

Statement of Community Involvement.

East Stour Solar
Farm
February 2022

Contents

Executive summary	2
Background	4
Purpose of consultation	6
Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement	7
First round of consultation	8
Consultation feedback: first round of consultation	12
Consideration of feedback: first round of consultation	21
Engagement between consultations	23
Second round of consultation	24
Consultation feedback: second round of consultation	27
Consideration of Feedback: second round of consultation	31
Appendices	33

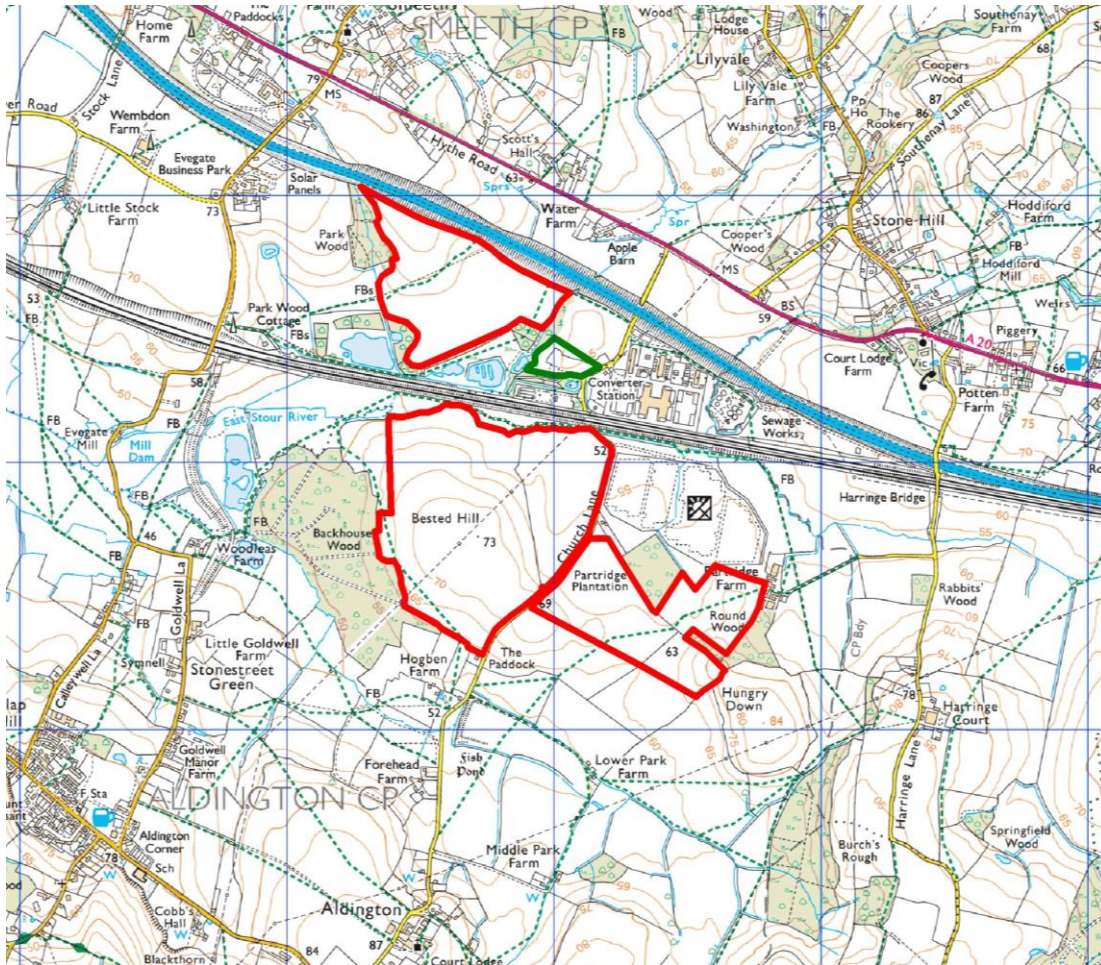
Executive summary

- > EDF Renewables ('the Applicant') has carried out a full programme of community consultation in support of its proposals for East Stour Solar Farm ('the Scheme'). The Scheme involves the development of a solar farm with a generating capacity of up to 49.9MW that would connect to the national electricity grid at Sellindge Substation. The Scheme location is across three areas of land. The northernmost of these areas is located between the M20 and the HS1 railway line, the central area is located on Bested Hill to the west of Church Lane and the final area is located to the east of Church Lane and to the south of an existing solar farm.
- > The Applicant's proposals for the Scheme are the subject of a full planning application submitted to Ashford Borough Council. If approved, this would enable the construction and operation of the solar for a period of 40 years. At the end of the solar farms operating life, the facility would be decommissioned and its site returned to its existing (agricultural) use.
- > The Applicant has appointed SEC Newgate UK to undertake a programme of community consultation on the proposals, in line with Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and the tenets of the Localism Act 2011. This document explains the public consultation that has been carried out in relation to this application.
- > In line with Ashford Borough Council's guidance, as set out in its SCI and its Planning Guidance Note on large scale solar arrays (2013), the Applicant has consulted with the local community and stakeholders across two rounds of public consultation. These public consultations have taken account of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and guidance provided by the Government. The first round of consultation during summer 2021 was carried out remotely with a limited number of small, in-person meetings. The second round of consultation in winter 2021 adopted a mix of in-person events and information made available online through a virtual public exhibition.
- > To ensure that the public could take part in the consultation, the Applicant wrote to over 2,800 addresses in the area around the proposed Scheme at the outset of each consultation to provide information on the proposals and to set out how those with an interest can take part in the consultation. Each newsletter directed interested parties to view a virtual exhibition available through the Applicant's website (www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour). A hard copy questionnaire was made available with the newsletter and hard copies of the virtual exhibition and maps were made available on request through a dedicated Freephone information line and Freepost address.
- > The Applicant has also met with close site neighbours, local parish councils and councillors during both rounds of consultation. These discussions have helped to shape the Scheme design as submitted. This has included meetings with Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council, Smeeth and Brabourne parish councils, Sellindge Parish Council and Otterpool Park LLP.

