

lexington

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

Statement of Community Involvement

October 2024



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1. Overview

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Lexington on behalf of Brockwell Storage & Solar Ltd (BSSL), formerly known as RNA Energy. It forms part of a suite of documents in support of an application for a new 25MW solar farm and 12.5MW battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 The proposal is a resubmission of a scheme previously refused by North Hertfordshire District Council, albeit incorporating a number of design improvements. As consultation has spanned both application processes, for clarity this application is referred to as the Resubmission Scheme and the earlier application called the 2023 Scheme.
- 1.3 The Applicant previously consulted on the 2023 Scheme in 2022. The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and is in line with expectations set out in North Hertfordshire District Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The consultation received 256 submissions of feedback, with the majority of those responding via the online feedback form agreeing with the need for the scheme to tackle climate change. A summary of the activity is outlined below, and further details can be found in Section 3.0:
- Letters were issued to local councillors, including members for the previous Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo ward, where the site is located; the Leader of the Council; the Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure and the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council to advise of the consultation and offer meetings.
 - A letter was distributed to 1,102 nearby commercial and residential properties to provide an overview of the plans and how feedback could be provided.
 - A press release was issued to local newspapers to advertise the consultation and information of how to share their views.
 - A consultation website, www.sperberryhillsolar.co.uk, (formerly www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk) was established to provide further information on the proposals, as well as a facility to submit feedback via an online form.
 - A virtual exhibition with exhibition boards on the proposals.
 - Social media adverts were circulated to residents to ensure the wider community were included in the public consultation. The adverts provided details about the plans and provided a link to the consultation website.
 - A community information telephone line, email address and postal address were available throughout the consultation period for those wanting to correspond with a member of the development team.
- 1.4 Following the consultation, the application for the 2023 Scheme was submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council in March 2022. In November 2023, the application was refused in relation to landscape and Green Belt effects.
- 1.5 Since then, BSSL has developed the Resubmission Scheme, which it considers materially alters and improves the scheme from a landscape and Green Belt standpoint, reducing the number of solar panels, and the overall area of built development, whilst increasing certain separation distances and the amount of woodland planting. Despite the reduced area of



development, the level of renewable energy generation remains unchanged due to advanced technology.

1.6 BSSL undertook an engagement programme in relation to the Resubmission Scheme in July 2024, in order to notify key stakeholders and the community on the updated plans. A summary of the activity is outlined below, and further details can be found in Section 3.0.

1.7 Letters were issued to the following councillors to inform them of the Resubmission Scheme and to offer a meeting to discuss the scheme in more detail:

- Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley ward - where the site is located. The ward's name was changed due to boundary changes.
- Leader of the Council,
- Cabinet members with relevant portfolios,
- Member of Parliament,
- Chairs of Wymondley Parish Council and St Ippolyts Parish Council
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Control Committee

1.8 The website created for the 2023 Scheme was updated to include more information on the revised scheme, as well as an updated virtual exhibition room to learn more about the plan.

1.9 This report outlines the methods used to engage with the community and provides a summary of the feedback received from respondents for the 2023 Scheme. It also provides details and outputs of the engagement process for the Resubmission Scheme.



2. Planning and Guidance: Role of Community Involvement

2.1.1 Planning guidance states that pre-application consultation with communities, local authorities and statutory consultees can bring several benefits to the process of determining planning applications. Against this background, the development team has sought to consult with interested parties following policy and guidance concerning community involvement in the planning system.

2.2 North Hertfordshire District Council

2.2.1 North Hertfordshire District Council's adopted SCI encourages developers to undertake pre-application public consultation with the local community. The SCI provides a number of methods to encourage participation, including:

- Produce letters to inform local residents / interest groups of the planning application site.
- Publicise & prepare proposals for public consultation.
- Host a public exhibition or public meeting.
- Inform neighbours in the immediate vicinity.

2.3 Government Planning Policy

2.3.1 The Localism Act 2011: The Localism Act 2011 seeks to provide the local community with a voice throughout the planning process, highlighted in the former Department for Communities and Local Government's Decentralisation and Localism Bill: an essential guide, which outlines one of its principles as:

- *"Empowering communities to do things their way – by creating rights for people to get involved with, and direct the development of, their community."*

2.3.2 Elaborating on this, the Localism Act outlines that applicants must notify the local community about their proposals to *"bring the proposed application to the attention of a majority of the persons who live at, or otherwise occupy, premises in the vicinity of the land."* It goes on to state that the publicity must explain how the applicant can be contacted by those *"wishing to comment on, or collaborate...on the design of, the proposed development"* and that applicants must consider the feedback received by having *"regard to any responses to the consultation"*.

2.4 National Planning Policy Framework 2021

2.4.1 In December 2023, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government released its updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The document seeks to achieve sustainable development with three overarching objectives: an economic objective; a social objective; and an environmental objective.

2.4.2 The NPPF sets out guidance in relation to pre-application engagement and front-loading. Paragraph 39 sets out how early engagement in the planning process has significant

potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties involved in planning applications. The ambition of this guidance, therefore, is to enable better coordination between public and private resources and create improved outcomes for the community and developer.

- 2.4.3 The policy goes on to state that *“the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits”* (para. 41).

2.5 National Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.5.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is intended to make planning guidance more accessible and easier to keep up to date. With regard to consultation and community engagement, the NPPG notes:

“Early and timely engagement between developers, statutory consultees and local authorities at the pre-application phase is important in helping to address issues and opportunities early on and avoid delays occurring at the formal application stage”. (para. 15-013-20190722).

- 2.5.2 The guidance states that this can be achieved by consulting the local planning authority, statutory and non-statutory consultees, elected members and local people, with the level of engagement proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposed development.

2.6 The Applicant’s Approach

- 2.6.1 The development team has sought to ensure that the engagement with the local community on the plans has adhered to the guidance outlined in the Localism Act 2011, the NPPF, the NPPG and North Hertfordshire District Council’s SCI, as well as industry best practice.



3. Consultation Programme – 2023 Scheme

3.1.1 The consultation for the 2023 Scheme was launched on Friday 7th January 2022 and ran until Monday 24th January 2022. The consultation process included inviting comments from the local community and political stakeholders on the proposals. To ensure the consultation process was accessible to all interested parties and groups in the area, several methodologies were employed, including those described below.

3.2 Letters to local political stakeholders

3.2.1 Before the consultation launch, a letter was issued to local political stakeholders* to notify them of the proposals and advise of the public consultation. Members were also invited to meet with the team to discuss the proposals and consultation in more detail. A separate letter was issued to the relevant parish councils, which asked for a discussion on the scheme.

The letter was sent to¹:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council
- Councillor Ian Mantle, North Hertfordshire District Council's Deputy Executive Member for Planning
- Councillor Steve Jarvis, North Hertfordshire District Council's Executive Member for Environment & Leisure
- Councillor Claire Strong, Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council's Conservative Group and site ward councillor
- Councillor David Barnard, site ward councillor
- Councillor Faye Frost, site ward councillor
- Councillor George Davies, site ward councillor
- Councillor Terry Tyler, site ward councillor
- Wymondley Parish Council
- St. Ippolyts Parish Council
- Councillor Richard Roberts, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council
- Councillor Eric Buckmaster, Hertfordshire County Council's Executive Member for the Environment
- Councillor Stephen Boulton, Hertfordshire County Council's Executive Member for Growth, Infrastructure & Planning
- Bim Afolami MP, Member of Parliament for Hitchin & Harpenden

¹ *All political stakeholders were in post during the 2023 Scheme consultation period.



- 3.2.2 A copy of the correspondence sent to local politicians and to the Parish Councils is provided in Appendix A.

3.3 Website

- 3.3.1 A dedicated website was originally set up under www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk on Friday 7th January 2022. However, due to concerns from a local business, the website address was changed to www.sperberryhillsolar.co.uk on Thursday 20th January. Anyone visiting the previous site, would automatically be taken to the new website, ensuring residents could still provide feedback. The website provided an overview of the masterplan, illustrative designs of the scheme, information about the impact of the proposals and outlined the benefits the plans would bring to the area. An online feedback form was also provided to capture residents' views and comments. The feedback form received 193 submissions.

- 3.3.2 Between Friday 7th January and Monday 24th January 2022, the consultation website was viewed 3,643 times. Images of the website can be viewed in Appendix B.

- 3.3.3 The website also included downloadable information boards which set out further detailed information relating to the application. These can be viewed in Appendix C.

3.4 Consultation email and postal address

- 3.4.1 A dedicated email address, initially redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk and then sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk was established to receive feedback and answer enquiries from the public regarding the plans. Alternatively, respondents were able to post their comments. During the public consultation, 60 emails were received and zero letters. More information about this can be found in Section 4.0 'Feedback Received'.

3.5 Community Information Line

- 3.5.1 A Community Information Line (0333 358 0502) was available throughout the consultation to enable people to speak with members of the development team. It was established from the start of the consultation and was staffed from 9.00am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. An answerphone facility was available outside of office hours. Three calls were received during the three-week consultation period.

3.6 Social Media

- 3.6.1 Social media was utilised to engage with residents across the wider community. Facebook adverts were sent to residents which directed users to the consultation website, www.sperberryhillsolar.co.uk. During the consultation, the adverts were seen by 39,346 people with 3,024 visitors clicking through to the consultation website via social media adverts. Copies of the social media adverts can be found in Appendix D.

- 3.6.2 Social media adverts were distributed at a 3-mile radius around the site, covering the towns of Hitchin and Stevenage, as well the nearby villages of Great Wymondley and St Ippolyts, to ensure a wide variety of views were taken into consideration. A map of the distribution area can be seen in Appendix E.



3.7 Letter to residents and businesses

- 3.7.1 To announce the public consultation, letters were sent to 1,102 residential and business addresses situated near the site on Friday 7th January 2022. This distribution area was chosen to ensure that those most likely to have an interest in the proposals, i.e., those closest to the site, were made aware of the public consultation and had the opportunity to submit their feedback on the plans. The applicant also discussed the distribution area with North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure it had appropriate coverage.
- 3.7.2 The letter provided an overview of the proposals and the planning rationale for the scheme. The letter also included details of how people could view the plans in greater detail and provide comments via the following methods:
- Visiting the website and completing the online feedback form at www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk ;
 - Calling the community information line on 0333 358 0502;
 - Emailing redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk
- 3.7.3 The consultation provided the local community two weeks to submit their feedback. A copy of the letter to residents and businesses can be seen in Appendix F. A map of the distribution area can be seen in Appendix G.

3.8 Meetings with stakeholders

- 3.8.1 Representatives from BSSL met with Wymondley Parish Council and attended a public meeting organised by St. Ippolyts Parish Council. The meetings were an opportunity for Councillors and, in the case of the St. Ippolyts Parish Council meeting, members of the public to raise any concerns or ask any further questions on the proposal.
- 3.8.2 Both meetings reflected many of the views received from the public through the wider consultation. This included support for renewable energy, concerns regarding wildlife and building on the Green Belt. These issues will be covered in the 'response to feedback' section 6 of this report.

3.9 Media Coverage

- 3.9.1 A press release was issued to both the local and trade press, which included the following outlets: The Comet, The Herts Advertiser and Herts Live. The press release provided details of the proposals and consultation process and can be found in Appendix H. Coverage on the consultation was provided on Herts Live and The Comet, which can be seen in Appendix I.

4. Feedback Received – 2023 Scheme

4.1 Summary of feedback

4.1.1 In total, 256 individual submissions were received during the public consultation on the 2023 Scheme, the majority of which were via the consultation website's online form (193). The table below provides a summary of the methods used by the public to provide their feedback or contribute to the consultation:

Method	Number of Responses
Email	60
Telephone	3
Online Feedback Form	193

4.1.2 A summary of feedback is provided below, with the most frequently raised comments during the consultation coming from those who support the proposals. However, a large majority of the email correspondence objected to the proposals.

4.2 Correspondence

4.2.1 Residents and stakeholders were invited to contact the development team via email or post, with a dedicated project email address, redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk and sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk, established for the consultation. The feedback received from the 60 individuals who contacted the project team via email has been incorporated into the 'feedback received' section in this report (Section 4.4).

