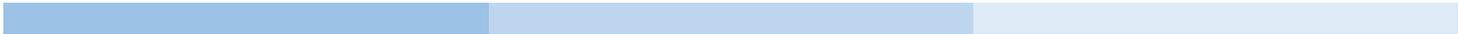


# Varley Solar Farm

Statement of Community Involvement



## CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
2. INTRODUCTION .....	3
3. PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT .....	3
4. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING .....	4
5. CONSULTATION .....	5
6. <b>FEEDBACK AND APPLICANT'S RESPONSE</b> .....	9
7. CONCLUSION .....	15
APPENDICES .....	16

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced for the proposed 25MW Varley Solar Farm and associated infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on lands south east of Cromhall, in South Gloucestershire (the “Application Site”).
- 1.2. The SCI has been prepared by the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.
- 1.3. As well as detailing the stakeholders and community the Applicant has consulted with during the pre-application period, it also details the various consultation methods used.
- 1.4. The SCI goes on to summarise feedback from stakeholders and the community and how this feedback has been taken into account regarding the design of the Proposed Development.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### Background

- 2.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) accompanies the planning application for the proposed 25MW Varley Solar Farm and associated infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on lands south east of Cromhall, in South Gloucestershire (the “Application Site”).
- 2.2. Please refer to the Planning Application Drawings for the layout of the Proposed Development (Figure 4 - Infrastructure Layout (drawing number 004886-RES-LAY-DR-PT-003 Rev 2)).

### Development Description

- 2.3. The Proposed Development will consist of the construction of a 25MW solar farm. It will involve the construction of bi-facial ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, new access tracks, underground cabling, perimeter fencing with CCTV cameras and access gates, one temporary construction compound, seven inverter locations, one substation and all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated works.
- 2.4. The Proposed Development will result in the production of clean energy from a renewable energy resource (daylight) and will also involve additional landscaping including hedgerow planting and improved biodiversity management.

## 3. PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 3.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by the Applicant to provide a comprehensive record of the pre-application public consultation undertaken on the Proposed Development.
- 3.2. Conducting an early and transparent pre-application public consultation is consistent with the guidance within the NPPF (2019). Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:

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

3.3. The NPPF goes on to state that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 4. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

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

4.2. The stakeholder groups identified included:

- The local population around the Application Site, including Cromhall, Heath End, Cromhall Common and the surrounding area;

- Outdoor recreation groups; and
- Locally elected political representatives from the following parish councils and district ward:
  - Cromhall Parish Council;
  - Wickwar Parish Council;
  - Ward councillor for Charfield ward, South Gloucestershire Council.

## 5. CONSULTATION

5.1. The pre-application public consultation began on Wednesday 15 June 2022. During the pre-application public consultation, a range of communication methods were used to provide information about the Proposed Development and ensure that the local community had the opportunity to provide their feedback. These methods included:

5.1.1 Introductory letter to stakeholders

On 15 June 2022, the Applicant wrote to Cromhall and Wickwar Parish Councils, the ward councillor for Charfield ward and a local outdoor recreation group, to advise them that they were investigating the potential for a solar farm development at the site location and would be undertaking a range of consultation activities in early July 2022. The letter also invited the parties to get in contact if they wished to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix A.

5.1.2 Project website

On 15 June 2022, a dedicated project website was launched at [www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk](http://www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk) containing information on the project as well as contact details for the Applicant.

The project website is updated regularly and will also be updated when the planning submission is made, to include links to all planning application documentation and information on how people can comment on the application.

5.1.3 Update letter to stakeholders

On 7 July 2022, the Applicant wrote to Cromhall and Wickwar Parish Councils, the ward councillor for Charfield ward and a local outdoor recreation group enclosing a newsletter regarding an upcoming public exhibition. A copy of the newsletter can be found at Appendix B.

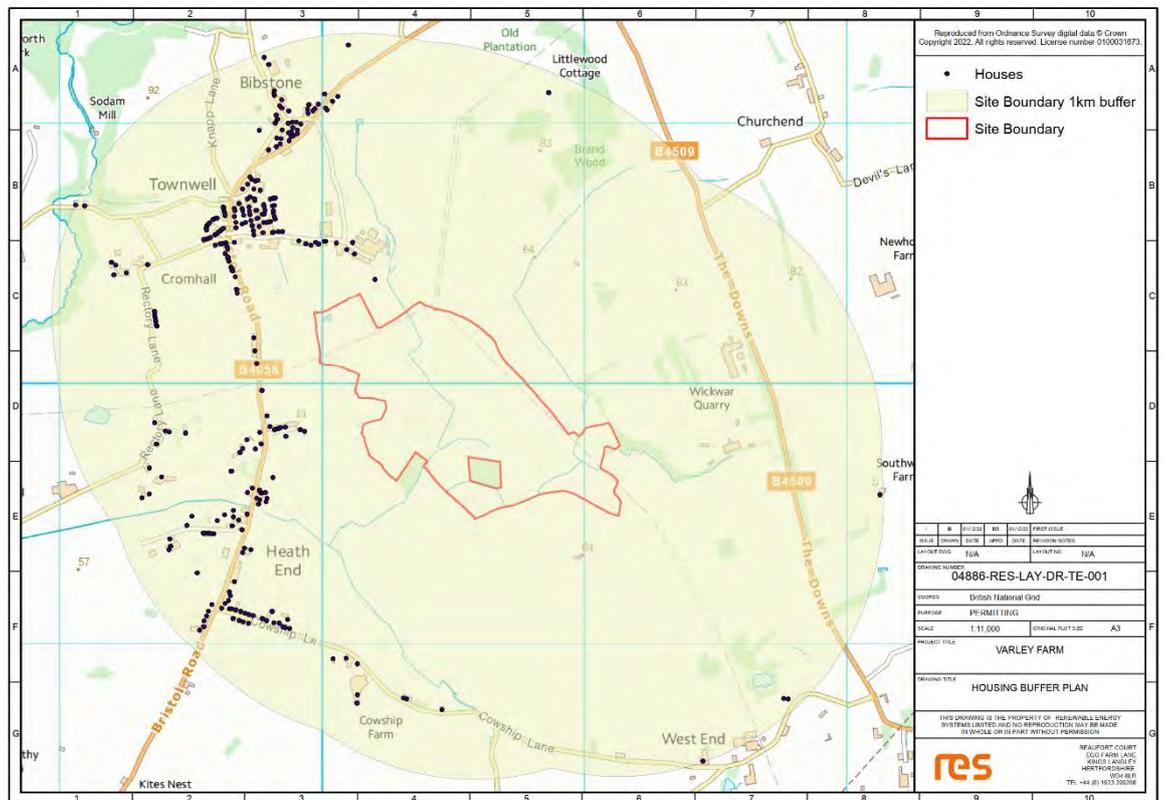
5.1.4 Pre-exhibition advertising

The Applicant placed an advertisement in the Thornbury Gazette, on 7 July 2022 to inform the wider community of the upcoming public exhibition. A copy of the advertisement can be found at Appendix C.

On 11 July 2022, the Applicant placed a linked sidebar graphic on <https://cromhall.com/>, advertising the upcoming public exhibition. A copy of the sidebar graphic can be found at Appendix D.