- > During the second round of consultation, the Applicant held public exhibition events at Aldington Village Hall and Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall. These events were attended by over 70 people in total.
- > Pre-application consultation was undertaken with officers of Ashford Borough Council and Kent Downs AONB both through the formal pre-app service offered by Ashford Borough Council and through direct consultation with officers.
- > The Applicant received 415 individual pieces of feedback over the two consultations: 254 during the first round of consultation, and 161 during the second. The Applicant is pleased to have received such a significant volume of feedback and is grateful to all who took the time to contribute. The feedback received has played an important part in shaping the Scheme design, as set out within this document.
- > The most common themes to emerge through each round of consultation was concern at the potential loss of agricultural land, general support for the proposals, concern for the potential impact of the proposals on wildlife, concern at the Scheme's visual impact and suggestions that other forms of renewable energy would be superior to the proposed Scheme.
- > The Applicant will continue to engage with the local community through the planning process.

Background

Figure 1: Scheme boundary (shown in red lines)



The site of the proposed East Stour Solar Farm is located on agricultural fields to the south of the M20, north east of Aldington and south west of Sellindge in Kent. The site is split into three areas of land. The northernmost of these areas is located between the M20 and the HS1 railway line, the central area is located on Bested Hill to the west of Church Lane and the final area is located to the east of Church Lane and to the south of an existing solar farm. These areas are shown in red in Figure 1 above.

The proposed solar farm would include solar photovoltaic (PV) panels mounted in rows alongside planting and ecological areas to mitigate its environmental effects. The PV panels would use light from the sun to generate electricity for export to the national electricity grid. The Scheme would connect to the national electricity grid at the Sellindge Substation. The Scheme would have a generating capacity of up to 49.9MW, the Applicant is submitting a full planning application to Ashford Borough Council. If consented, the Scheme would operate for 40 years before being decommissioned. At this time, the land used for the Scheme would be returned to its existing use.

The site is located within the Bircholt and Saxon Shore wards of Ashford Borough Council. It also sits within the parishes of Smeeth and Aldington, and close to the parishes of Sellindge and Lympne. Folkestone and Hythe district is located close to the site on the eastern side.

In addition to the proposed East Stour Solar Farm, the Applicant's battery storage team, Pivot Power, is bringing forward proposals for a battery energy storage system (BESS) that would also connect to the national electricity grid at the Sellindge Substation. The proposed location of this facility is shown in green in Figure 1 on the previous page.

Pivot Power's proposals will be the subject of a separate planning application submitted to Ashford Borough Council. Each project is capable of operating independently in the event that the other is not developed. However, in the event that both projects are consented, the two facilities would share a grid connection to maximise efficiency.

