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Tillbridge Solar
Community Newsletter
March 2024

Introduction

Tillbridge Solar Limited (referred to as “Tillbridge Solar”) is developing proposals for a new solar and energy storage scheme (referred to as the “Scheme”) located to the east of Gainsborough and to the north of Lincoln. The Scheme will export and import electricity to the national electricity transmission network at the Cottam substation in Nottinghamshire.

The Scheme is being brought forward by Tribus Clean Energy Ltd and Recurrent Energy (a subsidiary of Canadian Solar), who are both experienced developers of renewable energy projects. They are being supported by a team of technical specialists.

Last year we held a public consultation, which ran for six weeks between 30 May and 11 July. This newsletter provides a summary of our consultation and the work we have carried out since then.

Why is the Scheme needed?

Our vision for the Scheme is to deliver cleaner, greener, and lower-cost energy, while also enhancing the local environment and ensuring that we are a responsible developer.

as wind, nuclear, solar and hydrogen will be accelerated in its latest Energy Security Strategy (published in 2022).

In this strategy, a key aim is to increase the UK’s solar capacity five-fold by 2035, which would increase the total generation capacity from 14 gigawatts (GW) today to around 70GW in the future. Tillbridge Solar would make a significant contribution towards achieving these targets and help provide a reliable source of affordable energy.

The UK has set ambitious climate change targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and to ensure that the energy supply remains secure, reliable, and affordable. With legally binding commitments such as these, the government has further set out how the deployment of renewable technologies such



Scheme location

Our proposals for the Scheme include a Principal Site, which comprises “developable” areas (where all solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, energy storage and associated infrastructure would be located) and “non-developable” areas (which are being considered for environmental mitigation and

enhancement measures), and a Cable Route Corridor. The Cable Route Corridor comprises a 400kV underground cable of approximately 16km in length connecting the Principal Site to the national electricity transmission network at National Grid’s Cottam Substation.



A more detailed plan showing developable and non-developable areas within the Principal Site can be found on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter.



Consultation undertaken to date

As part of the early-stage engagement for the Scheme, in summer 2022 we held a series of collaboration workshops in the local area with elected representatives, as well as with environmental and community groups. A full summary of our collaboration workshops, including the key issues and information discussed, can be found in our workshop report on our website (tillbridgesolar.com/documents-library).

We then held our statutory consultation, which ran for six weeks from 30 May to 11 July 2023. As part of our consultation,

we provided information on our more developed proposals, including the proposed Principal Site layout and the refined Cable Route Corridor.




We produced a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) before our statutory consultation, which explained the consultation methods we would be using. We have also held an additional round of targeted statutory consultation between 14 December 2023 and 25 January 2024.

Our consultation implemented the actions set out in the SoCC and consisted of:

-  Engaging with political representatives and landowners.
-  Distributing newsletters to approximately 5,000 addresses, including additional communication with near neighbours to the Principal Site.
-  Holding six in-person consultation events and two public consultation webinar events.
-  Advertising our consultation in eight digital and print publications and on social media.

We would like to thank everybody who took part in our consultation, both at the in-person events and in the online sessions.

During our consultation we:

-  Received 57 feedback forms and 68 email feedback responses
-  Welcomed 173 people to our information events
-  Had 9680 visitors to our website

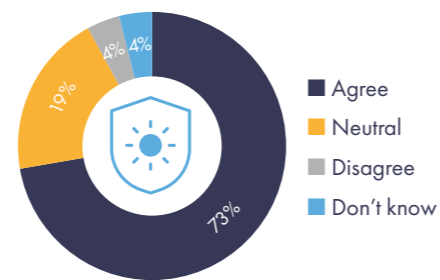
What you told us

The statutory consultation for Tillbridge Solar provided an opportunity for people to comment on our proposals. We would like to thank everyone for your comments, which have helped us to further understand the local area and develop our plans for the Scheme.