### 5.1.5 Newsletter to local residents

On 8 July 2022, the Applicant sent a newsletter, advertising the upcoming public exhibition, to 319 properties identified within 1000m of the site as shown on the map below. A copy of the newsletter can be found at Appendix B.



### 5.1.6 Other pre-exhibition consultation

The Applicant responded to an email from a local resident, received on 8 July 2022, who was unable to attend the upcoming public exhibition, and had a number of questions regarding the Proposed Development.

### 5.1.7 Public exhibition

The public exhibition took place between 2pm and 7pm on 18 July 2022 at Cromhall Village Hall and was attended by approximately thirty-three members of the community.

All of the material provided at the public exhibition was also published on the project website at <http://www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk/> from 18 July 2022. A copy of the exhibition materials can be found at Appendix E.

For people without internet access, hard copies of the exhibition material were available upon request. No requests for hard copies were received.

At all stages of the consultation process the Applicant set out clearly the purpose of the consultation and emphasised that comments made were not representations to the determining authority (South Gloucestershire Council) and that there would be the opportunity for representations to the determining authority once the planning application was submitted.

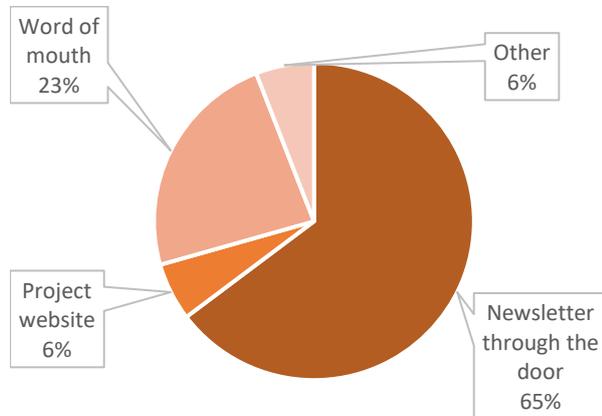
A comments form was provided as part of the public exhibition and online, to encourage feedback from attendees about renewable energy in general, the project design specifically, ideas for improvements the Applicant could make to the existing

Public Rights of Way network, as well as ideas for other local projects the Proposed Development could support to help address the needs of the community. The comments form was made available as a hard copy at the exhibition or as a downloadable version on the project website. A copy of the comments form can be found at Appendix F.

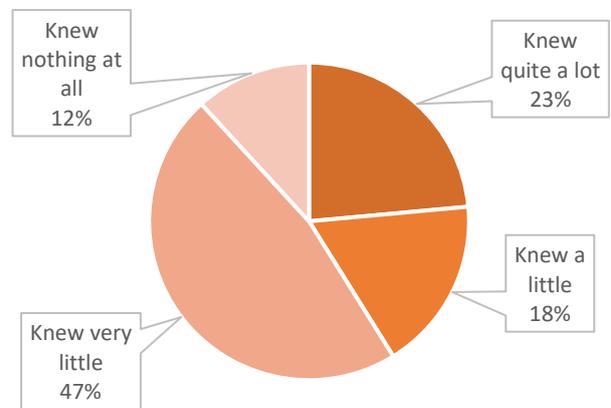
Seventeen completed comments forms were received by the Applicant. Below is a summary of the answers received to the questions on the comments form.

5.1.8 Summary of responses to questions on submitted comments forms

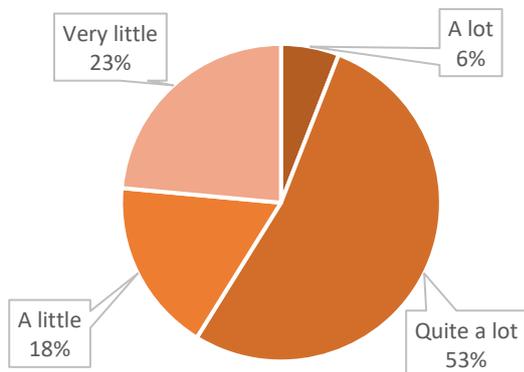
Q1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibition?



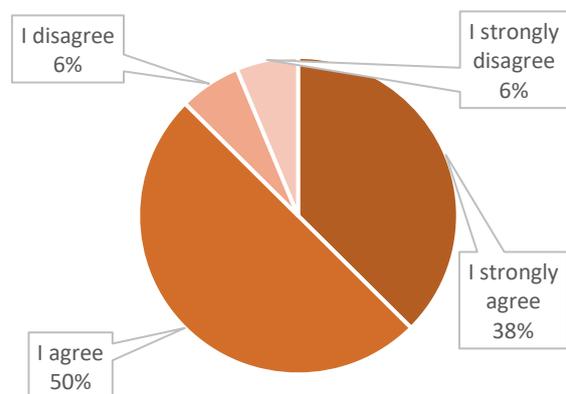
Q1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Varley Solar Farm?



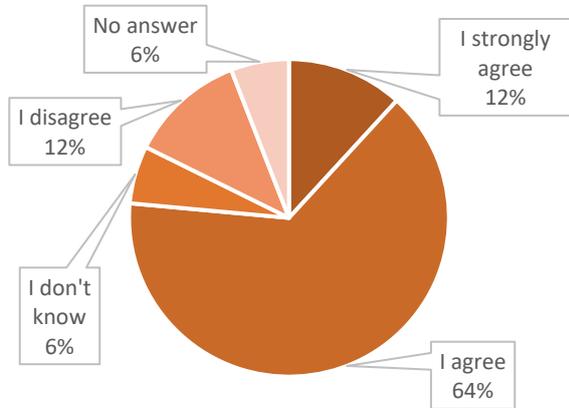
Q1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the Varley Solar Farm?



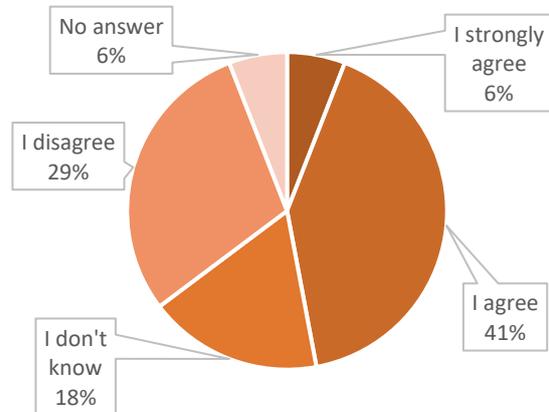
Q2.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?



