

Allington Lane Solar Farm

Pre-Application Consultation Report



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2.0	<i>28/06/2024</i>	Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Removed

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1. Introduction

This Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report supports an application by Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC, the Applicant). The PAC Report details the consultation activity carried out by the Applicant in relation to the proposed Allington Lane Solar Farm which includes the installation of solar panels, and ancillary development on unused agricultural land off Allington Lane; approximately 2.5 km to the southeast of Eastleigh in the Hampshire County Council area.

Comments and feedback received from the Public Consultation Events have been collated and reported within this PAC Report. Furthermore, the PAC Report demonstrates how the Applicant has responded to comments, and how the feedback received has shaped the design of the proposed development.

This PAC Report has been prepared to accompany the planning application to EBC.

2. Summary of Consultation Activity

A Pre-Application advice request was sent to EBC 3rd of February 2023 with a detailed response received on the 3rd April 2023 (Ref: Q/23/94598), listed in Appendices A and G.

A formal Screening Request was submitted to EBC on 27th July 2023, followed by a Screening Response issued by EBC on 9th October 2023 (Ref: V/23/95757) confirming the proposed development to be non-EIA.

The Applicant commenced local community consultation for the proposed development in May 2023. An email was circulated to West End Parish Council to introduce the proposed development and seek their advice in relation to a suitable venue for a Public Consultation Event.

The consultation event for the proposed development took place on 19th July 2023, at West End Parish Centre, West End, Eastleigh, SO30 3FE. The event was attended by 5 members of the public, the comments received were focussed on the suitable setbacks to residential properties that had been included and to maintain their views, attendees enquired about impacts from traffic, and attendees enquired about where the grid connection point was.

Key matters that arose are outlined in Section 3. Feedback from the above has helped to shape and inform the final layout of the proposed development.

2.1. Public Consultation Events

2.1.1. July 2023 Public Consultation Event

A public consultation exercise was undertaken by the Applicant on the 19th of July 2023, at West End Parish Centre, West End, Eastleigh, SO30 3FE. Itchen Valley Country Park was highlighted as an alternative proposed location but feedback from the Parish Council was that the Parish Centre was easier to access and was more of a community hub that's used regularly.

Ahead of the event, flyers were hand delivered to 49 identified local households within 500m of the boundary the proposed development area. Flyers were also placed in the Parish Centre in West End and the event was publicised on the Parish Council's Facebook page. A copy of the flyer is provided in Appendix B. The flyer provided a website link¹ to allow those unable to attend the event to still find out about the project and provide their feedback. The website provided key project information including the proposed plan for development, a copy of the information boards and an online survey.

Locogen notified West End Parish Council of the event and encouraged them to attend (with a Council Meeting being held at the same location, on the same date).

The event was attended by 5 people who used the sign in sheet including a local councillor. The vast majority who attended lived within the West End postcode area. A summary of the consultation feedback is provided in Section 3 of this Report. Figure 1 below shows the boards set up in the hall ahead of the event.

¹ <https://locogen.com/allingtonlane-solar-project/>



Figure 1: Photograph of the information boards set up at the event

3. Key Matters Arising from Consultation

This section sets out the key issues raised during the pre-application consultation period in both public events and meetings with stakeholders and local residents, along with a response from the Applicant on how the issues raised have been addressed.

Consultation Comment		Applicant Response
Residential amenity	Set back distances from properties.	Whilst views from private properties are not material considerations, the Applicant has worked with those neighbouring the proposed development to increase setback distances and provided screening from the key views/aspects.
	Location of energy storage facilities.	The Applicant has repositioned the energy storage facility further away from Hogwood and Allington Lane. The amendments to the layout between consultation events are demonstrated in the Consultation Event Boards included in Appendix C of this Report
	Local path network.	Access to core paths close to the site would be maintained during construction. There are no core paths within the site and therefore there will be no direct impact during any construction and operation if the site is consented. There is the potential for improvements to the local connectivity of public access that has been highlighted in the application documents.
Site Selection	Site Location.	The Applicant has detailed the site selection process in the Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) accompanying the Application. The project has been designed specifically in terms of its scale and location to match the currently available grid export capacity made available from the Distribution Network Operator (DNO). The site has been designed to fit within the physical confines of several fields off Allington Lane, allowing it to be sympathetically incorporated into the existing landscape, alongside additional native hedgerow planting to bolster the pre-existing hedgerows, providing additional screening.
	Use of agricultural land.	The Applicant has provided an Agricultural Land Classification Report in Appendix H of the PDAS. The site was originally unused agricultural land with the majority of the site being classed as Subgrade 3b and some small areas being classed as Grade 4, both being classified as non-prime agricultural land, with prime agricultural land being defined as that graded at 1, 2 and 3a. Ground mount solar makes up just under 0.1% of land within the UK as of 2022, and this figure will likely rise to 0.3% by 2035. As a result of these low levels, the security of agricultural farmland throughout the UK is not at risk from solar. This development offers the potential for sheep to graze