Purpose of consultation

The Applicant recognises the potential impact that development has on local communities and believes that local people should be involved in helping shape the environment in which they live.

The importance of pre-application engagement is recognised in the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in July 2021, which states that:

"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community" (Section 39, page 13).

In accordance with the NPPF, the Applicant has undertaken a programme of consultation with the local community, to ensure that local people have the opportunity to inform the proposals prior to the submission of a planning application.

Against this background, the objectives of this engagement strategy and programme were as follows:

- To meet the requirements for pre-application consultation on major planning applications set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and supporting guidance, including the Council's SCI and the Localism Act;
- To ensure that the local community and its elected representatives were informed and consulted in respect of the proposed plans; and
- To demonstrate how feedback has been incorporated in the revised proposals, and to explain why not, if it has not been.

Effective community involvement should ensure that people:

- Have access to information;
- Can put forward their own ideas and feel confident that there is a process for considering those ideas;
- Can take an active part in development proposals and options;
- Can comment on formal proposals; and
- Get feedback and can be informed about progress and outcomes.

The Applicant is committed to fulfilling these principles and engaged SEC Newgate UK to co-ordinate the public consultation.

Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement

Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in March 2020. This sets out the importance that the Council places on pre-application consultation. An extract from the SCI is shown in Figure 2 below.

In addition to its SCI, Ashford Borough Council published a Planning Guidance Note on large scale solar arrays in November 2013. An extract from this relating to pre-application consultation is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 2: Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement, p15

Before applications are submitted

54. Ashford Borough Council strongly supports pre-application discussion. Details of the services we provide are available on our website <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pre-application-advice> and the major new development pages which includes our 'Charter' for strategic and major development proposals (viewable here: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/major-new-developments/major-sites-charter/>). This charter has the commitment of all the local agencies involved in the development process, and sets in place a structured toolkit which aims to encourage and quickly facilitate major planning applications from submission to determination.
55. For applications at Chilmington Green there is a separate protocol, the Chilmington Green Pre-Application, Application Handling and Delivery Protocol. Please email planning.help@ashford.gov.uk for further information about the charter or Chilmington Green protocol.
56. The council also works hard to inform and involve the wider community in helping to create better quality developments and "place-making". The council encourages potential major developers to undertake pre-application consultation with the local community on significant applications. This process can serve to inform interested parties about the nature and scale of the proposal and local people have an opportunity to comment before proposals reach an advanced stage. Some major developments will also be subject to a design panel review. This is where experienced urban designers will provide feedback and improvements on the design principles of the proposed scheme.

Figure 3: Ashford Borough Council's Renewable Energy Planning Guidance Note 2, p29

v) Community Involvement

Community Involvement - Community involvement should be considered as an integral part of the development process. The local community should be engaged, by the developer, at the pre-design, conceptual stage, ideally utilising a local exhibition/presentation where community views can be sought and recorded. A second exhibition/presentation should be arranged, by the developer, some weeks prior to submission of the planning application. This second consultation should allow sufficient time to seek community views/opinions, and take them into consideration, prior to the submission of any final planning application. Any planning application should detail the exhibitions/presentations, any views/representations received and how any planning application was influenced/amended to accord with such representations.

The developer may also wish to undertake an exhibition/presentation following the submission of a planning application.

First round of consultation

Overview

The Applicant held a first round of consultation on proposals for East Stour Solar Farm between 12 July and 9 August 2021. The purpose of this round of consultation was to introduce the proposals to, and to gain feedback from, the public. This ensured that the community had the opportunity to inform the detailed design process from an early stage in the design process. The consultation also asked for feedback on conducting a future round of consultation in autumn 2021.

The context of the Covid-19 pandemic and heightened public health restrictions meant that the Applicant decided that this round of consultation should be carried out remotely. To ensure that the public could participate in the consultation, the Applicant used a range of techniques to consult. These included:

- > Issuing a newsletter detailing the proposals and feedback form to 2,871 addresses;
- > Launching a dedicated website page and virtual exhibition with a feedback facility;
- > Publicising a Freephone number, email, and Freepost address for enquiries;
- > Publicising the consultation in the print edition of the Kentish Express;
- > Issuing a press release advertising the consultation;
- > Holding two public Q&A webinars; and
- > Offering individual meetings with identified stakeholders and on request.