4.3 Community Information Line

4.3.1 During the public consultation, a Community Information Line facility was available for those who wished to speak with a member of the team or provide their feedback by phone. Three calls were received during this period. The feedback received has been incorporated into the 'feedback received' section in this report (Section 4.4).

4.4 Feedback Breakdown

4.4.1 During the consultation, three calls were received. Two calls were questions on whether the power generated would be kept locally and the reason behind the choice of site location. The final caller expressed support for the scheme and wanted to see a greater emphasis on biodiversity.

4.4.2 The email address received 60 responses from members of the public. Overall, 57 of the emails objected to the plans, with the remainder expressing support or asking general questions. It should also be noted that seven respondents objected to the plans but

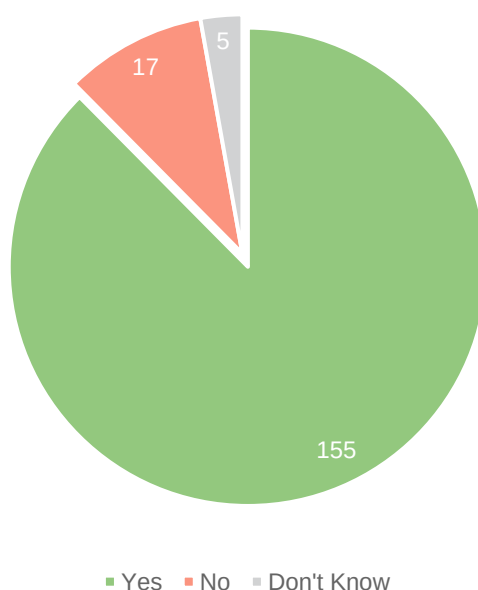
expressed support for renewable energy. The community group Transition Town Letchworth, which is made up of volunteers that promote sustainability, emailed to support the proposals. The key themes and issues raised are expressed below:

- Concerns with building on the Green Belt
- Belief that a solar farm will harm wildlife
- Solar farms are unattractive
- There would be a loss of public space for residents to walk/run/cycle through
- Loss of agricultural land
- Existing building should have solar panels on them, instead of building a solar farm

4.5 Online Feedback Form

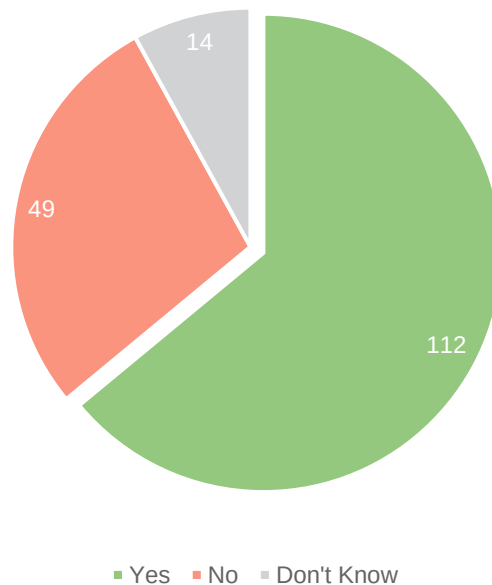
4.5.1 Question 1: Do you agree with the need to generate more of our energy from renewable sources?

4.5.2 This question asked respondents to provide a yes, no or don't know answer. 177 respondents provided an answer to this question, of which, the clear majority (155 or 89%) expressed their support for the need to generate more renewable energy.



4.5.3 Question 2: Do you agree that renewable energy should be generated locally?

4.5.4 This question was also a yes, no or don't know question. Overall, this question received 175 responses, with the majority (112 or 64%) expressing a clear willingness for renewable energy to be generate locally.



4.5.5 Question 3: Do you have any other comments on the proposals?

4.5.6 This question provided a free-text field to allow respondents to provide any additional comments on the plans. In total, this question received 168 responses, with a mixture of supportive comments and objections. Below are a range of verbatim responses received separated into supportive and negative comments.

4.5.7 Supportive Comments

- A good thing to have locally.
- Excellent news - if we want to do something about the climate crisis, we need to start local - I am 100% in favour of this and drive past here on my way to work every morning.
- Appears to be a carefully considered plan. I'm in favour.
- As long as the lanes, footpaths and bridleways are kept and ideally improved, especially for better bicycle access, this could be a very good opportunity to improve both energy and transport infrastructure.
- Great idea. We can't all talk the talk and do nothing.
- Hedgerows between the site and the road would be good to help preserve wildlife and improve views.
- I am supportive of all renewable generation plans which do not adversely affect farming and local populations. The use of farmland for grazing V solar generation is very positive and will benefit Hertfordshire as electricity demand increases over the next 20 years due to increasing fossil fuel prices and phasing out of ICE transport.
- I have no problem with this proposal at all ,we need it and it is well positioned.
- I think it is a great idea as sustainable energy is the way forward.



- I think this is a great proposal. It looks well thought out and resourced. I hope it goes ahead with no major complications, as we desperately need to develop renewable energy to break the reliance on fossil fuel.
- It's great that you've built in plans for increasing biodiversity and grazing so the land is not wasted.

4.5.8 Negative Comments

- Farmland should be used for farming, solar is great for roofs and other spaces not in use but taking up farmland is stupid.
- A further assault on the Green Belt.
- I feel this would be an eyesore in a rural environment. I worry about the problems it would cause for flooding.
- I object to the proposal on the basis that it is green belt land and the destruction of habitation for wildlife.
- I strongly object to the proposal, this would ruin the views and local green belt enjoyed by so many locally.
- It's a blot on the landscape look at the mess near Royston.
- Local roads are already congested. Most roads around this site are single lane and would not cope with construction traffic.
- Really dreadful idea totally out of keeping with the countryside and beautiful walks in that area. These panels belong on top of multi storey car parks in towns.
- The site is huge and will blot the countryside.
- Yet more green belt destroyed for cash, this time in the name of flawed virtue signalling instead of yet more housing, leave us alone ,let us recycle.



5. Resubmission Scheme

- 5.1.1 In November 2023, the application for the 2023 Scheme was refused by North Hertfordshire District Council, citing concerns that the impact on the landscape and Green Belt outweighed the benefits of the scheme. This decision was described as “...*very finely balanced*...” In response, BSSL has materially revised the plans to address these concerns. The updated proposal includes a reduction in the number of solar panels and the overall footprint of the development. Additionally, BSSL has increased separation distances and incorporated more woodland planting to mitigate visual impact. Despite the reduced development area, advancements in technology allow us to maintain the same level of renewable energy generation.
- 5.1.2 BSSL initiated an engagement programme to inform key stakeholders about the updated scheme and provide details on how to access more information. The methods of engagement are outlined below.

5.2 Letters to local political stakeholders

- 5.2.1 In July 2024, BSSL issued a letter on to local politicians and to the Farmhouse at Redcoats to notify of the updated scheme and advise on the resubmission. The letter also offered an opportunity to meet to discuss the resubmission in further detail. The letter was sent to:
- Councillor Daniel Allen, Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council
 - Councillor Ruth Brown, Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Democrat Group
 - Councillor Chris Hinchliff, North Hertfordshire District Council's Executive Member for Planning & Transport²
 - Councillor Mick Debenham, North Hertfordshire District Council's Executive Member for Environment, Leisure & Green Spaces
 - Councillor Dave Winstanley, North Hertfordshire District Council's Executive Member for Housing & Environmental Health
 - Councillor Dominic Griffiths, site ward member
 - Councillor Caroline McDonnell, site ward member
 - Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, Chair of North Hertfordshire District Council's Planning Control Committee
 - Councillor Nigel Mason, Vice-Chair of North Hertfordshire District Council's Planning Control Committee
 - Wymondley Parish Council
 - St. Ippolyts Parish Council

² *Councillor Chris Hinchliff has since stepped down as the Executive Member for Planning & Transport, with this portfolio now being overseen by Councillor Daniel Allen. Councillor Allen received the letter in his capacity as the Leader of the Council.



- Alistair Strathern MP, Member of Parliament for Hitchin
- The Farmhouse at Redcoats

5.2.2 A copy of the correspondence sent to local politicians and to the Farmhouse at Redcoats is provided in Appendix J.

5.3 Meeting with Stakeholders

5.3.1 BSSL met with Alistair Strathern MP on Wednesday 11th September to discuss the 2023 Scheme and the Resubmission Scheme. The meeting was an opportunity to provide an overview of the 2022 consultation and how the scheme has changed to reduce the number of solar panels and visual impact on the area.

5.3.2 BSSL met with representatives from Wymondley Parish Council and St Ippolyts Parish Council on Thursday 24th October to discuss the Resubmission Scheme. The meeting was an opportunity to provide an update on the plans and how the Resubmission Scheme had changes in line with the feedback received to minimise the impact on the local area through the reduction in the number of panels as well as other mitigation measures.

5.3.3 BSSL also engaged with the owners of Redcoats Farm. As solar panels have become more efficient, BSSL could reduce the solar panel coverage in areas of the Site without compromising the 25MW export capacity. This has resulted in the removal of the solar panels that were adjacent to southern and western boundaries (of Redcoats Farm) in the 2023 Scheme. Further details of the Resubmission Scheme design changes are set out later in this SCI.

5.4 Website

5.4.1 The dedicated consultation website, www.sperberryhillsolar.co.uk, was updated to include more information on the revised scheme, including an updated virtual exhibition to show where changes have been made.

5.4.2 The website included a contact us section that invited viewers to reach out to the development team via post, phone and email.

5.4.3 Images of the updated website can be viewed in Appendix K and the downloadable information boards which set out further detailed information relating to the application. These can be viewed in Appendix L.

5.5 Consultation email and postal address

5.5.1 The dedicated email address, sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk, remained active to answer questions regarding the plans. Alternatively, respondents were able to post questions. There were no emails or letters received on the Resubmission Scheme.

5.6 Community Information Line



- 5.6.1 The Community Information Line (0333 358 0502) remained available to enable people to speak with members of the development team. Zero calls were received.

6. Response to Feedback

- 6.1.1 The applicant would like to thank everyone who participated in the public consultation for the 2023 Scheme. BSSL also appreciates the feedback provided by the officers of North Hertfordshire District Council and the members of the Planning Control Committee in 2023.
- 6.1.2 While the 2023 Scheme received strong public support, several concerns were raised during the consultation process. BSSL provided responses to these concerns as part of the Statement of Community Involvement, which was submitted with the 2023 application.
- 6.1.3 BSSL has taken into account the feedback from officers, the Planning Committee, and the local public through the consultation process to revise the plans and form the Resubmission Scheme. The key changes are outlined below.

6.2 Enhanced Woodland

- 6.2.1 The consultation for the 2023 Scheme showed that enhancing biodiversity was one of the most appreciated aspects of the plans. In response, BSSL will ensure biodiversity is further boosted in the Resubmission Scheme by including additional woodland planting, increasing the number of trees and promoting local wildlife.

6.3 Reduction in Development Size

- 6.3.1 The Resubmission Scheme directly addresses concerns about the scale of the development and the impact on the Green Belt that were raised through the 2023 Scheme. BSSL has reduced the overall footprint of the built development compared to the 2023 Scheme, specifically aiming to minimise the impact on sensitive receptors while maintaining the same renewable energy benefits.
- 6.3.2 To achieve this, we have implemented key design improvements. The original scheme featured solar panels with a power rating of 640 watts. With advancements in technology, the Resubmission Scheme will deliver a 9% reduction in the area of panels compared to the 2023 Scheme, but still having the same power output of 25MW owing to the panel power rating being increased to 710 watts. This means the same amount of energy can be produced with fewer panels on the land.