		around and beneath the panels once the site is operational. Installing a solar farm on land that is currently unused agricultural land also allows the ground to generate income for the farmer, potentially increasing farming production through the proposed sheep grazing and providing a BNG to the local area across the lifetime of the project.
Environmental	Impact on Wildlife.	The Applicant has carried out a Phase 1 Ecological Assessment which is included in the Ecological Impact Assessment in Appendix B of the PDAS which accompanies this Application. A gap of 10-15cm will be left below the security fence to allow wildlife to move between the proposed development and surrounding fields. The Applicant will continue to work with the ecologist, closest neighbours to the site and the Council to identify opportunities for habitat improvements and ecological enhancements to be incorporated into the project. These enhancements will form part of the overall planning application submission and ensure the project achieves a BNG across its lifetime.
	Reinstatement on Completion of Operations.	This is likely to be dealt with via planning conditions should the project be consented, and if not via the terms of the lease with the landowner. This will oblige the developer to put arrangements in place to guarantee funds are available to restore the site to its former condition after the operational period of the site is complete.
Landscape and Visual	Potential of visual impacts to local residents through reflections from solar panels.	The Applicant has carried out a glint and glare assessment in the PDAS which accompanies this Application and demonstrates that there would be no glint and glare impact on local residents. The applicant has also proposed the extensive planting of native hedgerows to fill in any gaps that exist in the pre-existing hedgerows onsite to ensure the site will not be visually intrusive for local sensitive receptors.
Construction Impacts	Construction and Traffic.	The Applicant has undertaken a traffic and transport assessment and a noise assessment, both of which accompany the Application in Appendix E and F of the PDAS respectively. A dual haul route was proposed and determined upon after assessing the rail bridge on Allington Lane as being sub-optimal for routing HGV traffic. Both proposed haulage routes have been assessed as appropriate. The new link road presents an appropriate link to the north of Allington Lane, avoiding routing traffic through the constrained bridge. The haul route road width, structure, traffic count data and road traffic accident data have all been analysed and no significant effects are predicted to the road network which connects the site to the M27. Given the rural landscape and generally flat topography on Allington Lane, visibility and swept path of the site access junctions have been assessed and engineered to obtain a safe and practical site

		access arrangement. Hogwood Lane has been assessed to be unsuitable for public use except by specific road end users and so the maximum visibility achievable (REF) has been reached for the two site entrances which, along with consultation with road users will allow safe use by HGVs. The operational use of the site is estimated to be 15 – 20 LGVs per year which is considered acceptable and a betterment to common alternative land uses such as housing development and agricultural land. The daily peak average HGV trip is estimated to be six, which is considered a safe and acceptable impact for the construction phase of the development. Construction Traffic Management measures have been suggested in outline the form of the draft CTMP. A more detailed version of the CTMP can be agreed with the planning authority prior to the start of construction and can be secured through the use of suitably worded planning conditions.
Socio-Economic and Community Benefit	Impact on Property Prices.	Whilst under UK law there is no right to a view over neighbouring land and property prices are not material planning considerations however the Applicant recognises that the development should be sensitively designed to reduce impact on neighbouring properties. Locogen engaged with near neighbours to assess the views from their properties and in response to feedback have accommodate changes including adjusting setbacks and introducing screening in the form of native hedgerows.
	Impact on Human Health: Vibration.	Solar racking is designed to bear the load of the PV modules, as well as additional load factors including seismic, weather and wind forces. The design and installation of the racking account for these continuous forces on the site. Additionally all noisy infrastructure such as inverters have been located with appropriate setbacks to avoid generating unacceptable noise impacts. A full Noise Assessment is located in Appendix F of the PDAS.