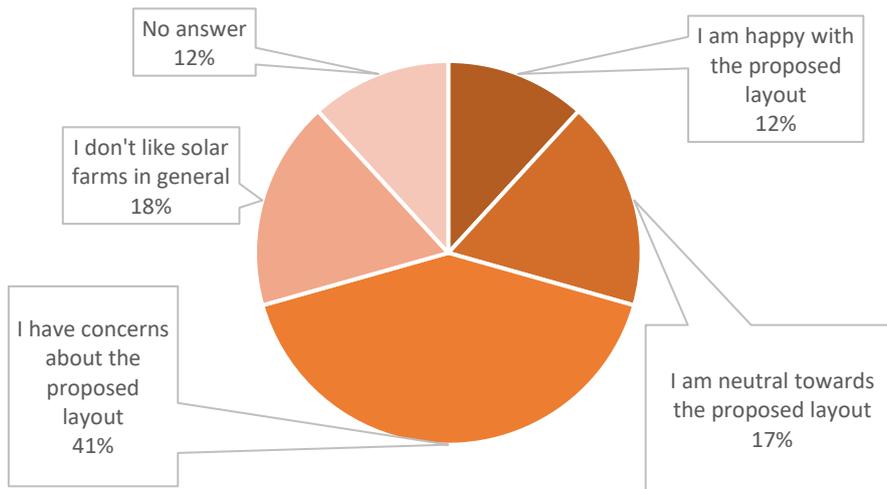
Q2.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?



Q2.3 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to help reduce our carbon emissions?



Q3.1 What do you think about the proposed design layout of Varley Solar Farm?



5.1.9 Post-exhibition consultation

On 24 August 2022, the Applicant held a video call with a local community group regarding potential support for a road safety project.

In addition to the activities outlined above, the Applicant has been receiving and responding to enquiries and comments from the local community, via video calls and email.

To date, consultation has been undertaken, post exhibition, with two local residents. The Applicant will continue to respond to any queries received in relation to the project from the local community, stakeholders and statutory consultees throughout the determination process.

5.2. All feedback received during the consultation activities detailed above has been considered by the Applicant throughout the design iteration and pre-planning stages of the Proposed Development. A summary of feedback, issues and concerns raised, together with the Applicant’s response to each can be found in section 6.

## 6. FEEDBACK AND APPLICANT’S RESPONSE

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

Comment(s) received	Applicant response
<u>Need for renewables</u>	
<p><i>“Of course we face a global climate change emergency. This scheme, therefore, does not automatically provide the answer”</i></p> <p><i>“The most efficient clean 24/7 energy is nuclear - with far more efficient land use. Renewables have a place small scale and attached to dwellings but not on a large industrial scale requiring heavy subsidy which is passed onto energy bills”</i></p> <p><i>“Alternative renewables and locations should be sought (wind, wave)”</i></p>	<p>As laid out in its Net Zero Strategy published in October 2021, the UK Government has made it clear that solar and wind will be the backbone to achieving a secure, affordable and low carbon energy supply.</p> <p>Analysis from the Climate Change Committee<sup>1</sup> and other independent bodies shows that the UK will need to deploy at least 40GW of solar by 2030 if it is to achieve net zero by 2050.</p> <p>Solar Energy UK<sup>1</sup> has published an analysis estimating that residential and commercial development is expected to account for nearly 37% (15GW) of the total 2030 solar PV deployment with the remaining 63% (25GW) coming from large scale ground mounted solar farms.</p> <p>The UK Energy Security Strategy<sup>2</sup> published in <b>April 2022 commits to look to increase the UK’s</b> current 14GW of solar capacity by up to 5 times by 2035. Our current power system still relies heavily on fossil fuels, such as gas. The volatile price of gas is the main reason that bills have increased so rapidly in recent months. The need to rapidly scale up home grown energy has become even more urgent.</p> <p>Large-scale solar, alongside onshore and offshore wind is now the cheapest form of electricity generation. This makes developments like the Proposed Development not just good for the environment but also for the consumer. If consented, the Proposed Development would be capable of producing clean, green electricity for approximately 9,700 homes every year.</p>

1 <https://solarenergyuk.org/resource/lighting-the-way-making-net-zero-a-reality-with-solar-energy/?cn-reloaded=1>

2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy>

	<p>In September 2021, the UK Government announced that large-scale solar was eligible to bid for the Contracts for Difference<sup>3</sup> support mechanism, for the first time since 2015. The <b>Applicant's</b> large-scale solar developments since 2015, including the Proposed Development are designed to be able to operate subsidy-free.</p>
--	---

<u>Food security/loss of agricultural land</u>	
<p><b>“Food security is also important. Taking out productive land means greater dependence on imported food”</b></p> <p><i>“I do not agree that putting large solar development on prime agricultural land benefits the local or the national ability to feed itself”</i></p> <p><i>“I'm happy with solar in the right location, this might be grade 3 land but it is still currently a productive, organic dairy farm in a sector of the industry that is struggling for supply. We currently import about 40% of our dairy products (cheese/butter/yoghurt). My view is this is not a suitable location. Taking 100 acres out of this farm will effectively stop milk being produced as there won't be sufficient land to legally spread the manure currently produced”</i></p> <p><b>“We need land to grow food”</b></p> <p><i>“Not a good use of 120 acres - subsidies should go to new small holding organic farms for food security instead of covering in metal/glass”</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development would not pose a threat to food security. One of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. This is <b>clear from recent reports on how this year's</b> drought is affecting harvests of staple crops including potatoes, carrots and onions<sup>4</sup>.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will help towards tackling climate change and furthermore, is specifically designed to be dual purpose, enabling continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing, and renewable generation.</p> <p>Agricultural land covers between 56% and 70% of UK land. Solar farms in the UK currently have a combined capacity of around 14GW which makes up just under 0.1% of land in the UK. <b>By comparison, the total land used by the UK's golf courses is 0.5% and airports is 0.2%.</b></p> <p>The UK Energy Security Strategy<sup>2</sup> commits to <b>increase the UK's current 14GW of solar capacity</b> by up to 5 times by 2035. If the government meets its target of increasing solar capacity fivefold, ground-mounted solar would cover a total of around <b>just 0.3% of the UK's land surface</b><sup>5</sup> which <b>is still less than the total land used by the UK's</b> golf courses.</p> <p>The project has been designed in such a way that just less than 6% of the land is physically occupied by the solar infrastructure. This allows remaining land to be accessible for plant growth, wildlife enhancements and complementary agricultural activities such as sheep grazing.</p> <p>The application is for temporary consent for dual purpose - enabling agricultural use in the form of sheep farming and generating renewable electricity using solar as a green energy source. It should be noted that the project is fully reversible, and the site can therefore be reinstated back to its current state following the operational period. Furthermore, where a solar</p>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contracts-for-difference/contract-for-difference>

4 <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-drought-farmers-struggle-feed-cattle-cheap-meat-heatwave-1793194>

5 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-is-solar-power-a-threat-to-uk-farmland/>

	<p>farm is installed on land which has been previously farmed, it enables the ground underneath to recover, while providing income for the farming business. This means solar farms help to regenerate soil quality, and so are helping to ensure the continued availability of high-quality agricultural acreage for future generations.</p> <p>Sheep farming provides employment, supports rural economies and can produce a much more diverse ecological mosaic across the site. Landscapes managed by grazing sheep support a rich diversity of wildlife, while producing food.</p> <p>An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey accompanies the planning application. The largest proportion of land has been classified as subgrade 3b or below. 85% has been graded Grade 3b 'moderate quality land' or Grade 4 '<b>poor quality agricultural land</b>', which is not classed as best and most versatile (BMV) land.</p>
--	--