6.4 Visual Impact

- 6.4.1 Another concern raised during the consultation was the visual effects of the proposed solar farm. The Resubmission Scheme has included several amendments to reduce these visual effects as followed:



- Through the removal of the landscape bund and solar panels adjacent to the southern boundary at Redcoats Farm, the Resubmission Scheme solar panels are now sited circa 60m-80m from this boundary. The area immediately to the south of Redcoats Farm (that contained the landscape bund and solar panels in the 2023 Scheme), will comprise species rich grassland area. The solar panels will be bounded by deer stock fencing and hedging, the latter which will mature over time and reduce visibility of the solar panels when looking south from Redcoats Farm.
- Solar panels have been removed from the area immediately to the west of Redcoats Farm, providing a setback of solar panels from this western boundary by circa 40m-45m. The intervening area between the western boundary and the solar panels will contain new woodland and species rich grassland areas. When looking west from Redcoats Farm, the deer stock fencing and hedging adjacent will reduce the visibility of the solar panels over time.
- An area of solar panels has been removed from the northwestern corner of the site, with additional woodland planting to soften views from nearby residential properties at the edge of St Ippolyts.
- The solar panels and associated infrastructure have been removed to the east of Hertfordshire Way at the south eastern part of the site, which would reduce the visual effects of the Resubmission Scheme on the public footpath users.



7. Conclusions

- 7.1.1 In preparing proposals for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, the development team conducted a pre-application consultation in line with North Hertfordshire District Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Localism Act 2011, the National Planning Policy Framework, and National Planning Practice Guidance. This consultation provided an opportunity for residents, politicians, and stakeholders to learn about the plans and offer their feedback.
- 7.1.2 The applicant and the wider development team would like to extend their appreciation to all who participated in the consultation process and shared their views on the plans. The consultation garnered 256 responses from residents, with the majority expressing support for the proposals and highlighting the importance of transitioning to renewable energy.
- 7.1.3 However, concerns were also raised regarding the scheme's impact on the Green Belt and the adequacy of landscaping features. These issues were brought up during the public consultation, including feedback from Council officers and members of the Planning Control Committee.
- 7.1.4 BSSL has carefully considered feedback from all stakeholders and has produced the Resubmission Scheme that mitigates the impact on Green Belt openness by reducing the number of solar panels and enhancing landscaping features to better conceal the solar farm. These measures include:
- At Redcoats Farm, the previously proposed bund has been removed. The solar panels and fencing have been relocated significantly further from the southern boundary. A new hedge will be added along the northern edge of the panels. This solution will maintain the openness of the views from the property boundary and provide effective screening over time.
 - The solar panels and fencing have also been moved further from the western boundary of Redcoats Farm, with a new area of woodland planting proposed in this location.
 - An area of solar panels has been removed from the northwestern corner of the scheme, and additional woodland planting is proposed here to soften views from residential properties at the edge of St Ippolyts.
 - The removal of the solar panels and associated infrastructure in the southeastern corner of the previous scheme, east of the Hertfordshire Way. This adjustment ensures the Hertfordshire Way runs alongside the southernmost boundary of the solar farm, preserving open views for footpath users.
- 7.1.4 This report reflects the views expressed by residents, stakeholders, and elected members during the public consultation and addresses the feedback received concerning the development. Moving forward, the development team will keep communication channels open, allowing the local community to stay engaged throughout the planning process.

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Letters to Political Stakeholders (2023 Scheme)



[Name]
[Address]

Tuesday 4th January 2022

Dear [Name],

Proposal for new solar farm and battery storage facility at Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire

RNA Energy is bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire. As the [Position], I am writing to provide you with more information on our plans and to seek a meeting to discuss these in more detail at your convenience.

Our proposals

The site comprises approximately 35.1ha of land at Redcoats Farm, to the south of Sperberry Hill / Stevenage Road, and between St Ippolyts and Uppage Green. The site is strategically located due south of the UK Power Networks Wyntonbury Substation, to which our proposed solar farm would connect. An important factor in the delivery of renewable energy is the proximity of any site to the electricity distribution network. The greater the distance from this network, the less viable a scheme.

The proposals include a solar farm unit which will provide approximately 25GWh of clean renewable solar energy each year, adding almost 50% to the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Hertfordshire and making a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero by 2040.

The plans also include a battery energy storage facility, which will have the capacity of 12.5MW. The battery storage element would either be used to store excess power that is generated by the solar array to make power available to the grid during times of peak demand, or to provide grid balancing services to keep the network operating within the frequency parameters set by National Grid.

Our plans also put biodiversity at its heart, and we have ambitions to convert the grassland between each solar panel into grazed land used by livestock along with substantial hedgerow, tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field. This will provide a huge boost to local pollinator, bird and small mammal (mice, voles, hedgehog and bat) species populations due to the increased habitat connectivity and additional food sources.

Public consultation

Ahead of submitting a planning application to North Hertfordshire District Council, we are launching a public consultation on the plans to understand the views of local residents, stakeholders and other interested parties. We are committed to an inclusive, accessible and engaging consultation process, which will run from Friday, 7th January 2022 to Monday, 24th January 2022.

To ensure local people are aware of the proposals, we will be advertising the consultation through a number of ways, including delivering leaflets to around 1,550 nearby properties, promoting the consultation on social media and issuing a press release to local media outlets. Due to the constraints of Covid-19, we will be hosting a virtual public exhibition of our proposals which will replicate a traditional on-the-ground event and allow local people to view the plans from the

comfort of their own home. This will be hosted on a dedicated website, which will provide more information about the scheme, including the draft technical reports, as well as a mechanism to capture feedback on the plans.

As the [Position], we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals with you in more detail and our consultants will contact your office shortly to see if a meeting can be arranged. In the meantime, should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to get in touch by calling our community information line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5.30pm) or email redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Nigel Viney
Managing Director
RNA Energy

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



[Name]
[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name],

Proposal for new solar farm and battery storage facility at Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire

RNA Energy is bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage unit at Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire. As the [position], I am writing to provide you with more information on our plans and to seek a meeting to firstly discuss our proposal, and secondly to discuss our community fund which we would welcome suggestions on how it should be best spent.

Our proposals

The site comprises approximately 35.1ha of land at Redcoats Farm, to the south of Sperberry Hill / Stevenage Road, and between St Ippolyts and Uppere Green. The site is strategically located due south of the UK Power Networks Wyndley Substation, to which our proposed solar farm would connect. An important factor in the delivery of renewable energy is the proximity of any site to the electricity distribution network. The greater the distance from this network, the less viable a scheme.

The proposals include a solar farm unit which will provide approximately 25GWh of clean renewable solar energy each year, adding almost 50% to the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Hertfordshire and making a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero by 2040.

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Our plans also put biodiversity at its heart, and we have ambitions to convert the grassland between each solar panel into grazed land used by livestock along with substantial hedgerow, tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field. This will provide a huge boost to local pollinator, bird and small mammal (mice, voles, hedgehog and bat) species populations due to the increased habitat connectivity and additional food sources.

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To ensure local people are aware of the proposals, we will be advertising the consultation through a number of ways, including delivering leaflets to around 1,550 nearby properties, promoting the

consultation on social media and issuing a press release to local media outlets. Due to the constraints of Covid-19, we will be hosting a virtual public exhibition of our proposals which will replicate a traditional on-the-ground event and allow local people to view the plans from the comfort of their own home. This will be hosted on a dedicated website, which will provide more information about the scheme, including the draft technical reports, as well as a mechanism to capture feedback on the plans.

As the [position], we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals and the community fund with you in more detail and our consultants will contact your office shortly to see if a meeting can be arranged. In the meantime, should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to get in touch by calling our community information line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5.30pm) or email redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Viney
Managing Director
RNA Energy

8.2 Appendix B – Consultation Website (2023 Scheme)

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [The Site](#) [The Proposals](#) [Virtual Exhibition](#) [Feedback](#) [Contact Us](#)

Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to visit our consultation website. We are excited about our plans and are delighted to share more information with you.

RNA Energy is bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.

You can learn more about our plans through the information here on our website and through our [virtual exhibition](#).

Our public consultation on the proposals will run from Friday 7th January until Monday 24th January. You can submit your comments by completing our feedback form or using one of the methods listed on the contact us section. **Please ensure your comments are submitted by Monday 24th January** so that these can be taken into consideration.

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



About RNA Energy

With the backing of institutional capital, RNA Energy is on a mission to develop and build a portfolio of solar and storage projects to power the UK with cheap, clean, and reliable energy.

The RNA Energy team is highly experienced and passionate about building the clean energy infrastructure needed for a net zero future.

RNA Energy is developing a portfolio of subsidy free solar projects in the UK. The sites are focused in the south-east to maximise energy yield and have been chosen to minimise grid connection costs by ensuring they are in close proximity to connection points. Where possible, sites will incorporate battery energy storage to enable energy to be delivered to the grid when it's needed most – during peak times. This avoids solar energy flooding the network when demand is low and clean energy being curtailed.



The Site

The site comprises approximately 35.1ha of land to the south of Sperberry Hill and Stevenage Road, and between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green.

The site is strategically located due south of the UK Power Networks Wymondley Substation, to which our proposed solar farm would connect. An important factor in the delivery of renewable energy is the proximity of any site to the electricity distribution network. The greater the distance from this network, the less viable a scheme.

Wymondley Substation is one of the few substations in North Hertfordshire that has available capacity for large-scale renewable energy generation and the only one with direct access to the National Grid transmission network. We have identified our site at Sperberry Hill as it is ideally placed to connect into the substation.

Currently, there are a number of public footpaths that cross the site. We will be keeping these open for the public to enjoy. We will not obstruct or change them.



The Proposals

You can find out more about our proposals by visiting the virtual exhibition. Here is a summary of what our plans include:

- The site covers 35.1ha of land at Sperberry Hill.
- The solar farm would have an export capacity of 25MW.
- The solar panels will be approximately 2.4m in height.
- The inverters will be attached to the backs of the panels and will not be visible.
- The transformers are 'smart' meaning they have a minimal noise impact and are located away from nearby properties.
- The battery energy storage facility will have a capacity of 12.5MW.
- The battery containers are approximately 3m in height and resemble shipping containers.
- There will be acoustic fencing around the batteries to reduce potential noise impact and they are located away from nearby properties.
- The land around the solar panels will be converted into grassland to be grazed by livestock.
- The plan includes substantial hedgerow, tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field to increase habitat connectivity for wildlife.
- Construction traffic would be routed from the A602, via the B656 to Sperberry Hill where access to the site would be from either Little Almshoe Lane, or Stevenage Road.



Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



Benefits

The proposals set out above will bring many benefits, such as helping the UK address its climate change obligations, boosting the local economy and increasing biodiversity.

Helping North Hertfordshire District Council meet its net zero targets

North Hertfordshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and has ambitions for achieving net zero across the district by 2040. Our solar farm will contribute approximately 25CWh of clean renewable solar energy, adding almost 50% to the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Hertfordshire and making a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero within the District by 2040.

Increasing biodiversity

As solar farms have a small footprint, the land between each solar panel can be converted to grassland and be used as grazing land by livestock. Our plans will further include substantial hedgerow, tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field. This will provide a huge boost to local pollinator, bird and small mammal (mice, voles, hedgehog, bat) species populations due to the increased habitat connectivity and additional food sources. The project will deliver an approximate 130% biodiversity net gain based on area-based habitats, and an approximate 155% net gain based on linear habitats such as hedgerows.

Economic benefits

The plans will deliver substantial economic benefits, such as construction jobs and high skilled jobs, as well as knock on benefits.

In addition, we are hoping to work with the local Parish Councils to develop a community fund for local projects.

Helping the UK become greener

COP26 demonstrated that the UK needs to move away from fossil fuels urgently. The plans for a new solar and battery farm in Hertfordshire will help to create a sustainable future for generations to come.



The Need for Renewables

Significant increases in renewable and low carbon generation, combined with carbon capture and storage will be required to achieve the UK's net zero commitment by 2050, based on current and predicted demand.

The National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios (FES) 2021 predicts that electricity demand will continue to increase due to an increasing population, the transition to electric vehicles, hydrogen production and a move away from natural gas for heating. This increased energy demand will need to be met by renewable, low carbon and carbon negative sources to achieve net zero by 2050. The FES 21 report predicts that between 34 GW and 77 GW of new wind and solar generation could be required to meet demand by 2030.

This Development will help the country meet its net zero targets by increasing the amount of clean, cheap, and secure electricity supplied to the National Grid.