4. Conclusion

The Applicant has sought to engage meaningfully with the local community about the proposed development in advance of the formal planning submission. the Applicant has followed best practice on Community Engagement and public consultation.

The changes to the proposed development as a result of this feedback have reduced the area of solar panels of the proposed development and increased the areas of native hedgerow screening to reduce any visual intrusion for local sensitive receptors. This demonstrates that the Applicant is committed to achieving a balance between the material concerns of the local community and positive climate impact resulting directly from the proposed Allington Lane Solar Farm development.

Appendix A. Consultation Activity

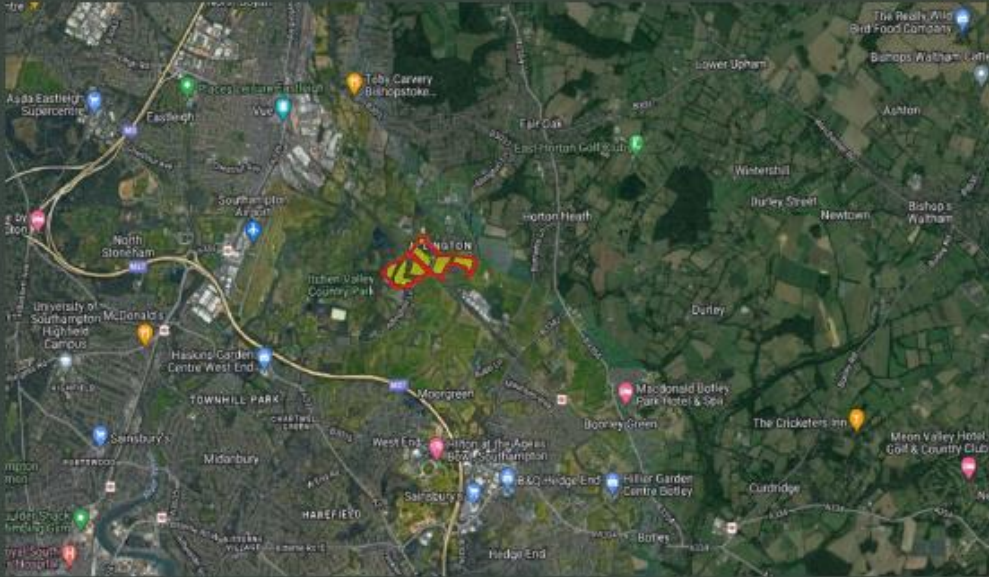
The timeline and details of the consultation activities are detailed here.

Consultation Activity		Date
Emails	Initial email to Eastleigh Borough Council Planning Department to introduce project.	January 2023
	Initial email to West End Parish Council to introduce project.	May 2023
	Invitation for West End Parish Council to attend Community Consultation Event.	July 2023
Flyers and Posters	Flyers were distributed to private residences within 0.5 km of the proposed development. Posters were distributed in public and community spaces ahead of the Community Consultation Event.	July 2023
Meetings	Meetings with Eastleigh Borough Council.	January 2023-July 2023
Public Consultation Event	Community Consultation Event	July 2023
Consultation with Eastleigh Borough Council	Pre application advice and discussion with Planning Department and other Departments	January 2023-Present
	Pre-Application EIA Screening	July-October 2023

Appendix B. Public Consultation Event Flyers and Website Post

Flyer that was sent to local residents and posted in West End Parish Centre- 13th July 2023

Allington Lane Solar Farm Project Public Consultation Event



Location: West End Parish Centre, Chapel Road, West End, SO30 3FE

Date: Wednesday, 19th July 2023

Time: You are welcome to attend any time between 2:45pm - 6:45pm

Members of the public are invited to attend our public consultation event at the above venue to view and discuss details of a proposed solar farm project on farmland at Allington, along Allington Lane, approximately 1.5km west of Horton Heath, Eastleigh.

Those that are unable to attend this event can still read about our proposed development and provide feedback at the following website: <https://locogen.com/allingtonlane-solar-project/>.