<u>Traffic and Transport</u>	
<p><b><i>“HGVs should not use Farleigh Lane - too narrow”</i></b></p> <p><b><i>“The proposed access from Talbots End is very narrow”</i></b></p> <p><i>“The construction of Varley Solar Farm will also affect our safety, quality of life and right to peaceful enjoyment of our family property due to vastly increased traffic”</i></p> <p><i>“Transport onto the site will be difficult with the proposed roads. Experience from a local solar construction had large articulated lorries tearing up the verges”</i></p> <p><i>“Farleigh Lane totally unsuitable for large vehicles, Talbots End is little better”</i></p> <p><i>“What traffic management systems will there be to safeguard additional vehicles entering and leaving the village?”</i></p>	<p>Following feedback from the local community, we undertook a comprehensive review of all possible delivery route options for the proposed Varley Solar Farm. As a result of this review, to minimise potential impact on the community from delivery traffic, we propose to create a bypass for HGV traffic on private land running west of and parallel to Farleigh Lane with Farleigh Lane used for other non-HGV construction traffic.</p> <p>A Construction Traffic Management Plan accompanies the planning application and itemises expected traffic movements and hours of operation.</p> <p>Hours of operation and traffic movements will be limited to avoid morning and evening peak times.</p> <p>There will also be a dedicated Community Liaison Officer to engage with local residents, throughout the construction and operational phases.</p> <p>A pre-and post-construction condition survey of all access roads and tracks will be undertaken and the Applicant will be liable to restore all routes to their pre-construction condition if damage is caused as a result of the solar farm construction.</p> <p>Operational traffic movements are generally low, on average once a month for maintenance purposes, and site inspections. Active monitoring is carried out by the Operations &amp; Maintenance team and site manager which can reduce site attendance through early fault detection.</p>

<u>Public Rights of Way</u>	
<p><i>“The footpaths need to be kept clear and could be improved as they can get wet in places”</i></p> <p><i>“PROW corridors through solar farms are not appropriate”</i></p> <p><i>“Footpaths must be safeguarded and given amenity value”</i></p> <p><i>“Paths need to be continuous, at the moment they are not”</i></p> <p><i>“Well designated footpaths would be good”</i></p>	<p>The Applicant understands the value of the local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network to the local community and users. Solar infrastructure will be set back from the PRoW and new hedgerows will be planted either side of the PRoW to reduce potential visual effects, with a 4m buffer between the new hedgerows and perimeter fence line to allow for maintenance.</p> <p>Both PRoWs would be retained in their entirety in their existing locations. The PRoWs will remain open throughout the construction period, if the solar farm is consented, except for a short period to allow for a section of site track, which crosses the PRoW, to be constructed.</p>

<u>Efficiency</u>	
<p><i>“Their efficiency deteriorates with time”</i></p> <p><i>“Solar and wind are intermittent. Winter is cloudy and with blackouts, back up reliant on traditional fossil fuels”</i></p>	<p><b>Solar panels don’t need direct sunlight to operate,</b> and they produce power all year round. The Applicant is proposing the use of bi-facial solar panels which can produce more electricity in less space. Diffuse sunlight is sufficient, and a grass surface reflects enough light to justify the use of bifacial modules.</p> <p>The UK energy grid system used to rely on a small number of power stations. As the grid system becomes increasingly powered by solar and other renewables, it has become much more diverse and distributed.</p> <p>Our grid is becoming smarter to match supply and <b>demand. The UK’s reliance on the use of natural gas</b> to balance the system will reduce as we see larger amounts of energy storage in the system. Systems like batteries and electric vehicles, as well as green hydrogen, are able to store surplus energy from renewables and release it when required.</p> <p>There are a number of variables (solar resource available, type, size and efficiency of the PV panels, orientation and inclination of the panels, shading etc) which affect performance of a solar panel over the long term and a decline in <b>performance over the project’s lifetime</b> is inevitable.</p> <p>There have been significant technological improvements in the solar industry in recent years, including Mono-crystalline modules, which have a much higher efficiency rate replacing the less efficient Poly-crystalline (or Multi-crystalline) modules.</p>

<u>Visual Impact</u>	
<p><i>“The Varley Solar Farm will be visible from our house, thus spoiling the rural view”</i></p> <p><i>“If, as was suggested by your representative during the public exhibition in Cromhall, additional hedging and/or screening was to be installed in order to completely hide the solar panels from our view then that would help affect our opinion of the proposal”</i></p>	<p>The site has been chosen as it has good solar irradiation levels, lies outside of any statutory environmental, archaeological and landscape designations and due to its proximity to a viable grid connection.</p> <p>The Proposed Development has been through a detailed design process, and the Applicant has taken account of feedback from the community and stakeholders, as well as the results of site surveys and assessments. Design changes include siting the substation further to the south reducing potential visibility from local properties. Some solar infrastructure has also been moved further away from residential properties and a close board timber gate has been added at the main entrance of the solar farm to screen views</p> <p>Potential visibility of the Proposed Development will be reduced by existing trees and hedgerow and proposed new and infill native planting.</p> <p>As well as providing screening, the planting will provide wildlife corridors and vital resources for mammals, birds, and insect species.</p> <p>A Landscape and Visual Assessment provides an assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the existing landscape and visual amenity of the site and the surrounding area and accompanies the planning application.</p> <p>A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) accompanies the planning application and provides detail on where hedgerow reinforcement is proposed, as well as the location and detail of planting.</p> <p>The LEMP also provides further details on measures to protect existing vegetation, proposed species and specifications for new vegetation, and any standards to be adhered to. In addition, the LEMP will provide information on the timings and aftercare regime for all planting.</p>

<u>Community Benefit</u>	
<p><i>“With the rising cost of energy, could organisations (village hall, churches, scout hall, school) receive free electric from the solar farm?”</i></p> <p><i>“There is no discernable benefits for the local population or community as the energy produced will not be used by them, while the loss of amenity is all theirs”</i></p>	<p>The Applicant believes that solar projects should provide direct, lasting benefits to local communities. The Applicant took a tailored approach and worked directly with the community, throughout the consultation period, to understand how the Proposed Development could support the local area and help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits.</p>

<p><i>“I suppose a community benefit fund that could be accessed by the village community as needed, if there will be no option in having this development”</i></p> <p><i>“Cromhall Road Safety Project needs funding to meet their ambitions.”</i></p>	<p>As a result of the consultation outlined above, if the Proposed Development is consented, the Applicant has committed to supporting the Cromhall Road Safety Project towards the purchase of a Safe-Speed™ Camera System to be used in combination with/as part of the Cromhall Community Speed Watch team.</p>
---	--

<u>Noise</u>	
<p><b><i>“Concerned regarding noise from transformers”</i></b></p> <p><b><i>“Cumulative noise effect from inverters should be considered”</i></b></p>	<p>Solar panels themselves do not generate noise. The main noise source associated with a solar farm will be within the inverter stations where small fans operate within the inverters, during daylight hours only.</p> <p>Further to feedback from the local community, the inverter location to the north has been moved further to the south away from residential properties.</p> <p>An assessment, carried out to consider the potential effects of noise associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, has determined that the Proposed Development is predicted to have low impact. Further information can be found in the Noise Impact Assessment.</p>