Pre-consultation meetings

Prior to the start of the consultation, the Applicant invited local stakeholders to a briefing with the project team where they would have an opportunity to discuss the proposals and any concerns. The Applicant issued invites to a number of people including the ward and neighbouring ward councillors in both the borough of Ashford and the district of Folkestone and Hythe, the relevant cabinet members at Folkestone and Hythe and Ashford councils, as well as Aldington and Bonnington, Sellindge, Lympne and Smeeth parish councils.

Meetings were offered through video conferencing, telephone or as a socially distanced in-person meeting and could be arranged by telephone or email.

As a result, members of the project team held four briefings on the proposals:

- > 9 July: Meeting with Folkestone and Hythe North Downs West ward councillor Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee;
- > 9 July: Meeting with Folkestone and Hythe councillors Douglas Wade, John Wing, Lesley Whybrow, Jim Martin and Tim Prater;
- > 12 July: Meeting with Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council and Cllr Linda Harman also of Ashford Borough Council; and
- > 13 July: Meeting with Sellindge Parish Council.

After a short presentation by the project team, members were invited to ask questions on the proposals and raise any concerns that they had. Discussions centred on the following themes:

- > Transport and access to the site during construction
- > Existing infrastructure and developments in the area
- > The consultation process
- > The Applicant's proposals to achieve a biodiversity net gain through the development

- > Details of the solar PV panels and the battery energy storage system (BESS) proposed by Pivot Power
- > Construction timescales
- > The potential impact of the proposed Scheme on the landscape and local heritage assets
- > The Applicant's proposals for a community fund

Consultation publicity

To publicise the consultation, the Applicant placed advertisements in print in the Kentish Express on 15 July and online until 21 July. The adverts gave a high-level overview of the consultation and detailed how people could get in touch with the project team, as well as how to view the virtual exhibition and register for the Q&A webinar sessions.

The Applicant issued a press release which outlined the proposals, and the ways people could get involved in the consultation and find out more. This was covered by Kent Online on 12 July and publicised on their Facebook page.

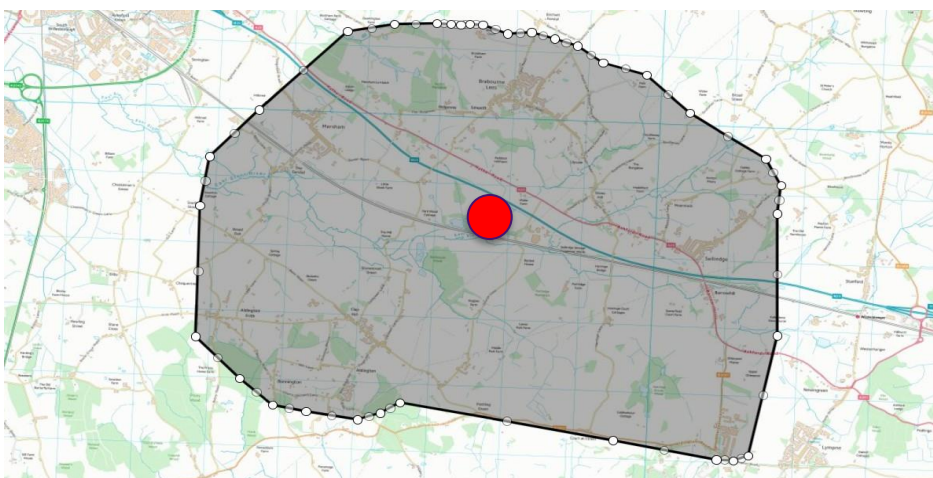
Copies of the print and online advertisements are included in Appendix 1.

Consultation newsletter

A consultation newsletter was posted to 2,871 addresses in the area around the proposed site on 12 July 2021. A map of the newsletter mailing area can be found in Figure 4 below with the area selected on the basis of encompassing key settlements rather than applying a fixed radius. In addition to providing a summary of the proposals, the newsletter encouraged the community to visit the dedicated project website (www.edf-re.co.uk/renewables/east-stour) and detailed how the community could contact the project team and take part in online Q&A sessions. The reverse page of the newsletter included a feedback form and each newsletter also included a Freepost envelope to allow recipients to respond to the consultation.

Alternatively, people were invited to submit their comments through a dedicated email address or by visiting the website and completing an online feedback form within a virtual exhibition hosted on the website. Hard copies of the virtual exhibition and website were made available on request through the dedicated Freephone line for anyone without access to the internet. A copy of the consultation newsletter can be found in Appendix 2.

