

Title: Statement of Community Involvement (Ref:1939-R004)
Proposal: Duns Tew Energy Park
Location: Hill Farm, Duns Tew, Bicester, OX25 6JJ

Community Involvement

In line with best practice guidance, the applicant sought to undertake pre-application consultation.

Pre-Application Consultation

A screening opinion request for the proposed extension to the permitted 5MW solar farm and associated infrastructure, land at Hill Farm in Duns Tew, Cherwell District in Oxfordshire was submitted on 16th January 2019 to Cherwell District Council planning officers regarding the general principle of the proposed solar development on this site.

- Pre-application advice was sought from Cherwell District Council. As fundamentally there were no changes from the original screening opinions given for the previously approved solar farm 15/00570/F, Cherwell District Council decided that no further advice was warranted.
- Advice from the previously approved solar farm 15/00570/F provided by officers in respect of the extent of reports and information required as part of any formal submission, included provision of a landscape assessment, archaeological assessment, and a preliminary ecological appraisal. These have all been undertaken and submitted with the application. A traffic management plan is being finalised and will be submitted during application.
- Detailed assessments have been undertaken in relation to the impact on landscape and visual impact, historic environment and ecology, as well as consideration of access/traffic and an assessment of possible impacts during the construction and operational phases. No significant issues of concern have been identified through these considerations.

Local Community

The developer has engaged in a lengthy consultation process with the local community and nearest neighbours to the proposed solar array, paying specific attention to consult with those who might be most impacted upon by the proposed development.

The developer has arranged several public consultations events, 7 in total. These were held in different locations at different times of day and different days of the week, ensuring members of the local community had as much opportunity as possible to discuss the proposal with the developers view up to date and accurate information about the proposed project.

The developer set up and advertised a dedicated project webpage to allow the community to raise questions and or arrange to meet with the developers to discuss any issues or suggestions that they may have.

The developer met on a one to one basis with a number of local residents to work through screening and construction access proposals.

The community has been consulted and listened too and the project plans have been modified as a direct response to suggestions and requests raised by the local community.

The most specific amendments are the decision to reduce the size of the project by over a MW (5-6 acres) to lessen the visibility of the project from the property to the north west of the proposed array and to access the site from the Oxford Road utilising an existing farm access so that no construction traffic and or future maintenance vehicles travels in or near to the village.

The developer has also looked at ways in which the local community can benefit more directly from having renewable energy generation in its locality and has introduced Low Carbon Hub, and Oxfordshire community energy co-operative, to evaluate this further.

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Public consultation events were held in Duns Tew on:

1. Friday 5th April 11am – 8pm, Duns Tew Village Hall – Public Consultation
2. Sunday 9th June 10am – 6pm, Hill farm – Public Consultation and Open farm day
3. Monday 10th June 7.30pm – 9.30pm, Duns Tew Village Hall – Duns Tew Parish Council Open Forum
4. Thursday 25th July – 4pm – 8pm, Deddington Arms Hotel. – Public Consultation
5. Friday 26th July – 2pm – 9pm, Duns Tew Village Hall – Public Consultation
6. Saturday 7th September – 10.30am – 12.30pm, Duns Tew Village Hall – Sustainable Duns Tew Meeting
7. Wednesday 18th September – 7.30pm – 8.30pm, Holly Tree Club – Deddington Parish Council Meeting

These events were advertised in:

- Duns Tew community website
- Duns Tew Parish Council community newsletter
- Deddington Community Website
- Deddington News
- Hand delivered invitations to both the consultation events were made to all Dun Tew residents
- Dedicated Duns Tew Energy Park project web page

The consultation meetings were always attended in person by the developer and a significant effort was made to provide as much information about the projects as possible through handout, presentations boards and a purpose made video reel highlighting the key components and of a solar array and specific work that is carried out in planning and the operating a commercial solar array.

Display material at the public consultation events included:

- Project summary
- Location plan focussing on why this location was chosen
- Proposed access route of the development
- Conceptualisation of the landscaping scheme
- Key components of the energy park
- Ecological enhancement and community benefit in the form of ownership by a Community Ownership Organisation.
- Video reel

An information sheet with answers to frequently asked questions and a feedback form were provided to all attendees. Copies of the public consultation documents and invitations are included with this statement.

20 feedback forms (hard or electronic copies) were received highlighting both support and some issues of concern regarding the proposal.

The comments received are set out in table 1 below. From the feedback received, most people responded positively, with the main areas of concern arising from the original construction access route proposition.

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Through the consultations the developer listened to the community concerns and have made modification to the proposals in three key areas, which has been well received.

Because the community have already experienced the construction of a solar array at the same location, they were generally very well informed and understood the proposal.

The feedback was nearly all positive particularly if the site could be accessed from the Oxford Road as proposed in the planning application.

There was significant support for the potential that the project could become a community owned project and the developer has gone to length to help make this a possibility.

