only been chosen due to the proximity to the Pelham substation thereby enabling you to maximise your profits.'</i></p> <p><i>'Thoroughly against not only your proposal but the money-grubbing backers and bankers that form your company. Go and get a job that does something good for the community and the world.'</i></p> <p><i>'The proposals are not joined up, having 3 solar installations in one small area is pure exploitation of good farming fields for profit and greed that hides under the banner of global warming.'</i></p>	<p>Thank you for the comments, which have been noted.</p>	<p>No changes made</p>

		<p><i>'It's abundantly clear that Low Carbon have only chosen this site because it will be extremely cheap to connect to the National Grid and that this will deliver the best possible financial outcome for Low Carbon and its investors.'</i></p> <p><i>'This project has been born out of pure greed. The local countryside will be trashed by people who do not live here, but will be happy to pocket the profits generated from this with absolutely no benefit to the local residents.'</i></p>		
	Public Consultation	<p><i>'The access according to the map on your website is via Maggots End, Battles Farm entrance. Please correct this misleading information.'</i></p>	<p>This comment was noted by the team during the first phase of the public consultation and was resolved in the revised consultation material present during Phase 2.</p>	<p>Whilst the proposed operational access will be from the south east of the site via the existing farm access north of Battles Hall, the proposed temporary construction access will be taken from a temporary access track to be constructed to the east of the site. For more information please refer to the submitted CTMP.</p>
	Noise	<p><i>'The Pelham substation already generates a constant 30db of 50Hz noise pollution, day and night, at 1.2km distance. This is high considering the remote location. Any further expansion of the substation should consider the noise impact to neighbours that additional load will entail and take steps to eliminate noise.'</i></p> <p><i>'What has not been raised or discussed in detail, is the level of noise generated from the many battery packs that will be located throughout the site. This noise will greatly affect the animals living on the land. During the recent webinar one of Low Carbon presenters used the words 'unlikely to hear noise from the battery packs' Research confirms there will be significant noise generated that will effect many animals as well as humans.'</i></p> <p><i>'What about the construction noise? The endless beeping of reversing and turning</i></p>	<p>The nature of the Proposed Development is such that it is not likely to cause any form of pollution during its operational stage as there are no significant noise sources and any increase in traffic would be low.</p> <p>The noise generated from the development will be minimal. The inverters and accompanying batteries would be located either in the centre of the solar panels in each development zone or to the edge of the development zones to reduce visual and noise impacts on surrounding receptors. The inverters would have a sound level of 75 dB (A) at a 1 metre distance.</p> <p>A noise assessment has been prepared and is submitted in support of this planning application to establish the potential noise impact of the development on surrounding sensitive residential receptors. Overall, the assessment indicates that the operational noise from the facility during day time and night time periods would be relatively low in absolute terms and would largely comply with the operational noise target at all sensitive residential receptors. Whilst noise levels were modelled to slightly exceed the noise target at one of the receptors, any exceedance is considered to ebb slightly and would not result in any adverse noise impacts.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Design and Access Statement • Noise Assessment

		<p>vehicles and the effect of this on the wider community, local villages and animals.'</p>		
	<p>Loss of Agricultural Land</p>	<p><i>'I do not agree that agricultural land/ existing green fields should be used for siting solar farms. Green fields and open spaces are better used for tackling climate change by carbon sequestration, eg. growing crops or trees.'</i></p> <p><i>'I fully back solar energy as we have a climate crisis in this country, however this should not mean that we sacrifice high quality farmland that should be used for crops, as well as other issues this "farm" will cause.'</i></p> <p><i>'Our village has already seen great expansion and loss of agricultural land and green space, due to house building, with more houses having been approved very recently. To even further remove the country feel of this area would be devastating.'</i></p> <p><i>'I like the idea of letting the ground rest for 40 years. However where will the crops be grown instead?'</i></p> <p><i>'I honestly cannot believe that you are proposing to ruin 180 acres (!!!!!) of farmland and beautiful countryside for over 40 years'</i></p> <p><i>'I also believe the choice of prime agricultural land is not a good use of the land especially as we attempt to reduce the distance travelled for the produce our country needs'</i></p> <p><i>'It takes out far too much fertile land that could be put to much better use in keeping with the rural heritage of the area.'</i></p> <p><i>'This is productive farmland that should be used for the growing of food.'</i></p> <p><i>'The suggestion that it is NECESSARY to use high quality farming land is false. Planning</i></p>	<p>The proposed development has been informed by an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey and report concludes that the site does comprise Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.</p> <p>Uttlesford District has a high proportion of Best and Most Versatile Land and it is a requirement of the scheme that the solar farm be located within relatively close proximity to the point of grid connection, in this case, Pelham Substation.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the development would not result in the permanent loss of agricultural land and following cessation of use, the land could be returned to full agricultural use. Introducing a 40 year fallow period for the land will also assist the rebalancing of soil nutrients, re-establishing soil biota, breaking crop pest and disease cycles, and provide a haven for wildlife thus enhancing the quality of land for future agricultural use following the decommissioning of the solar farm.</p>	<p>Please refer to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement • Agricultural Land Classification Report