Figure 4: Mailing area with the Scheme site marked in red



Consultation website and virtual exhibition

The Applicant launched a dedicated consultation page and virtual exhibition which hosted a feedback facility. This was particularly important given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on community consultation and public meetings. The website operated for the duration of the consultation and is available to view at www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour.

The webpage directed people to the virtual exhibition, detailed the ways in which people could respond to the consultation and hosted the recordings of the Q&A sessions held on 17 July and 22 July as detailed further below. The virtual exhibition detailed the Applicant's proposals across several themed exhibition boards covering topics including: the need, the site location, the solar farm and grid connection, the environment, construction, the community, and next steps. It also hosted maps of the proposed Scheme, as well as copies of the consultation materials and a link to submit feedback via the online form.

Hard copies of the feedback form and exhibition boards were made available on request.

The Applicant is pleased that a large number of people engaged with the consultation website.

Images of the website and virtual exhibition are included in Appendix 4. The exhibition boards which were featured within the virtual exhibition can be found in Appendix 5.

Stakeholder meetings

The Applicant sent an email to local councillors at district and county level at Folkestone and Hythe, and Ashford councils inviting them to a meeting with members of the project team. In addition to this, the Applicant wrote to Damian Collins MP, Aldington, Smeeth, Lympne and Sellindge parish councils, and the Kent Wildlife Trust. A copy of this email can be found in Appendix 3. The Applicant also wrote to the two closest neighbouring properties to offer them individual meetings with the project team to discuss the proposals. The Applicant extended the offer to neighbouring properties on request through the webinars and through the meetings with parish councils held at the start of the consultation.

As a result, the Applicant met with four neighbours directly during this round of the consultation, including residents of Church Lane. Each meeting covered a variety of topics including:

- > Development of the existing solar farm on Church Lane
- > The scale of the proposed East Stour Solar Farm
- > How the Scheme would be decommissioned at the end of its operating life
- > Grid connection capacity at the Sellindge National Grid Substation
- > The proposed community fund
- > The Applicant's habitat surveys
- > The visual and heritage impacts of the proposed Scheme
- > Opposition to areas south of the railway line being used for development
- > Property values and rights over land

The Applicant also held two Q&A sessions in webinar format on 17 July and 22 July. During each, members of the project team gave an overview of the scheme and invited questions from the audience. Anyone who wished to attend the sessions could register through the consultation website or by using the Freephone number. Two people attended each session. The sessions were recorded and published on the consultation website.

Communication channels

Throughout both consultation periods, an email address and Freephone number were made available for people to contact the project team, ask questions and submit feedback. Details of these were included on the consultation newsletter and through the project website.

The communication channels will remain open and available throughout the planning process should any interested parties have questions, queries or comments.

Consultation feedback: first round of consultation

First round of consultation

A total of 254 individual pieces were received by the end of the consultation on 9 August 2021. Of the feedback received, 190 were returned through the post using the physical feedback form, 60 were received through the online survey and four were received by email.

Section 1: The Scheme

The first four questions asked respondents to indicate their sentiment on climate change, renewable energy generation and on the proposals for East Stour Solar Farm. Respondents could answer 'Yes', 'No' or 'Unsure' to the following questions:

- > Question 1: Are you concerned about the effects of climate change?
- > Question 2: Do you support the generation of renewable energy in Kent?
- > Question 3: Do you support the development of solar farms?
- > Question 4: Are you supportive of East Stour Solar Farm?

Tables 1-4 set out the responses received for each of the four multiple-choice questions.

Question 1: Are you concerned about the effects of climate change?

Table 1: Breakdown of responses received to Question 1

Response	Frequency
Yes	214
Unsure	16
No	19

A majority of respondents indicated that they were concerned about the effects of climate change, totalling 214 out of 250 respondents (85%). 19 respondents said that they were not concerned about climate change (7.6%), with a further 16 indicating that they were unsure (6.4%).

Question 2: Do you support the generation of renewable energy in Kent?

Table 2: Breakdown of responses received to Question 2

Response	Frequency
Yes	200
No	24
Unsure	24

As indicated above, the most common sentiment expressed by respondents was that they were supportive of the generation of renewable energy in Kent. These accounted for 200 of the 250 answers received to this question (80% of the total). 24 respondents were not supportive (9.6%), with another 24 unsure.

Question 3: Do you support the development of solar farms?