## 7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has provided an overview of the engagement and consultation activities that have been, and continue to be, undertaken by the Applicant on the Proposed Development.
- 7.2. The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has allowed the Applicant to identify and respond to local issues and potential concerns.
- 7.3. Analysis from the comments forms has shown that those who attended the public exhibition felt better informed about the proposals further to their attendance. 59% **increased their understanding of the Proposed Development either 'a lot' or 'quite a lot'** following attendance at the exhibition.
- 7.4. Of the issues raised during the consultation, issues relating to loss of agricultural land and traffic were of particular importance to the community. Constructive comments on these and other topics have been taken into consideration by the Applicant before the submission of the planning application. The solar farm is specifically designed to be dual-purpose enabling continued agricultural use, in the form of sheep grazing, and renewable generation. The solar farm will also contribute towards tackling climate change, the **biggest threat to the UK's food security**. A comprehensive review was undertaken on potential access routes for the Proposed Development, including consideration of access from the east and west of the site. The Applicant, to minimise potential impact from delivery vehicles, is proposing to construct a bypass for HGV traffic on private land west of Farleigh Lane.
- 7.5. The Applicant is committed to continuing the open dialogue it has established with the local community during pre-application public consultation as the application process continues, as outlined within this SCI.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	Introductory letter to stakeholders
APPENDIX B	Public exhibition newsletter
APPENDIX C	Public exhibition newspaper advert
APPENDIX D	Public exhibition sidebar graphic
APPENDIX E	Public exhibition materials
APPENDIX F	Comments form



15<sup>th</sup> June 2022



RE: Varley Solar Farm Proposal near Cromhall, South Gloucestershire

I am writing to advise you that RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm southeast of Cromhall, in south Gloucestershire, with the hope of submitting a planning application later this year.

**RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy business active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution.** At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 22GW of renewable energy projects across the globe.

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

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

Detailed technical and environmental assessments will be carried out to ensure any potential impact upon the environment, landscape, heritage and local residents is appropriately assessed. The findings from the surveys and assessments will be written up in a number of detailed documents which will accompany any planning application. We are liaising with South Gloucestershire Council, on the proposal, and have recently submitted an EIA screening request.

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. In early July we will distribute a newsletter to all properties in nearby villages, along with other stakeholders, ahead of a public exhibition to be held later in July. Feedback from the community will be taken into account, along with the results of site surveys and assessments, as we refine the design of the proposed solar farm.

We have also launched a dedicated website at [www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk](http://www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk) which will be updated regularly.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed scheme in more detail with the parish council members and would be happy to arrange a meeting at a convenient time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries.

Yours sincerely,



Bertrand Devossel  
Development Project Manager  
E: [bertrand.devossel@res-group.com](mailto:bertrand.devossel@res-group.com)

# VARLEY SOLAR FARM

## JULY 2022



RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land southeast of Cromhall, in South Gloucestershire. Environmental and technical surveys have been ongoing in recent months to ensure that the site is suitable for a solar farm development and to inform a preliminary layout and design.

RES is now at the stage of consulting with the local community to get feedback on our early stage proposal. The feedback will be taken into account, along with the results of site surveys and **assessments, as we refine the design.**

### Public Exhibition

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding a public exhibition in the local area to share more information about the proposal and **to enable you to provide us with your feedback. RES staff will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.**

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July**

**Cromhall Village Hall, 2pm to 7pm**  
Talbots End Lane, Cromhall GL12 8AL

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available on our website at [www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk](http://www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk) from 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

The public exhibition initiates a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the proposal. **The closing date for comments is 5<sup>th</sup> August 2022.** Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

**Comments on the proposal should be provided in writing by either filling out a comment form at the public exhibition or online, or by writing to RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR.**

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



## Varley Solar Farm at a Glance

The proposed Varley Solar Farm is located on land southeast of Cromhall, in south Gloucestershire. It is anticipated that the solar farm would be capable of generating around 25MW of clean, low cost renewable electricity, enough to power approximately 9000<sup>1</sup> homes.



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

As we transition to a net-zero future, reducing the impacts of climate change both locally and globally, RES' priority is to deliver clean, green electricity at the lowest cost for consumers. New analysis on electricity generation costs published by BEIS<sup>2</sup> shows that large-scale solar, alongside onshore wind, are now the cheapest forms of new electricity generation.

### About RES

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

RES is developing a number of projects, ranging from 12MW to 120MW, across the UK & Ireland using the latest solar technology. We also provide full scope asset management and operations and maintenance services across a wide portfolio, and in 2021 were voted the fastest growing solar O&M provider in the UK, by a report published by Wood Mackenzie.



**Bertrand Devossel**  
Development project Manager  
✉ bertrand.devossel@res-group.com



**Carey Green**  
Community Liaison Officer  
✉ carey.green@res-group.com  
☎ 01872 226 931

RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR

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

<sup>1</sup> The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted average, annual electricity generation of the site and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,748 kWh (Dec 2021).

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf)





Pupils and staff from Can Woodfield Junior School

# School's delight over upgraded rating by Ofsted

STUDENTS and staff at a school in Chas are celebrating after receiving rapid improvement since their previous Ofsted inspection.

Can Woodfield Junior School has received a 'good' rating since the previous inspection, which placed them in special measures in January 2021.

Louise Bennett, who took over as Headteacher of Can Woodfield Junior School in October 2021, said the inspection process was rigorous but very positive.

She said: "This is an amazing achievement. The inspectors were very complimentary of the school's ethos and our staff were delighted."

"It is an amazing achievement and acknowledgement to staff, governors and CRAT trustees, who have worked tirelessly to ensure that Woodfield is a great place to learn and grow."

"Parents and carers have shown great dedication and

By Alice Knight

support to the school and our proud achievements and biggest thanks goes to the pupils who all work so hard every day making CRAGS thriving and inspiring environments to learn."

According to the Ofsted report, inspectors found that "leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils" and that the school has created an environment where children "feel safe" and look forward to school days.

The inspectors were also impressed with the inclusivity of the school and said that staff were "passionate about the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities."

However, the inspection found there were still issues that need to be improved.

Inspectors said, in some foundation subjects, across leaders

have not identified the essential knowledge that they want children to know and remember. As a result, students rely on ad hoc concepts since they are unable to build on prior knowledge or connect concepts taught.

Ofsted said in their report, "Leaders need to support teachers to develop their subject knowledge, in these subjects, and to adapt the curriculum effectively so that pupils know and remember the important concepts."

Emma Irvine, chief of governors at Can Woodfield Junior School, said: "I am so proud of the children, staff, governors and academy team who have made this dream a reality."

## CONTACT

alice.knight@newsquest.co.uk



## Banned for drug offence

A BURSLEY man has been banned and fined for drug-driving.

Christopher Elliott, 41, of Northolt Road, Can East, was caught drug-driving in a BMW on the road in which he lives on February 20 this year. Cannabis was found in Elliott's blood.

The case was proved at Cheshire Magistrates' Court on June 13.

Elliott was fined £160 and sent four days to prison with a 12-month driving ban. He was also disqualified from driving for a year.