Have Your Say

The consultation process provides an opportunity for you to provide your feedback on our plans ahead of a planning application being submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council. Your views are very important to us and all feedback will be considered to help shape the final plans.

The public consultation on the Masterplan will run until Monday 24th January 2022. Please ensure all feedback is received by us before this date. After the consultation concludes, we will review all feedback received and update our Masterplan accordingly.

Do you agree with the need to generate more of our energy from renewable sources?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

Do you agree that renewable energy should be generated locally?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



Do you have any other comments on the proposals?

Name *

Address *

Postcode *

Email Address *

Please note that any feedback provided by you will be used for the purposes of informing the submission of a planning application and a summary of all responses will be collated into a Consultation Statement to be submitted as part of that application to North Hertfordshire District Council. The information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this consultation exercise. The data will be held securely by Lexington on behalf of RNA Energy in accordance with data protection guidelines.

Send

Contact Us

Should you want any further information or have any questions, you can contact the team using the details below:

✉ RNA Energy, Sperberry Hill,
c/o Lexington,
Third Floor Queens House,
Queen Street,
Manchester,
M2 5HT

☎ You can call our Community Information Line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm)

@ You can email us at sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk

8.3 Appendix C – Exhibition Boards (2023 Scheme)



Welcome

RNA Energy is bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage unit at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.

Before we submit a planning application to North Hertfordshire District Council, we want to hear the views of the local community on our proposals. Your views are very important to us and all feedback received will be considered and help shape the final plans.

You can learn more about our plans through this virtual exhibition and on our website. We look forward to receiving your feedback.

All comments should be received no later than Monday 24th January 2022 to ensure that they can be taken into consideration before the final plans are submitted to the Council.



Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



The Site

Our site comprises approximately 35.1ha of arable farmland to the south of Sperberry Hill / Stevenage Road, and between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green.

The site has several access points: a track from Stevenage Road which runs to the east of Redcoats Farmhouse, and two field gates on the east and west side of Little Almshoe Lane. There are a number of public footpaths which cross the site but our development will not obstruct or change these public footpaths.

The site is strategically located due south of the UK Power Networks Wymondley Substation, to which our proposed solar farm would connect. An important factor in the delivery of renewable energy is the proximity of any site to the electricity distribution network. The greater the distance from this network, the less viable a scheme.

Wymondley Substation is one of the few substations in North Hertfordshire that has available capacity for large-scale renewable energy generation and the only one with direct access to the National Grid transmission network. We have identified our site at Sperberry Hill as it is ideally placed to connect into the substation.



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c/o Lexington Communications,
Third Floor Queens House,
Queen Street,
Manchester, M2 5HT

@ Sperberryhillsolar@ihavingyoursay.co.uk
0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5:30pm)



Site History

You may or may not be aware the site was subject to a previous application for solar development in 2015. Whilst the previous application was not granted permission, the national and local mood on renewable energy has changed. The impact of climate change is more evident both nationally and locally, and the need for renewable energy to keep Britain moving has never been greater. We firmly believe that this overwhelming need means this site needs to be looked at again if we are to reach net-zero emissions in the near future.



Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



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RNA ENERGY

The Need for Renewables

North Hertfordshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency on 21st May 2019, and has since set the ambitious objective of achieving net zero across the District by 2040. As the Council sets out, this commitment goes beyond Government targets, where net zero is targeted nationally by 2050.

Government data for electricity use within North Hertfordshire shows that in 2019 (latest available data) the District used a total of 506 GWh of electricity, based on sales of electricity made to household and business customers.

The Government has also collated data on renewable electricity generation by local authority area in the UK. This demonstrates that in the same year (2019), North Hertfordshire generated only 52.6 GWh of electricity from renewable sources, or approximately 10.4% of the total electricity need.



Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



Considering the above data, North Hertfordshire's deficit in renewable electricity generation as of 2019 was 453.4 GWh. This is a significant deficit to make up to achieve the Council's ambitious objective of achieving net zero across the District by 2040.

It is reasonable to assume that over time, the District's reliance on electricity as an energy source will increase as the use of fossil fuels are phased out for heating and transport. Therefore, whilst the above data is based on the Council's recent position, the actual demand for electricity is likely to significantly increase by 2040, and this electricity will need to come from renewable sources.

At the same time, we are not aware that North Hertfordshire District has given planning consent to any new commercial renewable energy generation schemes since 2015. On this basis, the renewable energy deficit in the District will have grown since 2019 and is likely to grow significantly in the period through to 2040 if schemes such as the Proposed Development are not consented as a matter of urgency.

In its first year, the Proposed Development would contribute approximately 25GWh of clean renewable solar energy, adding almost 50% to the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Hertfordshire and making a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero within the District by 2040.

Sources:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-renewable-statistics>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/renewable-energy-planning-database-monthly-extract>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/regional-and-local-authority-electricity-consumption-statistics>

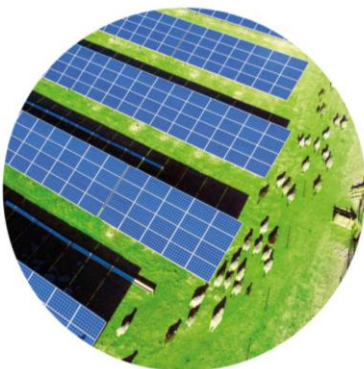
RNA ENERGY

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RNA ENERGY

The Project



The proposed solar farm would have an export capacity of 25MW as well as battery energy storage capacity of 12.5MW

Solar farms comprise rows of solar panels set out in an array which maximises their potential for harvesting solar energy. Our solar panels would be approximately 2.4m in height, mounted on steel and aluminium support frames which are driven into the ground. We have developed our layout to maintain buffers to hedgerows and trees around the site, and increased these buffers in proximity to local residents that are closest to the site.

The solar panels convert solar irradiance (sunlight) into direct current (DC) electricity. In order for the on-site generated electricity

to be transferred to the National Grid, inverters and transformers are required to take the DC electricity as generated by the solar panels, and convert it into alternating current (AC). You will therefore see 'inverters' and 'transformers' in our layout. The

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



inverters are similar to small boxes that sit at the end of some of the rows of solar panels. The transformers are bigger, but still only have a height of approximately 3m.

In addition to the solar panels, we are proposing to include batteries within our scheme. The benefit of batteries is that they assist in balancing supply and demand in an area. The battery storage element would either be used to store excess power that is generated by the solar array but could not be exported, to manage the export to make power available to the grid during times of peak demand, such as mornings and evenings, or to provide grid balancing services to keep the network operating within the frequency parameters set by National Grid. The battery containers are approximately 3m in height and resemble shipping containers. We have positioned the battery compound in a more obscure part of the site to reduce its visual impact, and are proposing acoustic fencing around the batteries to reduce any potential noise impact.



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Masterplan



- Application Site
- Deer / Stock Fence
- Acoustic Fence
- Photovoltaic Panels
- String Inverter
- Transformer Station
- Battery Container
- Battery Transformer Unit
- Other Building (Labelled)
- Existing Access Track Upgraded
- Proposed Access Track
- Existing Vegetation
- Proposed Woodland Belts
- Proposed Hedgerow
- Proposed Low Maintenance Pasture
- Proposed Species-Rich Grassland
- Proposed Compound Areas
- Archaeologically Sensitive Area

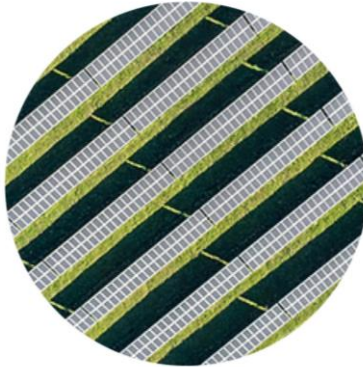


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Benefits



It is clear from the overwhelming need for renewable energy both nationally and locally that the principal benefit of the scheme will be the reduction in carbon emissions from this transition to a clean energy source; however, one of the many positives of developing solar farms for renewable energy is the wider environmental benefits they bring compared to alternative methods of renewable energy generation.

The solar arrays have a very limited footprint which means the land between and around them can be converted to grassland which could continue to be grazed by livestock. This in turn brings significant benefits to biodiversity, with our scheme expected to deliver an approximate 130% biodiversity

net gain based on area-based habitats, and an approximate 155% net gain based on linear habitats such as hedgerows. This is significantly above the mandatory 10% net gain expected by the Government on all new developments and should boost local pollinator, bird and small mammal (mice, voles, hedgehog, bat) populations who will all benefit from the more diverse habitat and food sources created and the connectivity provided to other habitat features in the area

The solar farm would also take the land out of intensive arable agricultural use. North Herts Climate Change Strategy states that: "Trees are probably those most often noted for their carbon sequestration abilities, but hedgerows, grasslands, and wildflower areas also have the capacity to absorb significant amounts of carbon, storing it in woody growth, in leaves, in roots and in the soil."

The Proposed Development would therefore not only provide a net carbon benefit through an increase in renewable energy, but also by reducing carbon released in the farming process through, e.g. disturbance of soils and use of fertilisers; and an increase in carbon sequestration across an area of land in relatively close proximity to large urban areas.



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 0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5:30pm)



Considerations

Noise

We have designed our solar farm to minimise noise impacts on local residents.

With solar farms, the solar panels themselves do not produce any noticeable noise, it is the inverters and transformers which can produce a low hum when in operation. Our solar farm proposes to use modern string inverters and 'smart' transformers which have a very minimal noise impact, and we have located these in positions across the site as far away from nearby properties as practicable. We have also positioned the batteries away from nearby properties, and are proposing to include acoustic fencing around the batteries to further reduce any potential noise impact they may produce.

We have undertaken baseline noise monitoring in the area, and when modelling the predicted noise of the proposed development against the current sound levels there will not be any significant noise impacts to local residents.

Traffic

Solar farms are a 'static' land use, in that once constructed there is limited or no regular activity across the Site, as opposed to residential / employment uses where a high degree of activity could be expected because of an increased population. There will be an increase in local traffic during the six-month construction period whilst the solar panels and associated infrastructure and materials are delivered to site. Construction traffic would be routed from the A602, via the B656 to Sperberry Hill where access to the site would be from either Little Almshoe Lane, or Stevenage Road.

Once operational, traffic movements would be limited to those required to manage any livestock that are grazing the land, and the occasional maintenance visit when required. There would be no permanent on-site workforce.

Visual Amenity

Solar farms are of a low height, such that they are often not as widely visible as typical residential or employment land uses, or other forms of renewable energy such as wind turbines. The proposed development will affect views at a local level from around the site boundary, from public footpaths which cross the site, and from some nearby footpaths to the south as a result of the change in land use from arable fields to solar infrastructure. In the long-term, the impact on some of these views will reduce as our proposed hedgerow and woodland belt improvements establish and reach a height where they 'screen' the proposed development.

We have prepared a number of accurate photomontages that are intended to give you an idea of what the proposed development would look like in views.



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Viewpoints - Year 1



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Viewpoints - Year 10



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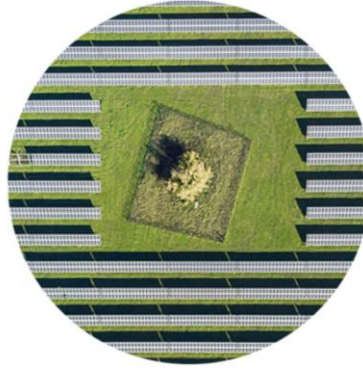
Sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk
 0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5:30pm)

Considerations

Green Belt

You may or may not be aware that the proposed development is within land designated as Green Belt, which has the fundamental aim of preventing 'urban sprawl' by keeping land permanently open.

It is our view that there are very special circumstances which justify the development of this green belt location for renewable energy, namely the overwhelming need for renewable energy in light of the climate emergency and the Local and National Government commitments to net zero, but also the wider environmental benefits of the scheme in the context of the simultaneous biodiversity emergency.