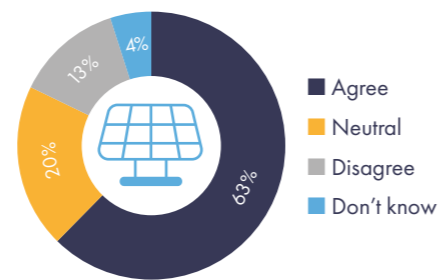
Your feedback to this consultation, combined with further assessments and engagement with other stakeholders, has allowed us to further refine our proposals for the Scheme.

We asked for feedback on the Scheme and asked for specific comments on our proposals for landscape and environmental design, operation and decommissioning and the conclusions of our preliminary environmental information report.

We also asked several questions about your general support for renewable energy and the Scheme, and the findings are shown here.



73% of respondents agreed that energy security is an important issue.



63% of respondents agreed that the UK needs more renewable energy.

The key consultation themes

The following pages summarise some of the key themes that came out of your feedback and what we're doing in response to these. A full breakdown of your feedback from the statutory consultation, and how your points have been addressed, will be provided in a Consultation Report, which will be submitted as part of our final Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

A number of changes to the Scheme's Principal Site can also be found on pages 8–9 of this newsletter and on our website. The updated design of the Scheme will also be available as part of our application for the DCO.

Visual impacts

You said

The visual impact of the Scheme was one of the most frequently mentioned topics in the feedback we received. You raised concerns over the scale of the Scheme and the resulting change in the character and nature of the area.

What we're doing

We acknowledge that solar schemes of this scale will result in a change to the character of the landscape. The relatively low profile of solar panels means that they are more easily screened by hedges and trees than other forms of renewable energy generation. We have focussed on reducing visual impacts through a design-led approach during which we have made changes following both consultation feedback and our survey findings.

Early design changes have included pulling back the panel areas from Springthorpe, Sturgate and nearby footpaths, as well as proposing areas of native woodland around sensitive locations such as houses. This has been informed by early discussions with residents close to the proposed Scheme boundary. Following statutory consultation, we removed solar panels from fields and introduced more ecological areas close to the former Harpswell Hall, which is the focus of walking routes and where views are available from the historic moat, reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan. We have also removed panels from a field to reduce visibility from Glentworth and properties on Kexby Road, and introduced more planting along the A631.

We recognise the value that many people place on views from Lincoln Cliff, and we have been working hard to balance proposals for new planting to screen the solar panels such as along Middle Street, while also seeking to maintain open views from Lincoln Cliff. We have avoided proposing solar panels close to the Cliff and within the Area of High Landscape Value from the earliest stages of design.

We feel it is important to note that although landscape and visual effects will arise, the Scheme offers an opportunity to create, enhance and reconnect landscapes and habitats that will result in a more extensive, varied and resilient 'green infrastructure' across the Scheme. This will include native species-rich grasslands, woodland, hedgerows, wetlands and trees.



Cumulative impacts



You said

You mentioned the impact of the multiple schemes in the area, including comments about wider changes in the landscape character beyond the Tillbridge Scheme.

What we're doing

Since our initial engagement with Gate Burton Energy Park and Cottam and West Burton Solar Projects in 2022, we have continued to work extensively with the respective developers to fully assess and understand the cumulative impacts of all schemes together and how we can sensitively develop our proposals for Tillbridge Solar before we submit our DCO application.

Specifically, our work has focused on:

- Carrying out a detailed cumulative impact assessment, which will be available as part of our DCO application.
- Inputting to a Joint Report on the Interrelationships between Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects with the other solar developers.
- Establishing cooperation between all developers, which has involved regular meetings and sharing of technical data and assessments (meaning new surveys do not need to be undertaken in many cases).
- Developing our mitigation proposals in more detail to reduce the cumulative impacts of all schemes, for example, sharing cable corridors and access locations where possible.