## VARLEY SOLAR FARM Public Exhibition



RES is exploring the potential for a solar farm on land southeast of Cromhall, in South Gloucestershire.

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding a public exhibition in the local area to enable people to find out more about the proposal and provide us with their views. RES staff will be on hand to answer any questions and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

18<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 2pm to 7pm  
Cromhall Village Hall, Talbots  
End Lane, Cromhall GL12 8AJ

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at [www.varleysolarfarm.org.uk](http://www.varleysolarfarm.org.uk) from 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

The public exhibition initiates a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the proposal. The closing date for comments is 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Comments on the proposal should be provided in writing by either filing out a comment form at the public exhibition or online, or by writing to RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR.

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

For more information please visit our website at [www.varleysolarfarm.co.uk](http://www.varleysolarfarm.co.uk)



Search

What's on

Community

Local directory

Offers & competitions

Jobs

Give 'n' Take

History

# Welcome

@cromhall  
cromhall

**BONDS**  
*of*  
**THORNBURY**  
INDEPENDENT  
ESTATE AGENTS

**res**  
**VARLEY**  
**SOLAR FARM**  
Have  
your say

Welcome to Cromhall.com - your online guide to events, organisations and businesses in and around Cromhall.

This month on Cromhall.com there's a chance to win Afternoon Tea for four people at The Swan, Thornbury, plus you could win Cromhall Flower Show & Village Fayre tickets, or a FREE private function package at LG's!.

Looking to advertise? [Click here](#) for options.

Want a monthly round-up of what's new? [Sign up](#) for our email newsletter.

**HEATHEND**  
**GARAGE**  
01454 294352

# What's on

## Monday 11th July 2022

- 11am: "The Battles of the Berkeleys" Exhibition, Berkeley Castle
- Gadgeteers, Summer Reading Challenge 2022
- 8pm: Flower Show Committee Meeting, Royal Oak

## Tuesday 12th July 2022

- 7pm: Cromhall Crafters, Cromhall Chapel

## Wednesday 13th July 2022

- 10am: Cool Ventures Webinar: Cyber Security for Small Businesses
- 5.30pm: Open Water Sprint Triathlon, Cromhall

**CROMHALL**  
**FLOWER SHOW**  
**& VILLAGE FAYRE**

**SATURDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER**  
**It's time to...**

**BOOK A STALL**  
**CHOOSE YOUR CATEGORIES**  
**FIND OUT HOW TO ENTER**

**Click here for more...**

**TORTWORTH**  
ESTATE SHOP

*the*  
**Swan**

**MEMORIAL**  
**WOODLANDS**  
BRISTOL  
Funeral Directors  
and Cemetery

## WHY SOLAR?

- » Renewable energy at lowest cost to the consumer<sup>1</sup>
- » Tackling climate change by supporting the UK's target of net zero by 2050
- » Specifically designed to be dual purpose, combining continued agricultural use and renewable generation
- » Quick to deploy
- » Modern, efficient technology allowing more electricity generation in less space
- » Diversification of agricultural business
- » Significant biodiversity enhancement opportunities by supporting new and existing plant and animal habitats
- » High level of public support<sup>2</sup>

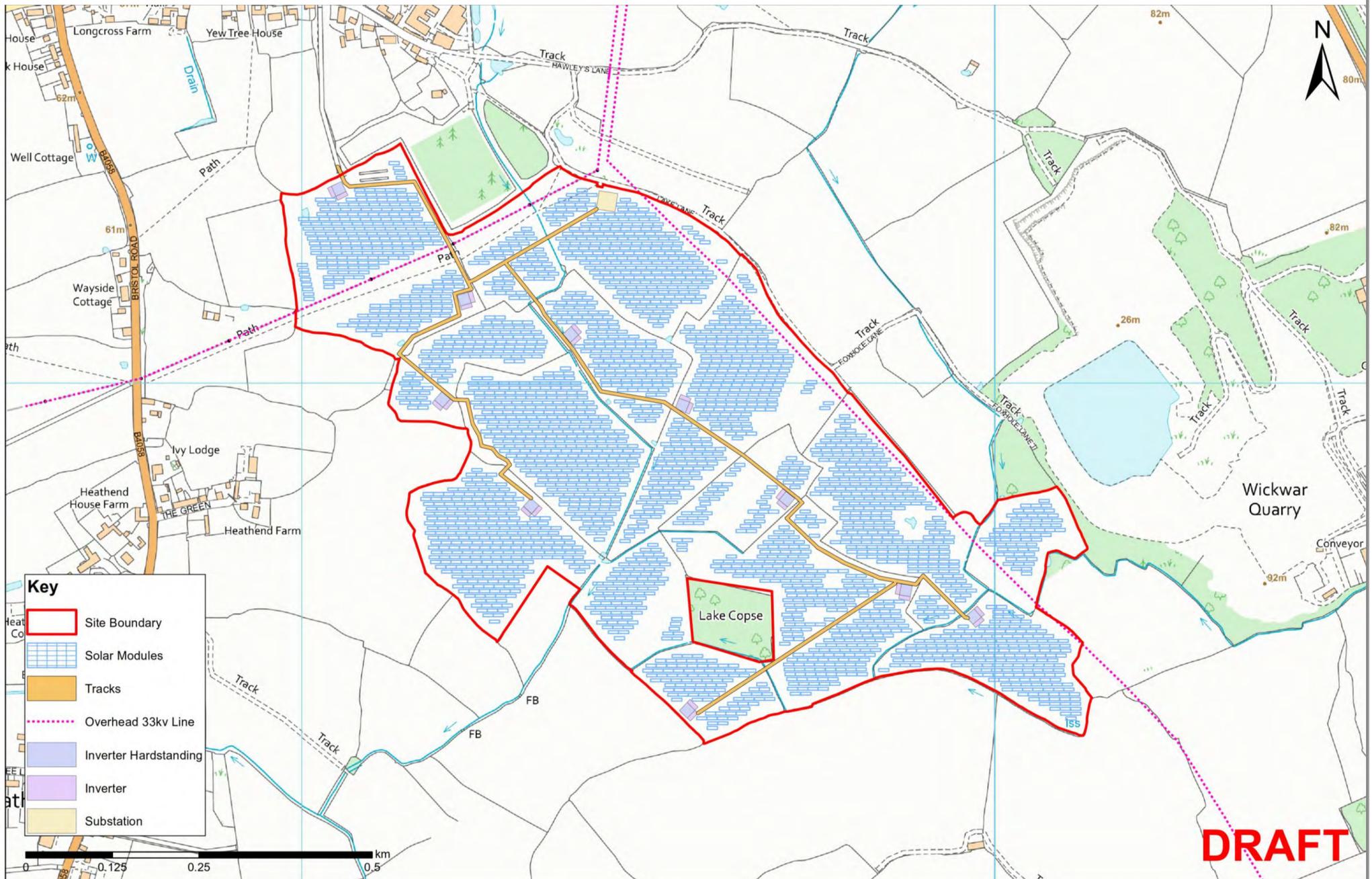


<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911817/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Copper-Consultancy\\_Solar-Energy-UK\\_Public-attitudes-to-solar\\_January-2022.pdf](https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Copper-Consultancy_Solar-Energy-UK_Public-attitudes-to-solar_January-2022.pdf)