We believe that solar farms can be acceptable in the Green Belt for the following reasons:

- Solar farms can continue to be managed as agricultural land through the grazing of livestock, as opposed to residential / employment or other uses which could sterilise agricultural land;
- Solar farms are a 'static' land use in that once constructed there is limited or no regular activity across the Site, as opposed to residential / employment uses where a high degree of activity could be expected because of an increased population;
- Solar farms cause a negligible change in traffic along the local road network, as opposed to residential / employment uses where an increase in traffic along local roads through the Green Belt can be expected;
- Solar farms do not result in a substantial change in land (field) pattern or require substantial site clearance or topsoil stripping, such that whilst they may be operational over a long period of time, they can be considered temporary as once decommissioned the land can be easily returned to its former use without significant demolition or remediation. This is clearly different to the development of residential or other land uses where land is permanently divided up and developed such that it cannot easily go back to agricultural use.



Next Steps

The public consultation on the Masterplan will run until 24th January 2022. After the consultation concludes, we will review all feedback received and update our Masterplan accordingly.

Once we have made any necessary changes, we will submit our planning application and provide further information in relation to the finalised plans. Following submission of the planning application there will also be an opportunity to make comments directly to Council in response to their formal consultation process.

Have Your Say

Please take the time to review the boards on show. All of the information and a feedback form is available on our website: www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk

You can also provide feedback in the following ways:



You can complete a feedback form which is available on our website



You can write to us: RNA Energy, Redcoats Farm Solar,
c/o Lexington Communications,
Third Floor Queens House,
Queen Street,
Manchester, M2 5HT



You can call our Community Information Line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm)



You can email us at redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk



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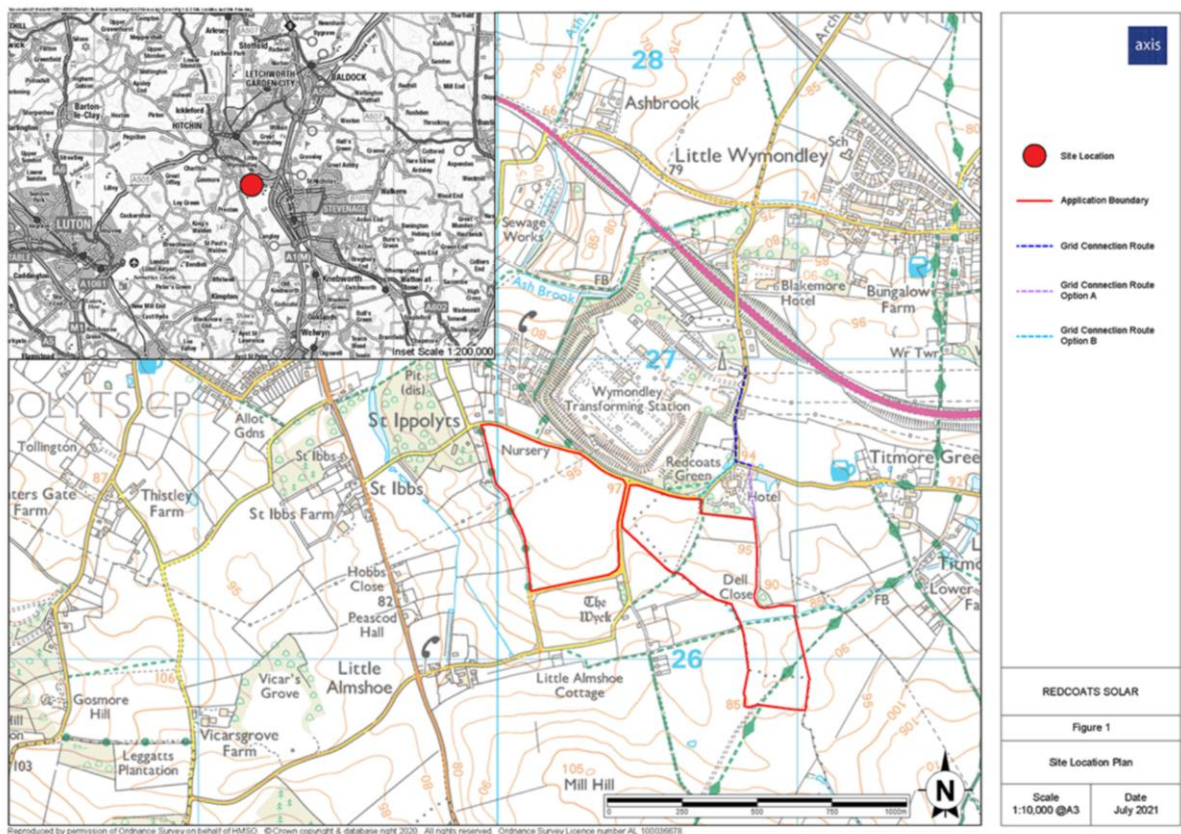


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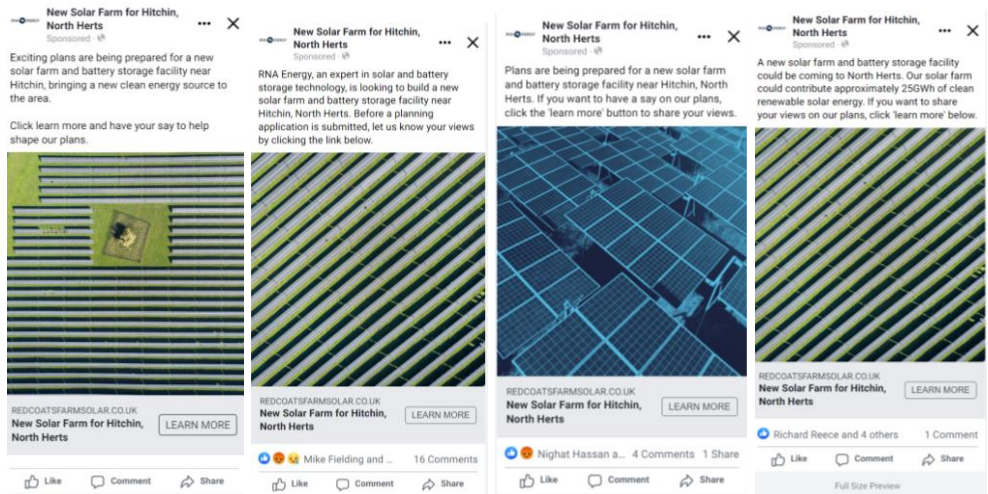


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Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project
October 2024

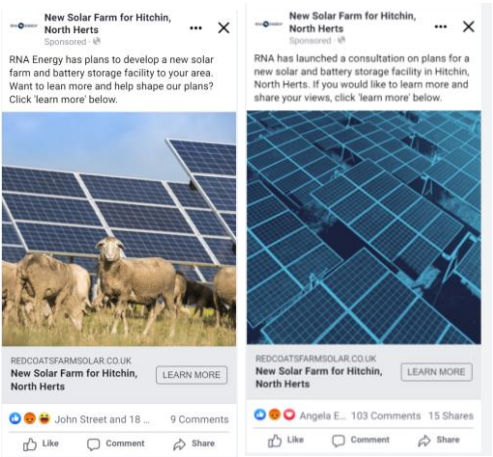


8.4 Appendix D – Social Media Adverts (2023 Scheme)

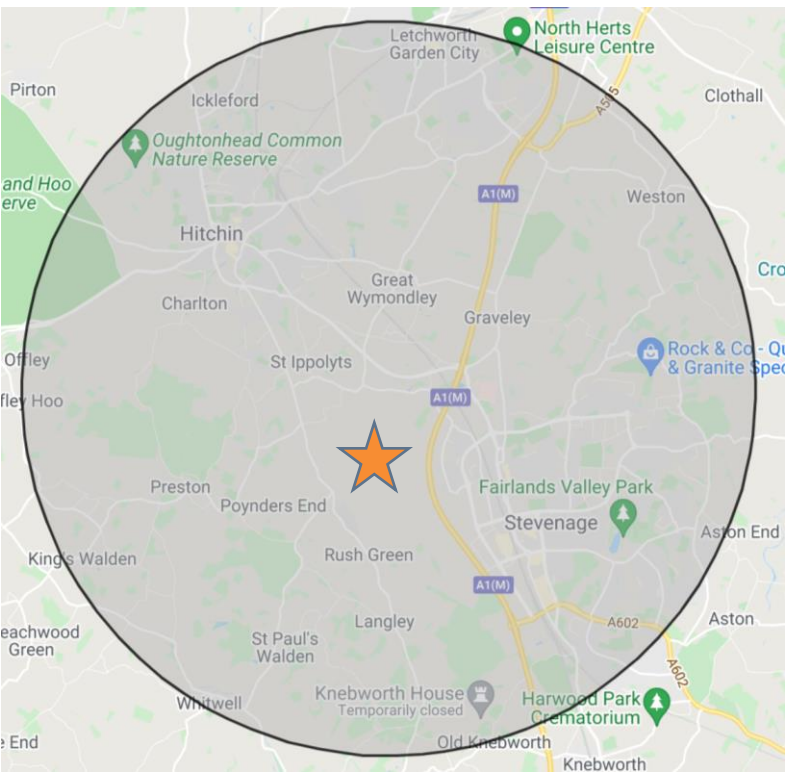


Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



8.5 Appendix E – Social Media Adverts Distribution Area (2023 Scheme)





8.6 Appendix F – Letter to Residents (2023 Scheme)



[Address]

7th January 2022

Dear resident,

Consultation launched on plans for a new Solar Farm and Battery Storage Facility at Redcoats Farm

I am writing to you to inform you that RNA-Energy has opened a consultation on its plans to bring a new solar farm and battery storage facility to Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire. The consultation will run from Friday, 7th January until Monday, 24th January.

The site comprises approximately 35.1ha of land at Redcoats Farm, to the south of Sperberry Hill / Stevenage Road, and between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green.

To view the plans in full, please visit www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk

Have your say

Before we submit a planning application to North Hertfordshire District Council, we want to hear the views of the local community on our proposals. Your views are very important to us and all feedback received will be considered and help shape the final plans.

There are a number of ways you can provide your views:

- Visiting our project website – www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk
- Calling our Community Information Line on – 0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5:30pm)
- Writing to us at – RNA Energy, Redcoats Farm Solar, c/o Lexington Communications, Third Floor, Queens House, Queen Street, Manchester, M2 5HT
- Emailing us at – redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk

All comments should be received no later than Monday 24th January 2022 to ensure that they can be taken into consideration before the final plans are submitted to the Council.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,



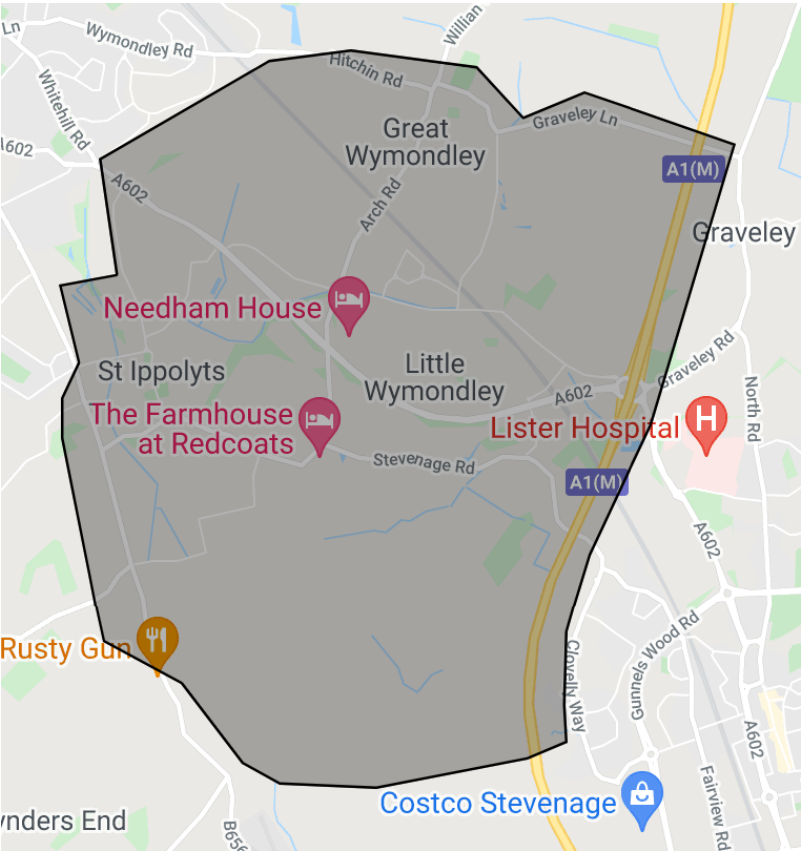
Nigel Viney
Managing Director
RNA Energy

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



8.7 Appendix G – Letter Distribution Area (2023 Scheme)



8.8 Appendix H – Press Release (2023 Scheme)

RNA ENERGY

Press Release

Date: 4th January 2022

Exciting New Solar Farm and Battery Storage Unit proposed at Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire

RNA Energy, an expert in solar power and battery storage, is bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility to Redcoats Farm, North Hertfordshire.