Battery safety



You said

Feedback was received about safety, particularly around Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and fires, with questions regarding mitigation. A number of people asked for risk assessments to consider the impact of accidental fires from the Principal Site on any nearby locations.

What we're doing

Fire safety has been given thorough consideration and we can commit to the Scheme being constructed and operated in compliance with a battery fire safety plan. An outline of this

plan has been prepared by an industry-leading expert and has been informed by consultation with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). It will reflect the latest BESS safety codes and standards and each container would be isolated and would contain an automatic fire control system.

A detailed battery fire safety management plan will be prepared and approved by stakeholders once the detailed design of the Scheme has taken place, which will happen after granting of the DCO. We continue to engage with the Lincolnshire FRS to ensure all key stakeholders are satisfied that mitigation and safety requirements are agreed prior to construction.

Community benefits



You said

We received a number of comments about the desire to see more benefits for the local community as a result of the Scheme. We also received a number of suggestions for what community benefits are the most appropriate for the local area.

What we're doing

We are committed to being good neighbours and understanding how best local communities can benefit from our proposals, in addition to providing clean green energy for households in the UK. We are looking at delivering community benefits through our work with Lincolnshire Community Foundation and Nottinghamshire Community Foundation, who continue to share

their local knowledge and experience in order to best identify funding opportunities and help maximise benefits for local communities. We are also working on a wider industry level with local planning authorities, other developers, and industry bodies to understand the best practice for community engagement and benefits for the Scheme, and where it may be possible to deliver joint long term benefits across the multiple projects in the region.

Our community benefit fund could consist of supporting local community infrastructure and amenities (such as village halls and sports facilities), education and apprenticeship opportunities and provision of electric vehicle charging points. We are working to develop our plans in more detail and will provide further information once we submit our DCO application.

Agricultural land



You said

We received many comments regarding the land's agricultural use, especially in the context of the current geopolitical situation. A number of individuals mentioned that they worry about fields not returning to agricultural uses once the Scheme has been decommissioned.

What we're doing

Our DCO application is time limited with no permanent loss of agricultural land extent or quality. We will submit a

decommissioning plan for approval to the local planning authorities detailing how the Scheme will be decommissioned at the end of the Scheme's operating life. Furthermore, the vast majority of land within the Scheme can continue in agricultural production for the operational period, for example, grazing sheep when viable.

Research by the leading industry body, Solar Energy UK, shows that at a national scale, if we were to build five times as many solar farms as there are now to meet the government target, we would only use 0.5% of the UK's agricultural land¹.

Scheme location



You said

We have received multiple comments regarding the location of the Scheme, including putting solar installations on rooftops. You also mentioned the lack of brownfield sites included in the Scheme.