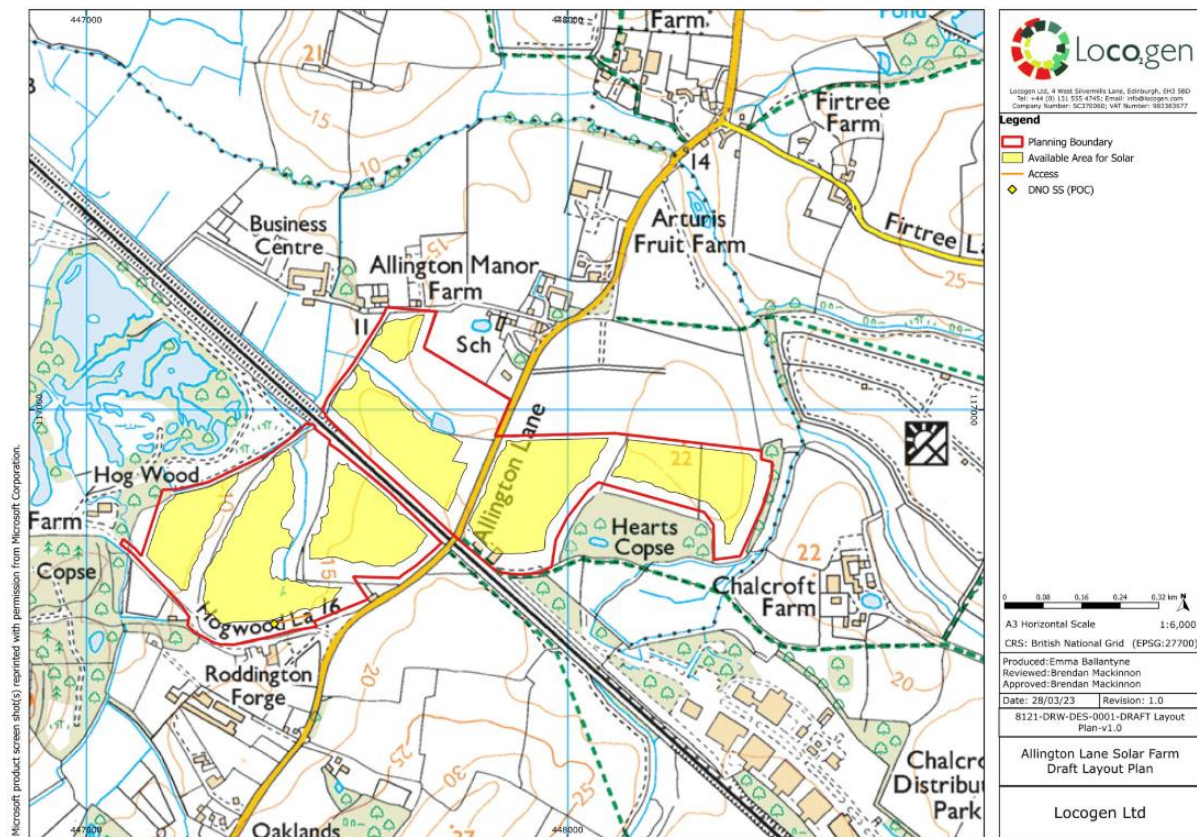
Loco₂gen



The client, freehold landowner Eastleigh Borough Council, are proposing the development of unused agricultural land into use as a Solar Photovoltaic Farm with an associated Battery Storage system. The development would be installed for a period of approx. 35 years. The Allington Lane solar development consists of seven fields that would contain solar panels, battery storage elements and ancillary grid infrastructure. This would generate low-cost renewable electricity, to support the UK Government's long-term green energy strategy, to decarbonise our economy and improve energy security by reducing reliance on volatile foreign energy markets.

The proposed development would comprise the most modern and efficient panels. The site is considered to be well screened but additional hedge and tree planting is proposed to strengthen screening. The solar panels would be mounted on a metal framework supported by ground anchoring without the need for concrete foundations. Between each line of solar panels there would be a gap of approx. 3m and the panels would also be setback from existing field boundaries. This would allow ample area to achieve strong biodiversity enhancements and improved land management, leading to higher quality habitats and benefitting local wildlife.

Site Layout Plan posted on Loco.gen's website - 10th July 2023



Public Submission Form posted on Locogen's website - 10th July 2023

Survey Form

If you were unable to attend the public events or wish to comment on the proposals in general, we would be grateful if you could complete the survey below and provide us with any comments you may have.