The proposals include a solar farm unit which will provide approximately 250MWh of clean renewable solar energy during its first year, adding almost 50% to the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Hertfordshire and making a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's ambition to be net zero by 2040.

The plans also include a battery energy storage unit, which will have the capacity of 12.5MWh. The battery storage element will be used to store excess power that is generated by the solar array to make power available to the grid during times of peak demand and to provide grid balancing services to keep the network operating within the frequency parameters set by National Grid.

The site comprises approximately 35.1ha of arable farmland at Redcoats Farm, to the south of Sperberry Hill / Stevenage Road, and between St Ippolyts and Tipton Green. The site is strategically located due south of the UK Power Networks Wymondley Substation, to which the proposed solar farm would connect. The close proximity of Redcoats Farm to the electricity distribution network makes it an excellent location.

The solar farm will also allow the arable land to be converted to grazing land for livestock and will equate to an approximate 130% biodiversity net gain based on area-based habitats, and an approximate 155% net gain based on linear habitats such as hedgerows.

Members of the public are being invited to provide feedback on the proposals through a public consultation which will be held for over two weeks between 7th January 2022 to 24th January 2022. A virtual exhibition of the proposals will be available on the dedicated consultation website, www.redcoatsfarm.co.uk, during the consultation period. This will provide local people an interactive way of learning about the proposals.

A spokesperson for RNA Energy said:

"We are delighted to be bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage unit to North Hertfordshire. Our plans will provide clean renewable energy to those living in North Hertfordshire and assist with the District Council's ambition of achieving net zero by 2040.

"We are committed to engaging with the local community to better develop our proposals. We are proud of our plans, and we look forward to hearing what those in the area think of our ideas."

All consultation materials will be available on the dedicated website, www.redcoatsfarm.co.uk. Furthermore, local residents can get in touch via email redcoatsfarm@havingyoursay.co.uk or by calling our Community Information Line via 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday – 9am to 5:30pm).

Following the consultation, all feedback will be analysed before a planning application is submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About RNA Energy

RNA Energy is on a mission to develop and build solar and storage projects to provide cheap, clean and reliable energy to households across the UK. Experts in both solar power and battery storage, RNA Energy has a 100W pipeline of solar projects and two 50MW battery storage projects starting in 2022. RNA's ambition is to build the clean energy infrastructure needed for a net zero future.

For more information, contact:

Frances Cosby, Lexington

E: frances.cosby@lexcomm.co.uk T: 07985573347

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



8.9 Appendix I – Media Coverage (2023 Scheme)

Huge new solar farm earmarked for Hertfordshire countryside

If it goes ahead, it's said to be a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's ambition to be net zero by 2040.

SHARE COMMENTS

By **Adam May** Senior Reporter
11.10, 11 JAN 2022

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RNA Energy has brought forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Redcoats Farm (Image: RNA Energy)

Proposals have been submitted for a new solar farm in Hertfordshire's countryside.

RNA Energy has brought forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Redcoats Farm near [Hitchin](#) in North Herts.

ADVERTISING



Ann Summers

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The site would be set across approximately 35.1 hectares of land to the south of Sperberry Hill/Stevenage Road and between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green.

[Read more: Get the latest news from across Herts](#)

It's strategically located due south of the UK Power Networks Wymondley Substation, to which the proposed solar farm would connect.

The proposals will provide approximately 25GWh of clean renewable solar energy each year, adding almost 50 per cent to the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Hertfordshire and making a significant contribution to North Hertfordshire's ambition to be net zero by 2040.

The plans also include a battery energy storage facility, which will have the capacity of 12.5MW.

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



The battery storage element will be used to store excess power that is generated by the solar array to make power available to the grid during times of peak demand and to provide grid balancing services to keep the network operating within the frequency parameters set by National Grid.

Members of the public are being invited to provide feedback on the proposals through a public consultation which will be held for two and a half weeks between January 7 to January 24, 2022.

A virtual exhibition of the proposals will be available on the dedicated consultation website www.redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk during the consultation period.



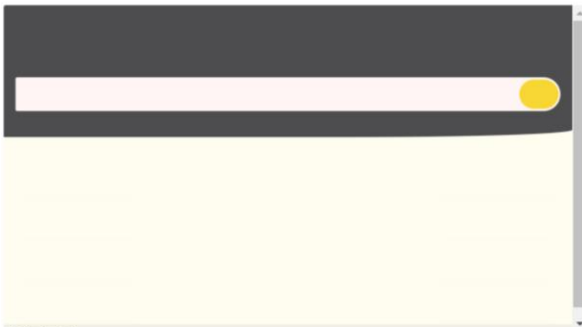
RNA Energy has brought forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Redcoats Farm (Image).

A spokesperson for RNA Energy said: "We are delighted to be bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility to North Hertfordshire. Our plans will provide clean renewable energy to those living in North Hertfordshire and assist with the District Council's ambition of achieving net zero by 2040.

"We are committed to engaging with the local community to better develop our proposals.

"We are proud of our plans, and we look forward to hearing what those in the area think of our ideas."

What is happening where you live? Find out by adding your postcode or [visit inYourArea](#)



It comes after separate plans were unveiled for a solar farm the size of more than 88 football pitches.

These could be built on green belt land between three North Herts villages, according to new plans.

AGR 4 Solar Limited has applied to build a solar farm of 88 hectares across the space between Great Wymondley, Graveley and Little Wymondley, which could stand for up to 40 years.

Following the submission of the plans on December 14, residents have raised concerns that the development would "create a blight on our landscape" and threaten the quality of life for residents in the surrounding villages.

Follow HertsLive on social media below.

Follow HertsLive on social media

Follow HertsLive on Facebook - Like our Facebook page to get the latest news in your feed and join in the lively discussions in the comments. [Click here to like and follow it.](#)

You can also join our local [Facebook groups here.](#)

Follow us on Twitter - For breaking news and the latest stories, [click here to follow us on Twitter.](#)

Follow us on Instagram - On the HertsLive Instagram page we share amazing pictures of our stunning county, and if you tag us in your posts, we could repost your picture on our page. [Click here to follow Herts Live on Instagram.](#)



The solar farm would export up to 49.995MWe of renewable energy to the National Grid during peak operation.

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



AGR 4 Solar Limited argue the scheme can be classed as very special circumstances to allow for building on the green belt.

The details of these plans can be found [here](#).

Have your say on proposed solar farm for North Herts

 Anne Suslak



Published: 9:00 AM January 10, 2022



A new solar farm and battery energy storage facility has been proposed for Redcoats Farm in North Herts - Credit: Google Street View

A consultation has opened into proposals to build a new solar farm and battery energy storage facility at Redcoats Farm.

The proposals, put forward by RNA Energy, are for approximately 35.1 hectares of land to the south of Sperberry Hill and Stevenage Road, between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green. The site is located south of the UK Power Networks Wymondley

A consultation has opened into proposals to build a new solar farm and battery energy storage facility at Redcoats Farm.

The proposals, put forward by RNA Energy, are for approximately 35.1 hectares of land to the south of Sperberry Hill and Stevenage Road, between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green. The site is located south of the UK Power Networks Wymondley Substation, to which the proposed solar farm would connect.

The solar farm will provide around 25GWh of renewable solar energy each year, increasing the existing renewable electricity generation capacity in North Herts by almost 50 per cent.

Meanwhile the battery energy storage facility will have the capacity of 12.5MW, and will be used to store excess power that is generated by the solar farm - which will make power available to the grid during times of peak demand.

According to RNA Energy, the solar farm will allow the arable land to be converted into grazing land for livestock, and will include substantial hedgerow and tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field.

This will provide a boost to local pollinator, bird and small mammal populations - including mice, voles, hedgehogs and bats.

ADVERTISING



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A spokesman for RNA Energy said: "We are delighted to be bringing forward plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility to North Hertfordshire.

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project October 2024



"Our plans will provide clean renewable energy to those living in North Hertfordshire and assist with the council's ambition of achieving net zero by 2040.

"We are committed to engaging with the community to better develop our proposals. We are proud of our plans, and we look forward to hearing what those in the area think of our ideas."

ADVERTISING



Get £0 Joining Fee At PureGym!

PureGym - Sponsored

Visit Site

The public consultation runs for two and a half weeks from January 7 to January 24.

A virtual exhibition of the proposals is available on the consultation website at <https://redcoatsfarmsolar.co.uk/>.

Residents can also get in touch via email at redcoatsfarmsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk or by calling the community information line on 0333 358 0502 from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm.

All feedback will be analysed before a planning application is submitted to North Herts Council.

8.10 Appendix J – Stakeholder Letters (Resubmission Scheme)



Councillor Daniel Allen
Leader of the Council
C/O NHDC
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG8 3JF

Friday 26th July 2024

Dear Councillor Allen,

Sperberry Hill Solar & Battery Storage – Notification of Resubmission

I am writing to inform you that Brockwell Storage & Solar Ltd, formerly known as RNA Energy, is bringing forward revised plans for a 25MW solar farm and battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.

The revised scheme comprises a reduced number of solar panels, providing an overall reduction in the proposed developed area, and additional landscape screening to protect the rural character of the area; whilst also delivering the same amount of clean renewable energy as the previous application.

Previous Engagement

A public consultation on the previous scheme took place in 2022 to gather feedback on the plans from the local community. In total, 256 submissions were received, with the majority of those agreeing with the need for increased renewable energy generation in the UK and that renewable energy should be generated locally. Other feedback received expressed concerns regarding the visual impact of the scheme and its implications on the Green Belt.

In response to this feedback, further mitigation was introduced, but despite these measures, North Hertfordshire District Council's Planning Committee ultimately refused the planning application in November 2023. The refusal related to landscape and Green Belt effects, although Committee members did acknowledge the benefits of the scheme in terms of renewable energy generation, combating climate change and enhanced biodiversity. In weighing the positive and negative effects of the scheme, the Council's planning officers acknowledged that their decision to recommend refusal was "... very finely balanced...".

Updated Scheme

Over the past 8 months, we have made material amendments to our plans to address the Council's reasons for refusal. We have reduced the number of solar panels and enhanced screening measures to better protect the rural character of the area. Advances in technology now allow the solar panels to each have a power rating of 700 watts, up from 640 watts in the previous scheme, enabling the site to generate 25MW with a smaller footprint, reducing the area covered by solar panels by more than 8.5%.



Key changes to the layout include:

- The removal of solar panels and associated infrastructure in the southeastern corner of the previous scheme, south of the Hertfordshire Way. This adjustment ensures the Hertfordshire Way runs alongside the southernmost boundary of the solar farm, preserving open views for footpath users.
- At Redcoats Farm, the previously proposed bund has been removed. The solar panels and fencing have been relocated significantly further from the southern property boundary. A timber stock fence and new hedge will be added along the northern edge of the panels. This solution will maintain the openness of the views from the property boundary and provide effective screening over time.
- The solar panels and fencing have also been moved further from the western boundary of Redcoats Farm, with a new area of woodland planting proposed in this location.
- An area of solar panels has been removed from the northwestern corner of the scheme, and additional woodland planting is proposed here to soften views from residential properties at the edge of St Ippolyts.

The area designated for new woodland planting, initially set at approximately 2,600 square meters in the 2023 scheme, will be increased with the additional planting areas.