What we're doing

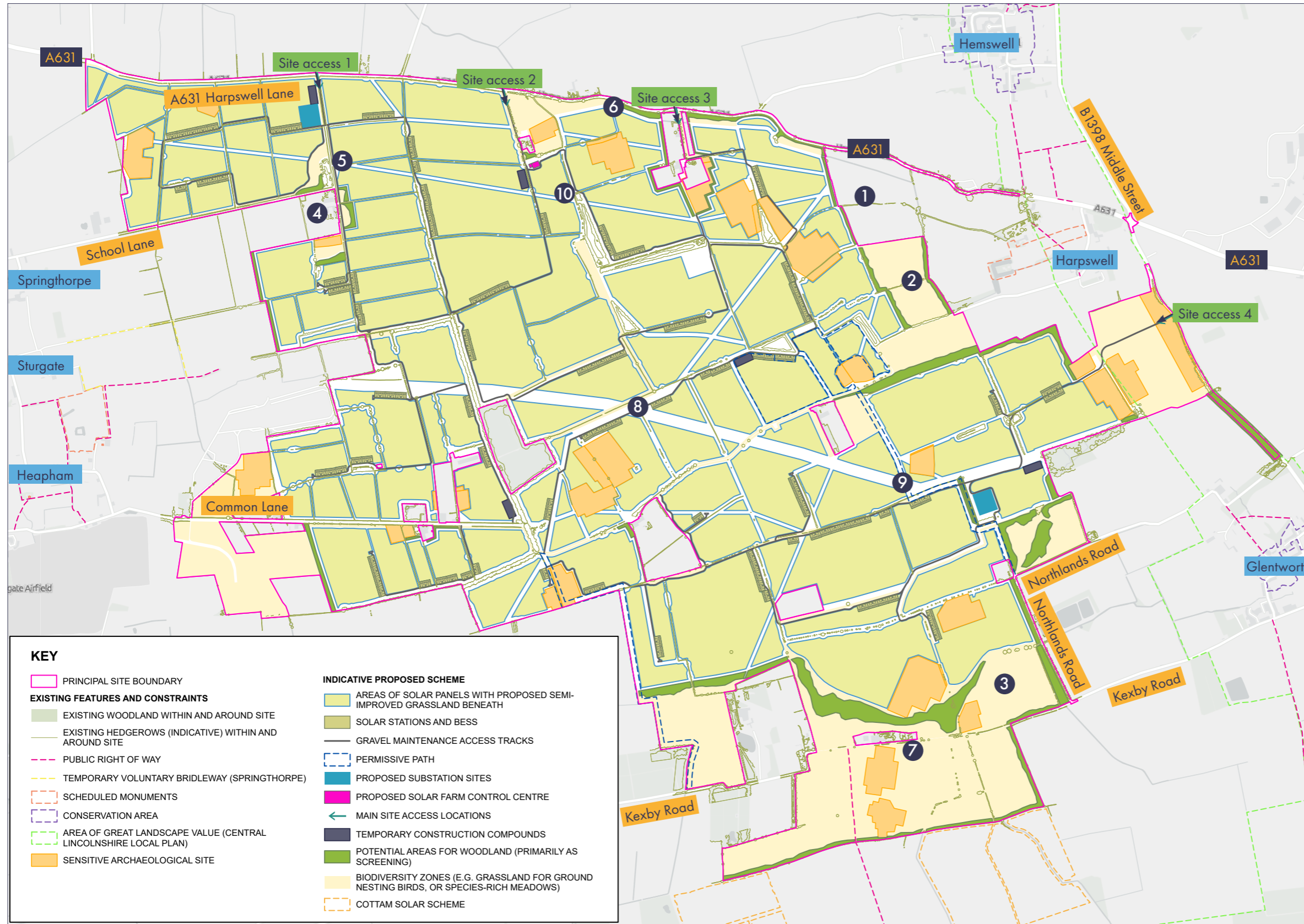
We have considered all available brownfield land within the area of search from the point of connection (at National Grid's Cottam substation) and did not identify any land of the size required to

achieve the scale of solar farm proposed. As the government has targeted 70GW of UK solar by 2035, up from a base of around 14GW today, rooftop solar alone will not meet the urgent need for solar. Large scale solar is, therefore, an essential part of the future electricity system and is recognised across national policy on energy security and the National Policy Statements.

¹Solar Energy UK Briefing - Solar farms and food security: the facts - https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Briefing-Solar-Farms-Food-Security_The-Facts_Sept2022.pdf

Indicative masterplan

The indicative site layout plan below shows our current proposals for the Tillbridge Solar Principal Site.