1. Do you agree that in the UK we should be developing renewable energy to help address the global climate emergency? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Other

2. Do you agree that using solar power to generate renewable electricity is a useful way of reducing emissions? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Other

3. Do you agree that the proposed solar development at Allington Lane provides an opportunity to contribute to the demand for electricity in the surrounding area? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Other

4. If a planning application was submitted for the proposed solar development at Allington Lane would you be most likely to: *

- ☐ a. Support the application by writing to the Eastleigh Borough Council
☐ b. Support the application privately but not make your views known
☐ c. Be against the proposal privately but not make your views known
☐ d. Be against the proposal and make an objection to the Eastleigh Borough Council
☐ e. None of the above

4b. Are you able to provide reasons for your answer to Question 4? *

5. Are there any potential changes you would make to the proposed solar project? *

5b. If these changes were included would this alter the answer you gave to Question 4? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ N/A

6. Any other comments or observations you would like to make? *

Name *

First

Last

Email *

SUBMIT

Appendix C. Community Consultation Event Boards

Boards from July 2023 Community Consultation Event

Allington Lane Solar Farm Development

The Proposed Development

The client, freehold landowner Eastleigh Borough Council, are proposing the development of unused agricultural land into use as a Solar Photovoltaic Farm with an associated Battery Storage system. The development would be installed for a period of approx. 35 years. The Allington Lane solar development consists of seven fields that would contain solar panels, battery storage elements and ancillary grid infrastructure which would generate low-cost renewable electricity to support the UK Government's long-term green energy strategy to decarbonise our economy and improve energy security by reducing reliance on volatile foreign energy markets.

The proposed development would comprise the most modern and efficient panels. The site is considered to be well screened but additional hedge and tree planting is proposed to strengthen screening. The solar panels would be mounted on a metal framework supported by ground anchoring without the need for concrete foundations. Between each line of solar panels there would be a gap of approx. 3m and the panels would also be setback from existing field boundaries. This would allow ample area to achieve strong biodiversity enhancements and improved land management, leading to higher quality habitats and benefitting local wildlife.

Draft Layout



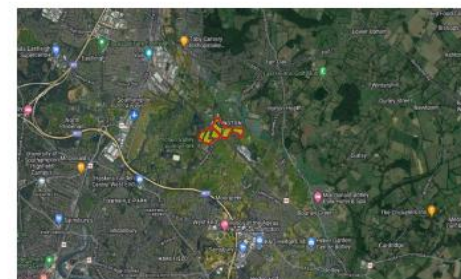
Indicative site layout for Allington Lane Solar Farm

The proposed development would:

- Generate 33GWh of clean renewable electricity per year.
- Comprise of circa 55,000 solar panels mounted on racks and arranged in rows with gaps to ensure limited shading. The top of the panel array would be approximately 3m off the ground and would face south.
- Include 4-5 battery storage units and associated infrastructure.
- Include approximately 8 inverter kiosks sited within the array.
- Be secured by a 2m high 'deer fence' in keeping with the agricultural setting and CCTV cameras around the perimeter.
- Include biodiversity enhancements within the design, which will have positive/beneficial effects for various wildlife species.

The planning consent would be requested for approximately 35-year period. On reaching the end of its operational life, the proposed solar development will be decommissioned, and the site restored.

Site Location



Allington Lane Solar Farm Development

Project timeframe

Work to date

To date we have sought to engage with the local community and near neighbours to the site and undertaken pre-application and screening discussions with Eastleigh Borough Council. The following survey works are ongoing, the results of which will form part of the planning application:

- Ecology & Ornithology;
- Landscape & Visual;
- Hydrology & Drainage;
- Glint & Glare;
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Noise;
- Traffic & Transport; and

The initial results of these surveys have already fed into the design of the proposed development and further mitigation and enhancement measures are being considered as this part of the project develops.

Proposed timescales

- Community consultation is underway with this pre-application community event ahead of the submission of any planning application.
- The current expectation is that a formal planning application will be submitted in August/September 2023.
- Members of the public will be able to provide any formal comments on the application through Eastleigh Borough Council's planning portal and, in the meantime, we would welcome feedback which can be made through our survey form at www.locogen.com/allington-lane-solar-project/.
- If consented, the project would likely begin construction in 2025 however this could be subject to change as it is dependent on grid connection timescales.
- Construction would take approximately 9 months.



Example Panels and Security fencing



Example Battery Units



Example Substation Building (shown part way through construction)



Example of Solar Farm within an agricultural setting

Allington Lane Solar Farm Development

Why renewable energy?