This project can also connect to Wymondley Grid without the lengthy delays which are affecting many renewable energy projects in the country and can therefore make a meaningful contribution to both the government's 2030 carbon reduction commitments, and North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero within the District by 2040. The scale of this local aspiration will require many renewable energy projects to be consented in the Borough, including those in the Green Belt.

Resubmission

We have updated our website (www.sperberryhillsolar.co.uk) to include details of these changes and have created a virtual exhibition to provide a comprehensive overview of the revised plans. We intend to resubmit the application in the coming weeks, which will be considered by the Council in due course.

As the Leader of the Council, we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the updated scheme with you in more detail. Our consultants will be in touch with your office shortly to arrange a meeting. In the meantime, if you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact our community information line at 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5.30pm) or email us at sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Gary Bird
Development Director
Brockwell Storage & Solar Ltd



Mr Peter Butterfield
The Farmhouse at Redcoats
Redcoats Green
Hitchin
SG4 7JR

Monday 29th July 2024

Dear Mr Butterfield,

Sperberry Hill Solar & Battery Storage – Notification of Resubmission

I am writing to inform you that Brockwell Storage & Solar Ltd, formerly known as RNA Energy, is bringing forward revised plans for a 25MW solar farm and battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.

The revised scheme comprises a reduced number of solar panels, providing an overall reduction in the proposed developed area, and additional landscape screening to protect the rural character of the area; whilst also delivering the same amount of clean renewable energy as the previous application.

Previous Engagement

A public consultation on the previous scheme took place in 2022 to gather feedback on the plans from the local community. In total, 256 submissions were received, with the majority of those agreeing with the need for increased renewable energy generation in the UK and that renewable energy should be generated locally. Other feedback received expressed concerns regarding the visual impact of the scheme and its implications on the Green Belt.

In response to this feedback, further mitigation was introduced, but despite these measures, North Hertfordshire District Council's Planning Committee ultimately refused the planning application in November 2023. The refusal related to landscape and Green Belt effects, although Committee members did acknowledge the benefits of the scheme in terms of renewable energy generation, combating climate change and enhanced biodiversity. In weighing the positive and negative effects of the scheme, the Council's planning officers acknowledged that their decision to recommend refusal was "... very finely balanced...".

Updated Scheme

Over the past 8 months, we have made material amendments to our plans to address the Council's reasons for refusal. We have reduced the number of solar panels and enhanced screening measures to better protect the rural character of the area. Advances in technology now allow the solar panels to each have a power rating of 700 watts, up from 640 watts in the previous scheme, enabling the site to generate 25MW with a smaller footprint, reducing the area covered by solar panels by more than 8.5%.

Sperberry Hill Solar and BESS Project

October 2024



8.11 Appendix K – Website (Resubmission Scheme)

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [The Site](#) [Updated Plans](#) [Virtual Exhibition](#) [Contact Us](#)

Welcome

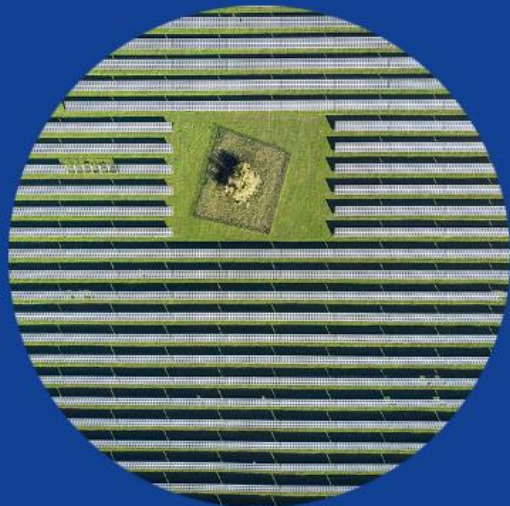
Thank you for taking the time to visit our website. We are excited about our plans and are delighted to share more information with you.

Brockwell Storage & Solar Ltd, formerly known as RNA Energy, is bringing forward updated plans for a new solar farm and battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.

You can learn more about our plans through the information here and through our virtual exhibition.

In January 2022, we conducted a consultation on our initial proposals and greatly appreciate the feedback we received. This led to the submission of our planning application in March 2022, which the Council refused in November 2023 because they believed the effects on the landscape and Green Belt outweighed the scheme's benefits in a "...very finely balanced..." decision. Based on this outcome, we have materially revised our plans, reducing the number of solar panels, and the overall area of built development, whilst increasing certain separation distances and adding more woodland planting. Despite the reduced area of development, the level of renewable energy generation remains unchanged due to advanced technology. For more details, please visit the 'Updated Plans' section of this website.

We are now resubmitting an application for the updated plans to North Hertfordshire District Council.



About Brockwell Storage & Solar

Brockwell Storage and Solar, formerly known as RNA Energy, is dedicated to advancing the development and construction of a diverse portfolio of solar and storage schemes, aimed at providing the UK with affordable, clean, and reliable energy solutions.

The team is renowned for its extensive expertise and unwavering commitment to constructing the clean energy infrastructure required for a net-zero emissions future.

Our site selection process is thorough, taking into account a variety of factors, including the potential environmental benefits and technical feasibility of each location. We prioritise the integration of battery energy storage systems whenever possible to ensure the seamless delivery of energy to the grid during periods of peak demand. This strategic approach prevents the inundation of the grid with solar energy during low-demand periods and minimises the limitation of clean energy.

With our well-established track record as project developers, we specialise in fostering collaborative relationships with landowners and local stakeholders. This collaborative approach enables us to design and deliver scheme that are mutually beneficial for all parties involved.



The Site

The site spans 35.5 hectares of land south of Sperberry Hill and Stevenage Road, situated between St Ippolyts and Titmore Green. It is strategically situated due south of the National Grid's Wymondley Substation, to which our proposed solar farm will connect.

Proximity to the electricity distribution network is crucial for the viability of renewable energy projects, and the neighbouring Wymondley Substation is one of the few in North Hertfordshire with the capacity to accept the power from large-scale renewable energy generation schemes. This project can connect to Wymondley Grid without the lengthy delays which are affecting many renewable energy projects in the country and can therefore make a meaningful contribution to both the government's 2030 carbon reduction commitments and North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero within the District by 2040. The scale of this local aspiration will require many renewable energy projects to be consented in the Borough, including those in the Green Belt.



Updated Plans

The updated plans for Sperberry Hill will still deliver the original 25MW solar farm and a 12.5MW battery storage facility. The scheme also retains improved existing access points off Little Almshoe Lane and Stevenage Road, as well as a combination of woodland and hedgerow planting to boost biodiversity.

Subsequent to our previous consultation and planning application process, we have made specific design changes. The original scheme featured solar panels with a power rating of 640 watts. With advancements in technology, the resubmission scheme proposes panels with a rating of 700 watts. This upgrade allows the project to deliver the same 25MW output with an overall reduction in the area of solar panels by more than 8.5%.

Key changes include:

- The removal of solar panels and associated infrastructure in the southeastern corner of the previous scheme, south of the Hertfordshire Way. This adjustment ensures the Hertfordshire Way runs alongside the southernmost boundary of the solar farm, preserving open views for footpath users.
- At Redcoats Farm, the previously proposed bund has been removed. The solar panels and fencing have been relocated significantly further from the southern property boundary. A timber stock fence and new hedge will be added along the northern edge of the panels. This solution will maintain the openness of the views from the property boundary and provide effective screening over time.
- The solar panels and fencing have also been moved further from the western boundary of Redcoats Farm, with a new area of woodland planting proposed in this location.
- An area of solar panels has been removed from the northwestern corner of the scheme, and additional woodland planting is proposed here to soften views from residential properties at the edge of St Ippolyts.

The area of new woodland planting proposed in the 2023 scheme was approximately 2,600 square meters. With the addition of the new planting areas, this figure will increase.

The resubmission scheme represents a reduction in built development compared to the 2023 scheme, specifically reducing the impact on sensitive receptors while maintaining the same renewable energy benefits.

Benefits

The proposals set out above will bring numerous benefits, including helping North Hertfordshire and the UK address climate change obligations, boosting the local economy, and increasing biodiversity.

Helping North Hertfordshire District Council Meet Its Net Zero Targets

North Hertfordshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and aims to achieve net zero across the district by 2040. Our solar farm, with an export capacity of 25 MW, would provide for a reduction of approximately 15,000 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, meet the energy needs of around 7,000-8,000 homes, and more than double the installed renewable capacity in the District^[1]. This will play a crucial role in helping the district meet its net zero objective by 2040.

Given the location and settlements throughout North Hertfordshire, solar energy is the primary method to generate clean electricity to meet these goals. Other forms of renewable energy, such as onshore wind, are not considered feasible due to population density and the extent of residential development across the District. The views of the solar scheme will be limited, and the updated plans ensure the proposal will be even less visible.

Increasing biodiversity

As solar farms have a small footprint, the land between each solar panel can be converted to grassland and be used as grazing land by livestock. Our plans will further include substantial hedgerow, tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field. This will provide a huge boost to local pollinator, bird and small mammal (mice, voles, hedgehog, bat) species populations due to the increased habitat connectivity and additional food sources. The original scheme was planned to deliver an approximate 130% biodiversity net gain based on area-based habitats, and an approximate 155% net gain based on linear habitats such as hedgerows. We have not yet finally calculated the corresponding figures for the revised proposal but they will be very similar.

Economic benefits

The plans will deliver economic benefits, including new construction jobs to build the scheme and highly skilled engineering jobs to manage and maintain the site, as well as knock-on benefits to the local supply chain.

In addition, we are hoping to work with the local Parish Councils to develop a community fund for local projects.

Helping the UK become greener

With the pressing climate crisis, it is imperative for the UK to urgently transition away from fossil fuels. The new Government has pledged to deliver clean power by 2030, including a commitment to triple solar power in Britain. The new solar and battery farm in North Hertfordshire will help create a sustainable future for generations to come.

^[1] Figures based on the Grid carbon intensity 2022



The Need for Renewables

Decarbonisation of our existing electricity supply infrastructure will necessitate the widespread deployment of new renewable energy generation projects. Further, the Committee on Climate Change's Sixth Carbon Budget (December 2020) describes that demand for electricity will increase by 50% by 2035 and 100% by 2050, reflecting increasing electrification of the economy. This increase is driven by population growth, the transition to electric vehicles, hydrogen production, and a move away from natural gas for heating.

To meet this growing energy demand, renewable, low carbon, and carbon-negative sources will be necessary to achieve net zero by 2050.

This development will support the country's net zero targets by increasing the amount of clean, affordable, and secure electricity supplied to the grid.

Virtual Exhibition



Contact Us

Should you want any further information or have any questions, you can contact the team using the details below:

-  You can write to us at Brockwell SSL, Sperberry Hill, c/o Lexington, Third Floor Queens House, Queen Street, Manchester, M2 5HT
-  You can call our Community Information Line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm)
-  You can email us at sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk

8.12 Appendix L – Virtual Exhibition Boards (Resubmission Scheme)



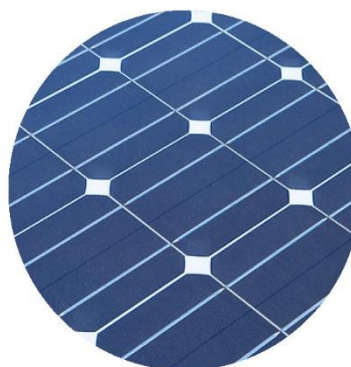
Welcome

Brockwell Storage & Solar, formerly known as RNA Energy, is bringing forward updated plans for a new solar and battery storage facility at Sperberry Hill, North Hertfordshire.

Since the original plans were consulted on in 2022 and were the subject of a planning application made to North Hertfordshire District Council in 2022, the scheme has been updated and now comprises a reduced number of solar panels, providing an overall reduction in the proposed developed area, and additional landscape screening to protect the rural character of the area; whilst also delivering the same amount of clean renewable energy as the previous application.

This virtual exhibition outlines the previous scheme, the updated plans, and the considerations that have taken place.

Brockwell Storage & Solar will be looking to submit the updated plans to the Council in due course.



The Site

The site comprises 35.5 hectares of land located south of Wymondley Substation and Sperberry Hill, near St Ippolyts in North Hertfordshire.