## Design Layout and Infrastructure

The plan below shows the preliminary layout for the 25MW Varley Solar Farm, based on environmental and technical surveys which are underway. We are currently consulting on this layout and as such it is subject to change.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2022  
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Approximate Location: 370533, 189929

In addition to the solar panels, the site infrastructure is expected to include:

- A network of on-site tracks
- A substation compound with security fencing
- Inverters on hardstandings
- Temporary construction compound
- Deer fencing around the perimeter of the solar farm

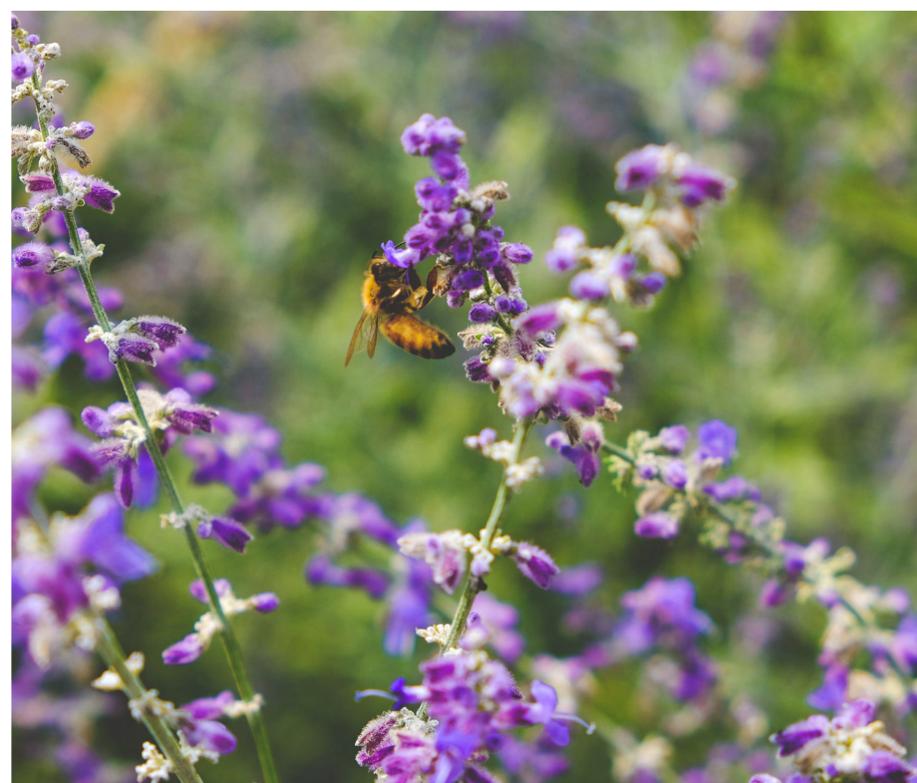
## RES design their solar farms so that they will fit sensitively in the surrounding landscape

As part of the planning process, RES carries out a number of detailed technical and environmental surveys to ensure any potential impact upon the environment, landscape, heritage and local residents is appropriately assessed and mitigated. These assessments include:

- » Landscape and Visual
- » Ecology
- » Cultural Heritage and Archaeology
- » Traffic and Transport
- » Agricultural Land Classification
- » Noise
- » Glint and Glare

The results of these surveys, along with feedback from the local community and stakeholders, are taken into account as the design of the solar farm is refined and finalised.

The assessments will accompany any planning application that is made.

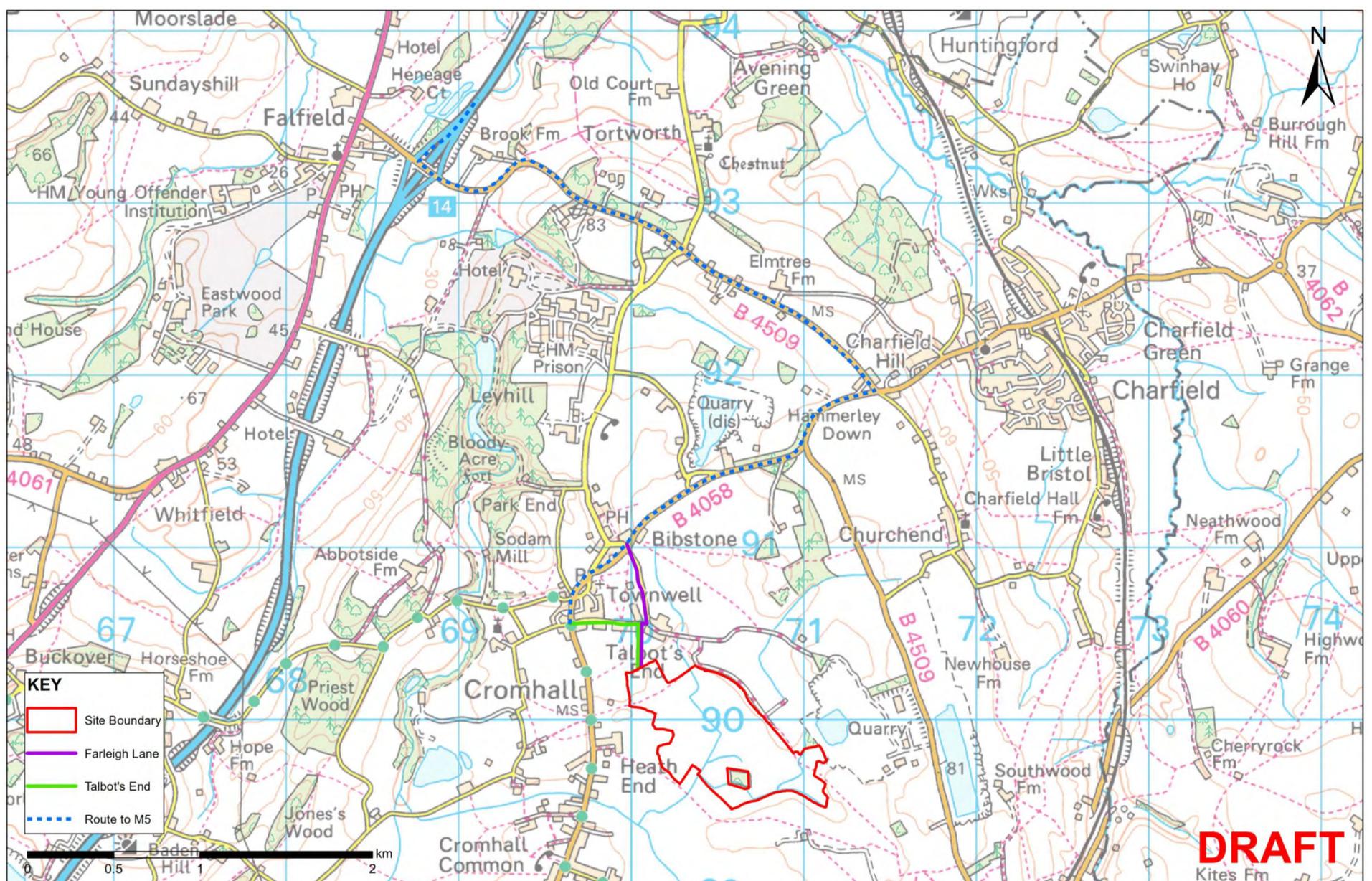




## Delivery Route and Access

Access is an important consideration when selecting a potential solar farm site.