Table 3: Breakdown of responses received to Question 3

Response	Frequency
Yes	169
No	39
Unsure	39

Again, a significant majority of respondents were supportive of the development of solar farms, with 169 respondents indicating support (67.6%). 39 respondents said that they did not support solar farm development (15.6%), with a further 39 unsure (15.6%).

Question 4: Are you supportive of East Stour Solar Farm?

Table 4: Breakdown of responses received to Question 4

Response	Frequency
Yes	127
No	77
Unsure	43

Just over half of respondents (50.8%) indicated that they were supportive of the proposals for East Stour Solar Farm. An additional 43 respondents (17.2%) stated that they were unsure. 30.8% of respondents said that they were not supportive of the proposals.

The following questions (questions 5, 6 and 7) provided an opportunity for respondents to explain their answers and offer suggestions for the project team to consider when further developing the Scheme design. Tables 5-7 provide a summary of the key themes raised for each question.

Question 5: Please use the space below to explain your answer to the previous questions

Question 5 invited respondents to explain their answers to questions 1 to 4.

Table 5: Open text responses provided to Question 5

Theme	Frequency
Supportive of solar power and renewable energy, so I support the proposal	25
We need to do more to combat climate change, so I support the proposal	18
There will be a loss of agricultural land	17
There is already too much development in the area	12
We need land to grow food/prioritise food production over energy	11

Prefer this development over housing	10
The countryside should not be lost or ruined	10
The scheme does not take into NPPF guidance in ensuring conservation of heritage assets, and the site in the setting of historic assets will cause substantial harm.	8
Solar panels should be installed on buildings	8
It is too big	8

The most common response theme to Question 5 was that respondents supported the proposals because they were supportive of solar power and renewable energy more generally. The next most common response was similar, with respondents expressing that they supported the proposals because of the need to combat climate change.

Another common theme expressed was concern at the impact of losing agricultural land to solar development, with some feeling that this would create a reduction in food production. This was also raised in the context of the perceived overdevelopment of the area and loss of green spaces generally. Many living in close proximity to the proposed site raised the potential impact on heritage assets, especially with regard to Church Lane.

Question 6: What do you think we need to consider in preparing our detailed design for East Stour Solar Farm?

Question 6 invited respondents to suggest things that the project team should consider in preparing the detailed design for the proposed solar farm.

The most common themes received in response to this question are set out in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Open text responses provided to Question 6

Theme	Frequency
Embed protection/mitigation for plants and wildlife	18
Keep traffic to a minimum and embedding traffic control measures into the design	16
The general impact on the community and villages	14
The impact on wildlife	13
Creating and maintaining walking routes for locals	12
The impact on the local community during the construction	10
Use trees and hedgerows to disguise the solar farm	10
General impact on the environment	10
Embed sensitivity to your design and operation to be less intrusive on the countryside.	9
Allow livestock such as sheep on the site - dual use of land	9
Public footpaths should not be removed	8
The scale of the project	8

The most common response theme to Question 6 was that protections or mitigation measures for plants and wildlife should be embedded into the Scheme design. This was followed by keeping traffic to a minimum and including traffic control measures in the proposals. A common theme related to public footpaths within the proposed site boundary, with some concerned at potential losses and others asking for more walking routes within the proposals. The impact on the community during construction and operations was also raised in response to this question.

Question 7: Please share any other thoughts that you have here

Question 7 left it open for respondents to provide any further comments they had on the proposals.

The most common themes received in response to this question are set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Open text responses provided to Question 7

Theme	Frequency
Invest in alternative sources of renewable energy	8
We need to retain agricultural land	6
Generally supportive of the proposals	5
Retain essential access for recreational walking	5
Make sure to visually mitigate the scheme by planting trees/hedges	4
Will sheep be able to graze the site?	4
It is quite large	4
Place this on non-productive land	4
Needs to be a commitment to return the site to farmland	4
This is a tick box exercise	4
Put solar panels on new builds or existing buildings	4

This was the least answered question, with 57% of respondents choosing not to provide any further comments. Those that did offered a variety of thoughts, but generally restated points raised in response to questions 5 and 6. The need to invest in alternative sources or scales of renewable energy was the most common theme raised, followed by the need to retain agricultural land.

Section 2: The online exhibition and future consultation

The next section was only included on the online feedback form and asked online respondents for their feedback on the virtual exhibition materials, as well as where they had found out about the consultation. All respondents (those using both hard copy and online feedback forms) were asked if they would attend a future consultation event in the autumn.