Access to the site is available via a track from Stevenage Road, which runs to the east of Redcoats Farmhouse, and through two field gates on the east and west sides of Little Almshoe Lane. The development will not obstruct or alter pathways in and around the site.

Proximity to the electricity distribution network is crucial for the viability of renewable energy projects, and the neighbouring Wymondley Substation is one of the few in North Hertfordshire with the capacity to accept the power from large-scale renewable energy generation schemes. This project can connect to Wymondley Grid without the lengthy delays which are affecting many renewable energy projects in the country and can therefore make a meaningful contribution to North Hertfordshire's objective to be net zero within the District by 2040. The scale of this aspiration will require many renewable energy projects to be consented in the Borough, including those in the Green Belt.



 Brockwell SSL, Sperberry Hill Solar,
c/o Lexington Communications,
Third Floor Queens House,
Queen Street,
Manchester, M2 5HT

 Sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk
 0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5:30pm)



Plans

Previous Scheme Engagement

In 2022, the scheme underwent a thorough consultation to gauge local sentiments and gather insights on potential amendments. The consultation received 256 submissions, with a majority of those responding agreeing with the need for increased renewable energy generation in the UK and that renewable energy should be generated locally.

Supportive comments emphasised the scheme's significance in addressing the climate crisis and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. However, concerns were also raised regarding the visual impact of the scheme and its implications on the Green Belt, which were echoed by the Council in 2023 which were echoed by the Council in 2023 in its determination of our previous planning application.

Updated Plans

Following feedback received, Brockwell Storage & Solar has made material amendments to the proposal to further reduce the visual impact of the scheme. These updates are possible due to advancements in technology to maintain energy output while decreasing the total area covered by solar panels by approximately 8.5% compared to the previous scheme.

This reduction in the area covered by solar panels reduces the effects of the proposal upon local landscape character and the Green Belt, while still ensuring that North Hertfordshire is producing clean, renewable energy to tackle climate change.



 Brockwell SSL, Sperberry Hill Solar,
c/o Lexington Communications,
Third Floor Queens House,
Queen Street,
Manchester, M2 5HT

 Sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk
 0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5:30pm)

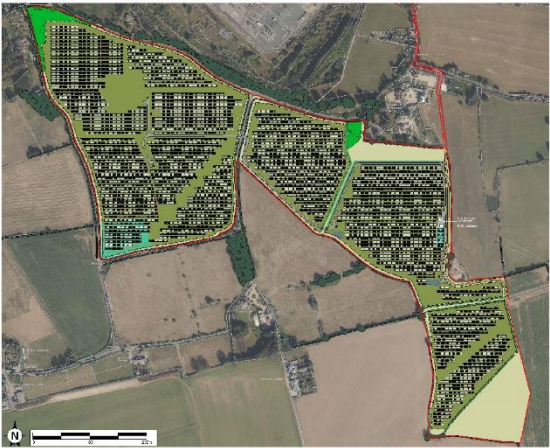


Plans

2023 Scheme



Resubmission Scheme



 Brockwell SSL, Sperberry Hill Solar,
c/o Lexington Communications,
Third Floor Queens House,
Queen Street,
Manchester, M2 5HT

 sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk
 0333 358 0502 (weekdays 9am to 5.30pm)



Reducing Visual Impact

Adjustment along Hertfordshire Way:

The area of solar panels in the southeastern corner of the previous scheme, south of the Hertfordshire Way, has been removed entirely. Consequently, the Hertfordshire Way will no longer cross the solar farm but will run alongside its southern boundary. This change preserves open views to the south from this section of the footpath, significantly mitigating the scheme's impact on the users of this section of the footpath.

Changes around Redcoats Farm:

The bund originally proposed to the south of Redcoats Farm has been removed, with alternative mitigation measures proposed.

Solar panels and fencing have been relocated significantly farther from the southern boundary of Redcoats Farm and will be accompanied by a new timber stock fence and hedge along the northern edge. This setup maintains the current openness and views from the southern edge, with the hedge serving as effective screening over time.

Further adjustments include moving solar panels and fencing away from the western boarder of Redcoats Farm, with a new block of woodland planting proposed.

Woodland Planting and Panel Adjustments:

An area of solar panels has been removed from the northwestern corner of the scheme, with additional new woodland planting proposed to soften views from residential properties near St Ippolyts.

Other Changes

Increase in Woodland Planting:

The area of new woodland planting will increase further with the addition of new planting areas. The exact increase will be detailed in the resubmission application. Similarly, the length of new hedgerow planting is expected to adjust slightly due to the changes along the Hertfordshire Way.

Transformer Stations Reduction:

The number of transformer stations has been reduced from five to four in the updated plans, streamlining infrastructure while maintaining operational efficiency.



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Core Elements

Elements that have remained the same

Including the changes outlined in the previous exhibition boards, Brockwell Storage & Solar has retained key elements of the scheme. The solar farm maintains an export capacity of 25MW alongside a battery energy storage capacity of 12.5MW.

Other elements that have remained the same include the solar panels, 8 battery storage units, string inverters, a Distribution Network Operator substation, switchroom, control room, grid connection/cabling to the nearby National Grid Wymondley Substation, internal stone tracks, 2 access points off Little Almshoe Lane, fencing, CCTV cameras, and a combination of woodland and hedgerow planting.



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Benefits

The proposals set out above will bring numerous benefits, including helping the UK and North Hertfordshire address climate change obligations, boosting the local economy, and increasing biodiversity.

Helping North Hertfordshire District Council Meet Its Net Zero Targets

North Hertfordshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and aims to achieve net zero across the district by 2040. Our solar farm, with an export capacity of 25 MW, would provide for a reduction of approximately 15,000 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, meet the energy needs of around 7,000-8,000 homes, and more than double the installed renewable capacity in the District*. This will play a crucial role in helping the district meet its net zero objective by 2040.

Given the location and settlements throughout North Hertfordshire, solar energy is the primary method to generate clean electricity to meet these goals. Other forms of renewable energy, such as onshore wind, are not considered feasible due to population density and the extent of residential development across the District.

Increasing biodiversity

As solar farms have a small footprint, the land between each solar panel can be converted to grassland and be used as grazing land by livestock. Our plans will further include substantial hedgerow, tree planting, and wilder grassland areas around the perimeter of each field. This will provide a huge boost to local pollinator, bird and small mammal (mice, voles, hedgehog, bat) species populations due to the increased habitat connectivity and additional food sources. The original scheme was planned to deliver an approximate 130% biodiversity net gain based on area-based habitats, and an approximate 155% net gain based on linear habitats such as hedgerows. We have not yet finally calculated the corresponding figures for the revised proposal but they will be very similar.



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Benefits

Economic benefits

The plans will deliver economic benefits, including new construction jobs to build the scheme and highly skilled engineering jobs to manage and maintain the site, as well as knock-on benefits to the local supply chain.

In addition, we are hoping to work with the local Parish Councils to develop a community fund for local projects.

Helping the UK become greener

With the pressing climate crisis, it is imperative for the UK to urgently transition away from fossil fuels. The new Government has pledged to deliver clean power by 2030, including a commitment to triple solar power in Britain. The new solar and battery farm in North Hertfordshire will help create a sustainable future for generations to come.



The Need for Renewables

Decarbonisation of our existing electricity supply infrastructure will necessitate the widespread deployment of new renewable energy generation projects. Further, the Committee on Climate Change's Sixth Carbon Budget (December 2020) describes that demand for electricity will increase by 50% by 2035 and 100% by 2050, reflecting increasing electrification of the economy. This increase is driven by population growth, the transition to electric vehicles, hydrogen production, and a move away from natural gas for heating.

To meet this growing energy demand, renewable, low carbon, and carbon-negative sources will be necessary to achieve net zero by 2050.

This development will support the country's net zero targets by increasing the amount of clean, affordable, and secure electricity supplied to the grid.



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Considerations

Noise

We have designed our solar farm to minimise noise impacts on local residents.

With solar farms, the solar panels themselves do not produce any noticeable noise, it is the inverters and transformers which can produce a low hum when in operation. Our solar farm proposes to use modern string inverters and 'smart' transformers which have a very minimal noise impact, and we have located these in positions across the site as far away from nearby properties as practicable.

We have also positioned the batteries away from nearby properties, and are proposing to include acoustic fencing around the batteries to further reduce any potential noise impact they may produce.

We have undertaken baseline noise monitoring in the area, and when modelling the predicted noise of the proposed development against the current sound levels there will not be any significant noise impacts to local residents.

Visual Impact

Solar farms are typically low in height, making them less visible than residential or commercial developments and other renewable energy sources like wind turbines. The updated scheme has been designed to further reduce visual impact. Notably, the area of solar panels in the southeastern corner of the previous scheme, south of the Hertfordshire Way, has been entirely removed. As a result, the Hertfordshire Way will no longer cross the solar farm but will run alongside its southern boundary. This change preserves open views to the south from this section of the footpath, significantly reducing the scheme's impact on users of the public right of way.

The originally proposed bund south of Redcoats Farm has been removed and replaced with alternative mitigation measures. The solar panels and fencing have been relocated significantly farther from the southern boundary of Redcoats Farm and will be accompanied by a new timber stock fence and hedge along the northern edge. This arrangement maintains the current openness and views from the southern edge, with the hedge serving as an effective screening feature over time.

Further adjustments include moving solar panels and fencing away from the western boundary of Redcoats Farm, with a new block of woodland planting proposed. Additionally, an area of solar panels has been removed from the northwestern corner of the scheme, with new woodland planting introduced to soften views from residential properties near St Ippolyts.



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Considerations

Traffic

Solar farms are a 'static' land use, in that once constructed there is limited or no regular activity across the site, as opposed to residential / employment uses where a high degree of activity could be expected because of an increased population.

There will be an increase in local traffic during the six-month construction period whilst the solar panels and associated infrastructure and materials are delivered to site. Construction traffic would be routed from the A602, via the B656 to Sperberry Hill where access to the site would be from either Little Almshoe Lane, or Stevenage Road.

Once operational, traffic movements would be limited to those required to manage any livestock that are grazing the land, and the occasional maintenance visit when required. There would be no permanent on-site workforce.



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Considerations

Green Belt

We believe there are very special circumstances that justify the development of the Sperberry Hill solar facility on Green Belt land. There is an overwhelming need for renewable energy, a view supported by North Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council, both of which have committed to increasing provision locally. Due to the nature of the area, other forms of renewable energy, such as onshore wind, are not considered capable of commercial scale deployment.

The nature of Sperberry Hill and its proximity to the Wymondley Substation means clean energy can be developed quickly and efficiently, aiding the District in boosting renewable energy provision and addressing climate change. Additionally, the scheme offers significant environmental benefits, particularly in the context of boosting biodiversity in the area.

We believe that solar farms can be acceptable in the Green Belt for several reasons:

Continued Agricultural Use: Solar farms can continue to be managed as agricultural land through the grazing of livestock, unlike residential or employment uses which could sterilise agricultural land.

Low Activity: Solar farms are a 'static' land use with limited or no regular activity across the site, unlike residential or employment uses where high levels of activity are expected due to increased population.

Minimal Traffic Impact: Solar farms cause negligible changes in traffic along local roads, unlike residential or employment uses which can significantly increase traffic.

Temporary Nature: Solar farms do not result in a substantial change in land patterns or require significant site clearance or topsoil stripping. Although operational over a long period, they can be considered temporary; once decommissioned, the land can be easily returned to its former use without significant demolition or remediation. This is distinctly different from residential or other land uses that permanently alter the landscape and cannot easily revert to agricultural use.

Furthermore, the updated plans, as outlined on Board 2, demonstrate a reduced visual impact on the Green Belt due to the decreased number of solar panels and the incorporation of additional landscaping features.



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Next Steps

Brockwell Storage & Solar will submit the new plans for consideration by North Hertfordshire District Council in the coming months.

If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact us through the following methods:



You can write to us: Brockwell SSL, Sperberry Hill,
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You can call our Community Information Line on 0333 358 0502 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm)



You can email us at sperberryhillsolar@havingyoursay.co.uk



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