A transport survey is ongoing and the plan below shows the site access point and the delivery routes currently under consideration.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2022  
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Approximate Location: 370533, 189929

We will consult with the local authority, the emergency services, the local community and other relevant bodies to produce a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to support any planning application. The CTMP outlines the overall framework for managing the safe movement of construction and delivery traffic as well as itemising the expected number of traffic movements and timing restrictions.

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

## How a Solar Panel Works



Solar PV panels are typically made from silicon, which is a great semi-conductor, installed in a metal panel frame with a glass casing.

The sun gives off light, even on cloudy days, and when these light particles, or photons, hit the thin layer of silicon on the top of a solar panel, they knock electrons off the silicon atoms which creates a direct current (DC) of electricity. This is captured by the wiring in the solar panels.

This DC electricity is then converted to alternating current (AC) by an inverter which is then funnelled into the grid network. AC is the type of electrical current used when you plug appliances into normal wall sockets.

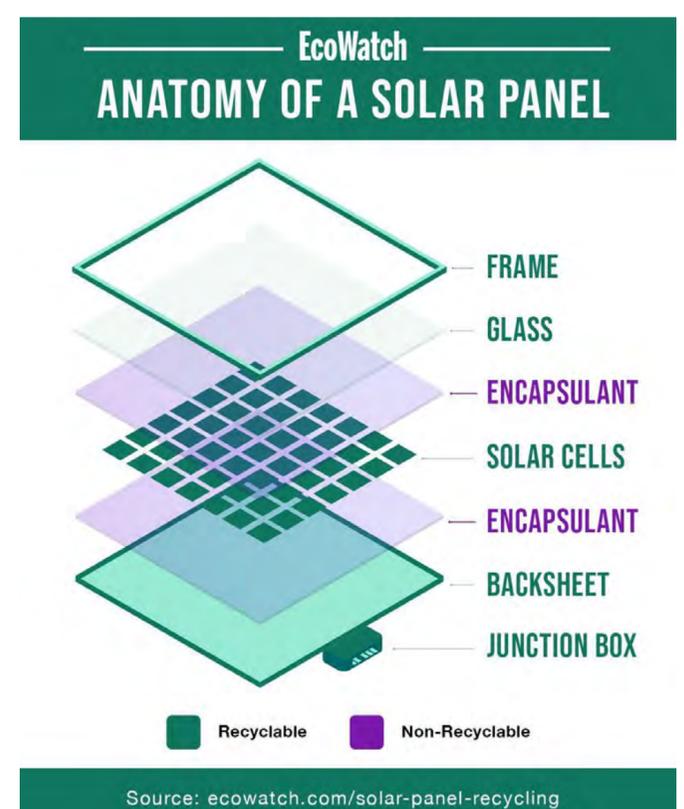
Bifacial modules have two sides of solar cells, enabling additional energy generation from the diffuse light reflected off the grass, on the rear-side of the panels.

## Recycling

In most cases solar panels are recyclable and there are well established industrial processes to do this. There are organisations around the UK and Europe specialising in solar recycling, such as PV Cycle and the European Recycling Platform.

They are working with solar developers to minimise electrical waste and recycle old panels in line with the Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/waste-electrical-and-electronic-equipment-weee\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/waste-electrical-and-electronic-equipment-weee_en)



## We believe in meaningful and effective consultation

The aims of our consultation process are to:

Engage early with the local community to facilitate a constructive consultation process to help identify and understand concerns.

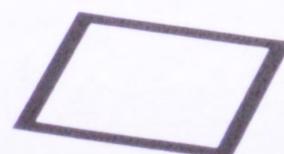
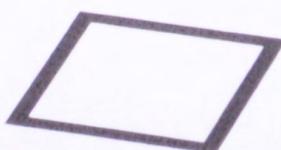
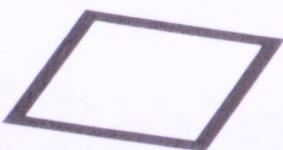
Assist the local community in understanding the benefits and potential impacts of the proposed solar farm.

Add value and improve the quality of our proposal through meaningful and productive consultation.

Before we submit a planning application, we will create a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), that documents the community engagement process and any steps we have taken to adapt our proposal.

At this stage we are inviting the local community to submit comments directly to RES. If an application is submitted there will be the opportunity to submit representations to the determining Planning Authority at that time.

We are keen to understand your views on the proposal and the information available at this exhibition. Please take a few minutes to fill out a feedback form with your comments.





# Varley Solar Farm Proposal

## Comments Form

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

Feedback from the local community is an important part of our pre-application consultation and we would be grateful if you would take time to fill out this comments form with your feedback. The closing date for comments is **5<sup>th</sup> August 2022**. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

*Please note that any comments submitted to RES are not representations to the determining authority (South Gloucestershire Council) and there will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.*

### 1 Public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibitions?

- Newsletter through the door
- Advert in local newspaper
- Project website - [www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk](http://www.varley-solarfarm.co.uk)
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

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

- Knew a lot
- Knew quite a lot
- Knew a little
- Knew very little
- Knew nothing at all

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

- A lot
- Quite a lot
- A little
- Very little
- Nothing at all



1.4 Do you have any suggestions for ways we could have improved our public exhibition?

## 2 Climate change and renewables

2.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I don't know
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

If you disagree or strongly disagree please explain why:

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

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I don't know
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

If you disagree or strongly disagree please explain why:



2.3 Do you agree that we need to develop solar farms to help reduce our carbon emissions?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I don't know
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

If you disagree or strongly disagree please explain why:

### 3 Varley Solar Farm Proposal

3.1 What do you think about the proposed layout of Varley Solar Farm?

- I am happy with the proposed layout
- I am neutral towards the proposed layout
- I have concerns about the proposed layout
- I don't like solar farms in general

Further Comments:

3.2 Please provide us with any further suggestions or comments regarding the design of the proposed Varley Solar Farm



# Varley Solar Farm Proposal

## Comments Form

### 4 Local benefit

- 4.1 We are keen to explore opportunities for improvements to the Public Rights of Way network which can be considered as part of our proposal. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please let us know in the box below.

- 4.2 We firmly believe that solar schemes should provide meaningful benefits locally. We are inviting feedback and input on other local projects you think our solar farm could support, to help address the needs of your community.

### 5 Your details

Please provide your name and contact details below.

*Your contact details will be treated by RES with the strictest of confidence, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We may at times share your contact details, in confidence, with third parties who we employ to help process your comments or update you on the project and by providing your details below you consent to this. You may write to RES at any time to ask that your contact details be removed from our records and from any third parties we work with.*

Name	
Email	
Address	
Telephone	

If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please tick this box

Once completed, please return your form by email to [carey.green@res-group.com](mailto:carey.green@res-group.com) or by post to RES, Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this comments form, your feedback is important to us