Question 8: Where did you find out about the virtual solar farm exhibition?

Table 8: Breakdown of responses received to Question 8

Response	Frequency
Letter in the post	38
Word of mouth	5
The newspaper	4
Online	2
EDF Renewables website	2
I was already aware	1
Facebook	1
Advised by EDF Renewables	1

Almost two thirds of respondents who used the online form had found out about the virtual exhibition from the mailout (63%). Other sources included word of mouth from a neighbour or councillor (five respondents), the newspaper (four respondents) and online/the EDF Renewables website (four respondents).

Question 9: Overall, has the exhibition been useful and informative?

Table 9: Breakdown of responses received to Question 9

Response	Frequency
Yes	37
No	9
Unsure	14

37 of 60 online respondents said that they found the exhibition useful (61%), compared to nine who did not (15%) and 14 who were unsure (23%).

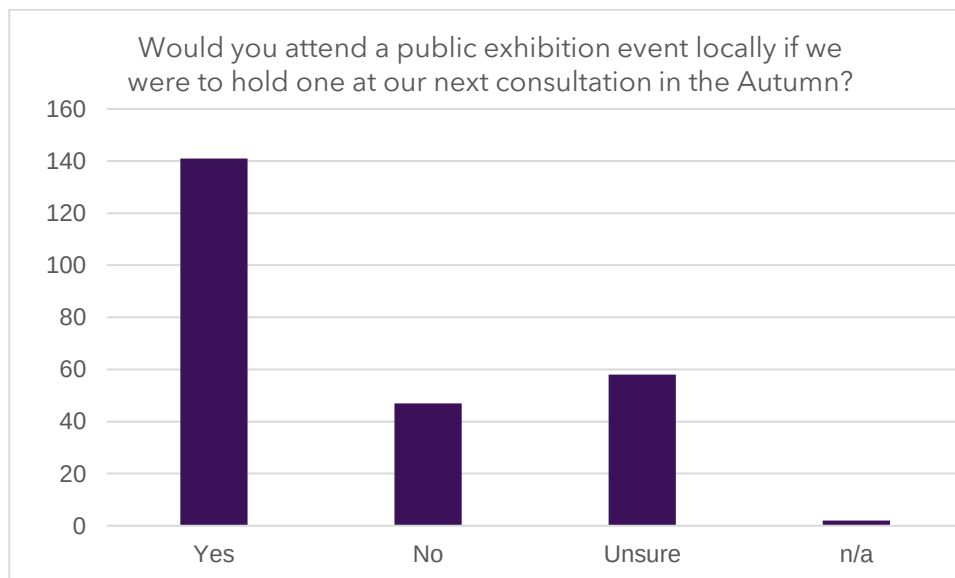
Question 10: Which aspects of the virtual exhibition did you find useful?

Table 10: Breakdown of responses received to Question 10

Response	Frequency
Maps	35
Leaflet	19
Information panels	16
Did not view	10
Press release	3

Respondents were able to select as many aspects of the virtual exhibition as they wished. Maps were the resource that respondents found most useful and were selected 35 times, followed by the leaflet (19 times) and the information panels (16 times).

Q11: Would you attend a public exhibition event locally if we were to hold one at our next consultation in the Autumn?



All respondents were asked if they would attend a local public exhibition if one was held during the next round of consultation. Most respondents (142) indicated that they would attend a future public exhibition. 47 respondents said that they would not, while a further 59 were unsure if they would attend.

Section 3: About yourself

Do you live locally?

Table 11: Breakdown of responses received to Question 9

Response	Frequency
Yes	240
No	7

Almost all respondents said that they lived locally.

Which age category do you fall into?

A breakdown of respondent by age is given in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Age breakdown of respondents as indicated on feedback form

Age	Frequency
20-29	1
30-39	11
40-49	24
50-59	45
60+	163

Respondents were generally older, with 83% aged 50 or older. 65% of respondents were over the age of 60.

Responses received by email

In addition to the 250 responses that used the Applicant's feedback form, three responses were received by email. These covered the following themes:

Table 13: Open text responses provided by email

Response	Frequency
The scheme will encroach on an AONB	1
The scheme will encroach on significant heritage assets	1
House prices on Church Lane will be affected	1
Access to the site through Church Lane is not suitable for HGVs.	1

The land used is not productive	1
Support for a dual use of land e.g., sheep grazing	1
Digital roadside display to see electricity generated	1
You should segment the age group 60+ further	1

The Applicant also received a written response from Kent Wildlife Trust which asked for future consultation documents to highlight Backhouse Wood, which is a Local Wildlife Site. It also drew attention to development areas north and south-east which are adjacent to ancient and semi-natural woodland. The Trust expressed support for projects seeking to tackle climate change but noted that developments should not negatively impact biodiversity within the site and in the surrounding area.