Changes from layout presented at the Statutory Consultation

- 1 Removal of panels from three fields at the northeastern corner of the Principal Site to mitigate heritage and landscape impacts.
- 2 Removal of solar infrastructure from the two fields immediately east of the Scheduled Monument to reduce impacts and reduce the presence of solar infrastructure close to permissive paths west of Harpswell.
- 3 Removal of solar infrastructure from a field north of Kexby Road, mitigating heritage impacts and reducing visibility along Kexby Road. The area is now proposed for biodiversity mitigation and enhancement.
- 4 Provision of woodland screening and an area of biodiversity enhancement south of Springthorpe Grange.
- 5 Amendments to the proposed woodland and biodiversity enhancement around the former orchard area north of Grange Cottages on School Lane, mainly to reflect great crested newts within the pond.
- 6 Extension to the biodiversity enhancement area into the field south of Hemswell Grange and Grange Cottage on the A631, to create a wider buffer with tree planting to limit residential view of panels.
- 7 Changes to proposed tree and hedge planting south of Kexby Road, in response to concerns from residents about loss of open views.
- 8 Enhancements to existing hedgerows running east-west through the site, to create more robust and continuous green infrastructure corridors, such as east of Harpswell Wood.
- 9 Provision of two permissive paths connecting Common Lane and Kexby Road, offering recreational access in an area where PRoW are limited and also improving north-south off-road links.
- 10 Relocation of the operational site office and stores to a location south of Hemswell Grange.

Next steps

Tillbridge Solar is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 as it is proposed to have a generating capacity exceeding 50MW. We will be applying to the Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy Security and Net Zero for a DCO.

Following the close of the statutory consultation in July 2023, we have continued to analyse all comments received and feed these into the Scheme design. Engagement with key stakeholders, including local planning authorities (LPAs) and parish councils, continues to be integral in our ongoing consultation process. We will show how we have had regard to all of the issues raised in consultation responses in the Consultation Report that we will submit as part of our DCO application.

All of this work has meant that we will need additional time to finalise our application. We now anticipate submitting our application by the end of Q1 2024. The application will be submitted to the SoS via the Planning Inspectorate. Once the application is made, the SoS will have a period of 28 days to decide whether the application should be accepted for examination. If the application is accepted, the SoS will appoint an independent Examining Authority to examine the application and make a recommendation to the SoS who will make the decision on whether or not to grant development consent.

You will be able to get involved with the DCO process by registering an as Interested Party on our page on the Planning Inspectorate's website once the application for the DCO has been accepted.

Targeted consultation

14 December 2023 to 25 January 2024

Following the statutory consultation, Tillbridge Solar carried out a further stage of targeted consultation on proposals for the Scheme in relation to a number of minor additions to the boundary. Due to the limited nature of the minor changes to the Scheme, we have focused the consultation on those directly affected by the changes.

These minor additions are a result of ongoing design evolution informed by an engineering review and collaborative working with the developers of other solar schemes in the area. This collaborative working will help minimise effects and impacts with respect to the Cable Route Corridor.

This consultation took place from Thursday 14 December to Thursday 25 January, and the relevant stakeholders identified – including landowners, LPAs and parish councils – were notified in writing about how to engage with us during this time. Our website (tillbridgesolar.com) has also been updated with the latest information.

We are now carefully considering all comments and further refining the Scheme's design ahead of submitting our application for development consent by the end of Q1 2024.



Project timeline²



- **July 2022**
Collaboration workshops
- **May–July 2023**
Statutory consultation
- **December 2023–January 2024**
Targeted consultation
- **Q1: 2024**
 - Preparation of DCO Application and associated documents, including Environmental Statement
 - Anticipated DCO submission
- **Q2: 2024**
 - 28-day period for acceptance by PINS
 - Pre-examination period (estimated to last up to four months), where stakeholders can register as an Interested Party
- **Q3–Q4 2024**
Examination period by PINS on behalf of the SoS (estimated to last up to six months). The local community will be able to attend and take part in a series of hearings
- **Q2 2025**
The panel of inspectors makes its recommendation to the SoS (within three months of the Examination concluding)
- **Q3: 2025**
Decision by the SoS to whether grant development consent (within 3 months of recommendation)
- **2025**
Earliest construction date
- **2028**
Earliest operational date

²A full overview of the DCO examination process can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's website at: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/>

Contact us

If you have any questions about Tillbridge Solar, please don't hesitate to contact the project team using the details below.



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(please note that no stamp is required)

You can also sign-up for updates and contact us using our comment form on our website.

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