Local policies

Eastleigh Borough Council's Climate Change and Environmental Emergency Strategy 2020-2030 advises that consideration of the scale of contribution to renewable energy generation targets and the effect of proposals on greenhouse emissions shall form part of the assessment process.

The plan also recognises the importance of the renewable energy sector and where the focus of investing in the energy sector has brought wider economic benefits.

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 has key policies in favour of renewable energy development such as "Policy DM4 - Zero or low carbon energy which permits the development of infrastructure to generate zero or low carbon energy."

The National Planning Policy Framework forms a key part of the planning process. NPPF Policy 158 states that "When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
- b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable

Future energy markets

There is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the future price of energy. Low-cost renewable developments such as this will ultimately help avoid or minimise future energy price rises. Such developments will also improve security of supply in the local area, strengthening infrastructure to cope with future demand increases due to, for example, electrification of heat and transport.

Grid Capacity

The UK currently needs to rapidly expand the transmission network to cope with the growing demand for renewable energy generation which is a key tool to be used to achieve the goals set out above. Identifying the appropriate GSP, within a local context, has been undertaken to ensure it will have ample capacity for this development, which is a key determinant in the site selection which is explained in Board 4.

UK targets

At a UK level, the Prime Minister created the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in February 2023. The new department's mission is to replace the UK's energy with cheaper, cleaner and domestic sources.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero produced a report in March 2023- Powering Up Britain. This sets out clear guidelines that the UK will be powered by renewables including wind and solar, hydrogen, power with carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) and new nuclear plants.

The aim for this is to make the UK much more energy independent and to protect the UK from volatile international energy markets, while underpinning our clean energy transition, so the UK becomes a net zero economy by 2050.

The Climate Change Act 2008 established long term statutory targets that reflect the UK's contribution to the international commitments outlined above. The Climate Change Act, as amended in 2019, introduced the Net Zero target - a minimum of a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050.

COP27 outcomes

The UN Climate Change Conference 2022, also known as COP27, resulted in a wide range of international agreements to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The primary aim of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees, and preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, whilst the UNFCCC's objective is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system. The agreed outcomes include a stronger commitment to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees, and a greater acknowledgement of the latest science which reflects the urgent need to take action during this critical decade.

COP27 held in November 2022 resulted in countries delivering a package of decisions that reaffirmed their commitment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The package also strengthened action by countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change.

Governments were also requested to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their national climate plans by the end of 2023, as well as accelerate efforts to phasedown unabated coal power and phase-out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