The community were also highly supportive of the developer proposal to plant over 2000 new wet woodland trees as a part of the proposed ecological gain for the site.

A copy of the final layout plan was provided to Duns Tew Parish Council and Deddington Parish Council a week before submission of the application, allowing time for any final comments.

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Table 1: Summary of Community Consultation Responses

Feedback	How supportive are you of the deployment of renewable energy in the UK?	How well do you feel that the proposed Duns Tew Energy Park and its benefits have been explained at this event?	How well do you understand why this location has been selected?	How supportive are you of the proposed construction access route?	How well has the proposed community energy society been explained to you?	Comments	Response / Action taken
Attendee 1	10	10	10	10	10	I am very supportive of renewable energy developments and diversification of farmland. I think the community energy society is very interesting and could be of great benefit to the village.	Duns Tew Energy Park is working closely with Low Carbon Hub, a Community Benefit Organisation
Attendee 2	8	8	8	1	5	1. From our house and garden the southern edge of the existing array is visible. 2. The existing screening that has partially died should be reinstated. 3. The hedge line should be extended along the southern edge of the new array. 4. The siting of the CSS should be to the rear of the farm buildings, not at the locations to the south of the centre array. 5. Assurances should be given that the new road for construction will not be used as a precedent for further residential development. Any such proposals will be rigorously opposed and be a cause for opposition for the solar scheme. 6. The two lines of planting to the north east of the Farm Complex should be made continuous. 7. Ensure the existing footpath is still useable.	The access route has been changed to avoid the village all together. Construction traffic will use the existing farm track from the A4260 Oxford road, which will be upgraded as necessary. Following construction this will revert to agricultural use and periodic solar maintenance vehicles. The hedge line will be extended along the southern side of the proposed array. The CSS will be sited on the southern side of the new array but will be screened by hedging. The construction and maintenance access. No footpaths will be diverted or stopped up as a result of the proposal.
Attendee 3						<i>No Comments</i>	
Attendee 4	10	9	10	10	10	<i>No Comments</i>	

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Attendee 5	5	9	10	5	10	Essentials: 1 - Enough trees planted to hide. 2 - Tree maintenance for 5 years - Replacement, spraying round bottom and pruning, watering. 36- Some big trees in strategic places. 4 - Access Road - It is very white and stands out. It should be made muddy / planted with grass to make less visible.	Access route is now from the Oxford Road and avoid the village entirely and any PROW (see note above). The planting proposal reflect comment received form the feedback forms.
Attendee 6	8	9	9	10	8	Very interesting. We look forward to hearing how it all progresses.	The applicant has proposed a local liaison group is set up with the Parish Council and community energy groups for the construction and operational periods to keep the local community informed.
Attendee 7	10	10	10	10	10		
Attendee 8	10	10	10	10	10	We think this site is very good for the proposal as the existing one looks like a lake and goes in well with the existing landscape. We would like to hear more about the community scheme.	The applicant is liaising with local community energy groups on how local residents can benefit
Attendee 9	10	9	10	9	8	Extremely supportive of it and would be interested in investing in it.	See comment above
Attendee 10	10	10	10	10	10	I am all for it	The NPPF recognises the responsibility on all communities to support renewable and low carbon development so the applicant welcomes this support
Attendee 11	8	9	9	2	6	My biggest concern is the new access road - lack of use as a public footpath, noise and dust to houses on Dashwood Rise which both back onto the track, mud being carried onto North Aston Road. Could a fenced off path remain at the side of the access road both during build and afterwards allowing for children and dogs to walk freely and safely? Also, can nature planting area / reserve be made a community useable resource by landowner?	Access route is now from the Oxford Road and avoid the village entirely and any PROW.
Attendee 12	10	10	10		N/A	As a local resident and frequent user of the footpath overlooking the existing farm, I am happy to fully support the proposal.	
Attendee 13						Thank you, Tim, for spending some time with me at the Open Farm event to explain about the Energy Park. It was great to have the opportunity to see the existing solar panels in position and see how the land is being maintained and see and hear all the birds and insects that can now enjoy the environment. It seems sensible to grow the Energy Park to maximise	The proposed scheme once operational will help rebuild habitat networks in the wider area improving ecological resilience and

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						the benefit of the existing infrastructure on site. I am sure the local community will enjoy the benefits.	adaptation to climate change after an extended period of intensive arable cultivation
Attendee 14	10	10	10	10	10	I fully support the extension of this scheme	
Attendee 15	10	10	10	10	10	I'm fully supportive	
Attendee 16						Broadly in favour	
Attendee 17						<i>No Comments</i>	
Attendee 18						<i>No Comments</i>	
Attendee 19	8	6	10	2	7	We would like to know what sort of impact this extension has on a) Public Health (Magnetic fields) b) Village future i.e. property value and village extensions. Could the site be accessed by the Main Road?	Access route is now from the Oxford Road and avoid the village entirely and any PROW.
Attendee 20	10	10	10	10	10	<i>No Comments</i>	