		<p><i>guidance issued by the Government is absolutely clear that "any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the MOST COMPELLING evidence. What is that evidence?? Simply stating that most of the local area is Grade 2 land does not satisfy this test'</i></p> <p><i>'We don't want any form of solar power factory on high grade farming land'</i></p> <p><i>'At a time when we need to be growing more produce from our land rather than importing from abroad, we need this productive farmland and also the wildlife that it naturally conserves along side it.'</i></p> <p><i>' It is agricultural land so now we have to buy more food from abroad meaning more wagons on the road.'</i></p> <p><i>' Solar farms should not be installed on prime agricultural land therefore I am against the whole project.'</i></p> <p><i>'We should not be losing good agricultural land and certainly not to vast acreages of inefficient solar panels and conceivably dangerous lithium battery dumps.'</i></p> <p><i>'To justify taking away excellent agricultural land, an exceptional or special justification needs to be made, and it has simply not been argued, let alone established.'</i></p> <p><i>'The use of grade 2 and grade 3 farmland for extensive Solar Power Station implementation is fundamentally wrong and is against guidelines for assessing the land as suitable for solar power generation.'</i></p> <p><i>'When solar factories are installed all the growing medium i.e. topsoil is removed which effectively makes it financially</i></p>		
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		<p><i>inconceivable that the land could ever return to agricultural land.'</i></p> <p><i>'Since the UK made the decision to leave Europe and become a more independent country, it is more important than ever that we look to increase our food production, a basic human requirement. Otherwise what happens when third-party countries put their human population ahead of our own, due to increasing failed crops due to fire, drought, and floods of which we are hearing about on the news, on an almost daily basis?'</i></p>		
Support for the scheme		<p><i>'What a great project to support the environment. Let's hope my neighbours think the same.'</i></p> <p><i>'I believe this is way forward for a better England'</i></p> <p><i>'Looks good, no complaints here'</i></p> <p><i>'Unfortunately, all the comments so far objecting to this development appear to be based on mis-information, jealousy and just plain NIMBY-ism! Solar farms don't destroy the countryside! They are just an alternative use leading to greater biodiversity and lower carbon emissions.'</i></p> <p><i>'So I say to Low Carbon, Make sure you fulfil your promises of effective screening... but otherwise I fully support this proposal.'</i></p> <p><i>'I am in favour of a solar farm and am pleased that you are listening to feedback and keeping everyone informed'</i></p>	Thank you for the comments, which have been noted.	No changes made

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Low Carbon Solar Park 6 Ltd have designed and delivered a comprehensive but proportionate pre-application consultation programme in order to proactively communicate and engage with the local community and key stakeholders.
- 6.2 The consultation strategy was designed to respond and adapt to the restrictions on physical movement and contact as imposed by Government's COVID-19 response. The methods of engagement were kept under constant review and, during the second phase of consultation, as restrictions eased, additional methods were introduced. The responses from the public were largely constructive and helpful.
- 6.3 The consultation process has influenced a number of changes made to the design prior to submission, such as setting panels away from the public footpaths and sensitive residential receptors.
- 6.4 Following the refusal of the original planning application (UTT/21/3356/FUL), the applicant has undertaken further pre-application consultation with Uttlesford District Council to gain further constructive comments on a redesigned scheme which removes significant areas of proposed arrays from the south, south eastern and northern parts of the site. These proposed changes have been addressed in the revised proposals subject to this planning application which subsequently address a number of concerns made by members of the public during Phases 1 and 2 of the public consultation exercise, and during the determination period of the original planning application, particularly with regards to visual and amenity impacts on users of PRoWs within and adjoining the site.
- 6.5 Whilst it is fair to say that there were some strong feelings against certain aspects of the proposal or the proposal in principle, the evolution of the proposal is significant. Whilst objections are likely to remain, the changes made represent a genuine and significant shift in the proposal as first put forward. When weighing this with the technical and environmental work that has been undertaken, on balance the site is considered to be the best variation of itself and one which the applicant feels merits a planning application to deliver an important part of Uttlesford's and the UK's shift to net zero.

APPENDIX 1 - PHASE 1 LEAFLET, LETTERS TO RESIDENTS & FEEDBACK FORM

APPENDIX 2 – PHASE 1A LETTERS TO NEAR NEIGHBOURS

APPENDIX 3 – PHASE 2A PUBLIC EXHIBITION MATERIAL

**APPENDIX 4 – PHASE 2 LEAFLET, LETTERS TO RESIDENTS & FEEDBACK
FORM**

pegasusgroup.co.uk

First Floor, South Wing,
Equinox North, Great Park Road,
Almondsbury, Bristol, BS32 4QL

E Bristol@pegasusgroup.co.uk

T 01454 625 945