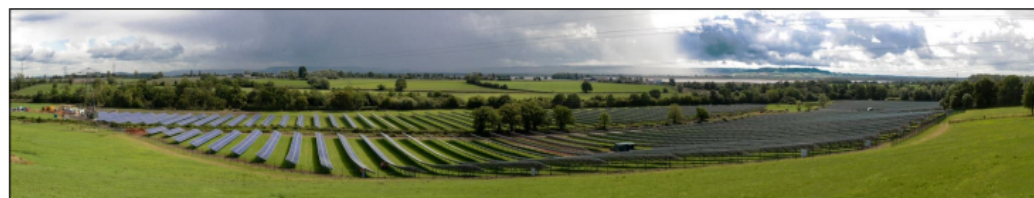
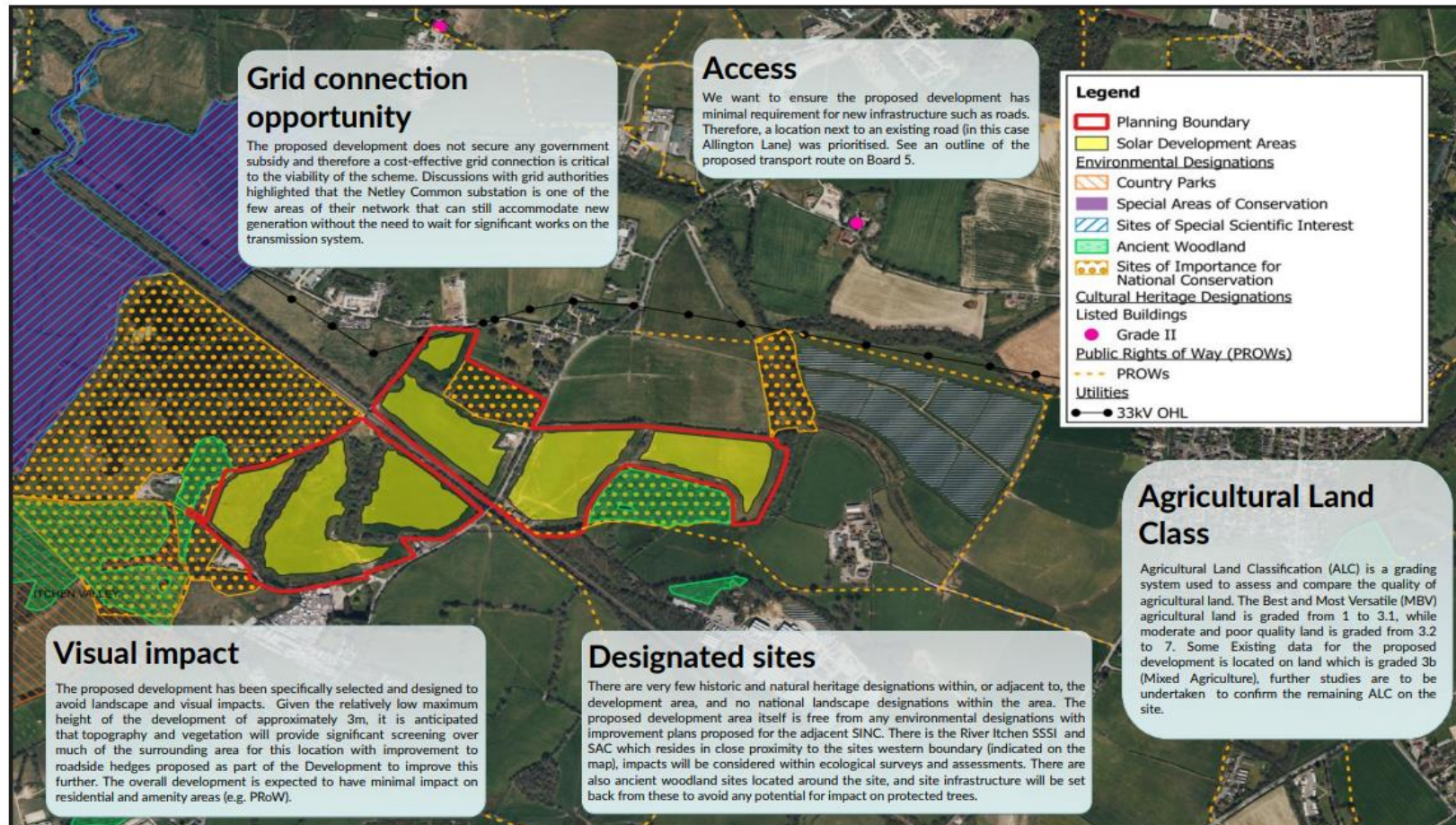


Figure: Installed Solar Array

Allington Lane Solar Farm Development

Why is it here?



Allington Lane Solar Farm Development

Local impact mitigation



Allington Lane Solar Farm Development

How will it look and the benefits

Council Ownership

The Allington Lane Solar Farm Development is being developed by Eastleigh Borough Council. They own all the land proposed for development and will therefore be a key beneficiary from the project going forward. The value that is generated by the Solar Farm will be realised by the council. There may also be opportunities for the energy generated by the development to be utilised at a local level, improving energy security.

How will it look?

The below images show existing land that the solar panels would be installed in but please note that our initial design already includes for setbacks from some of these viewpoint locations following local community consultation to minimise the extent of visibility.

Our design will include for the improvement of existing roadside hedgerows and trees where suitable to provide screening as needed and also improve ecological habitats.



Before construction

Socio-Economic Benefit

There will also be a wider socio-economic benefit to the local and national economy in the following respects:

- An estimated total investment of over £25 million for the construction of the project.
- Opportunities for local businesses to support in terms of groundwork, landscaping, civil engineering, and construction contracts.
- Local job creation during construction and operation.
- Extra income for local retail and accommodation business during the construction and operational phases of the project.
- Enough low-cost (subsidy free) local generation to power the equivalent of the annual electricity demand of over 10,000 UK homes.
- Offsetting approximately 6,600 tonnes of carbon emissions based on the current electricity generation mix.



After construction (note this is an example and not the same site)