Consideration of feedback: first round of consultation

The Applicant is pleased to have received such a large volume of feedback in response to the Scheme. This has influenced, and will continue to influence, the content of the Applicant's planning application.

The Applicant has responded to the key points raised in the consultation feedback below. Please also see the later details on the second round of consultation which includes a summary of how the Applicant has responded to the feedback that it received during its later public consultation.

Table 14: the Applicant's response to key issues raised during the first round of consultation

Issue raised	The Applicant's response
Support for renewable energy generation	The Applicant welcomes the significant level of support shown for renewable energy generation. This Scheme is being brought forward to help meet the UK's legal requirement to decarbonise and achieve net zero by 2050.
Concern about the impact of climate change	The Applicant shares concerns about the impact of climate change and is bringing forward its proposals for East Stour Solar Farm to help the UK meet its need for new, renewable forms of energy generation and to meet its legal obligation to achieve net zero by 2050.
Concern at the potential loss of agricultural land	The land proposed for use by the Scheme is currently in agricultural use. In line with local and national planning policy, the Applicant has sought to minimise the use of best and most versatile agricultural land. This formed an important consideration in the Applicant's choice of this site. The proposals will be predominantly sited on land that is classified as grades 3b and 4. This land is not considered to be best and most versatile. It is also important to note that this Scheme is temporary in nature and will operate for 40 years before being decommissioned. At this time, the land will be returned to its existing agricultural use. The cessation of intensive arable cultivation over the lifetime of the development will help to improve the structure and quality of the soils.

The proposals should consider local heritage assets	The Applicant sought to locate solar panels in areas of the site with less visual impact from local heritage assets. In addition to this, the Applicant also carried out an assessment of the Scheme's impact on local heritage assets as part of the Environmental Statement that it has submitted as part of its planning application. This assessment has resulted in the Applicant choosing not to locate solar panels within certain areas of the Scheme boundary.
Local public rights of way should be maintained and improved	During construction there will be some limited restrictions on access across the site as the area is prepared and panels are installed. After construction, the Public Rights of Way crossing the site will remain unaffected and neither panels nor infrastructure will be placed across footpaths.
Natural screening and design should be used to offset the visual impact of the proposals	The Applicant has developed its design to take account of comments relating to the Scheme's visual impact and has located solar PV panels in areas of the site to minimise the visual impact from neighbouring properties. In addition to this, the Applicant developed its design to incorporate a number of areas of planting around the boundaries of the sites. This has been shaped further by the feedback received to the second round of consultation.
Ecological enhancements should be provided for local wildlife	The Applicant is proposing ecological enhancements as part of its Scheme design and will ensure that biodiversity on site is improved over the operational lifetime of the solar farm. This has been informed by the results of the Applicant's ecological surveys. The development is relatively limited in extent and will retain most if not all existing habitats across the site with large areas actively enhanced to improve the quality of habitats and biodiversity. Existing hedgerows and trees will be retained.
Construction traffic impacts on the local community should be minimised	The Applicant has engaged with Kent County Council in the development of a plan to manage construction traffic. A draft Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted as part of the planning application. This details the Applicant's proposals for transporting materials and the construction workforce to and from the site during construction. During construction, the Applicant is proposing to access the site only from the north of Church Lane. This is being done to limit disruption to people living in Church Lane and Aldington to the south of the proposed sites.

Engagement between consultations

The Applicant continued to engage with stakeholders between the two rounds of consultation. During this time, the Applicant met with the organisations/individuals outlined below.

Members of the project team met with representatives of Otterpool Park LLP on 17 August 2021 to discuss the proposed Scheme in the context of the proposals for Otterpool Park Garden Town. Topics discussed included:

- > The expected timelines of each of the two projects
- > The energy needs of the proposed Otterpool Park Garden Town
- > The proposed East Stour Solar Farm's consultation to date
- > The need to keep in touch to share information on project milestones

The project team met with Smeeth and Brabourne parish councils on 8 September 2021 to set out the Scheme proposals and to provide an update on the feedback received during the first round of consultation. Following the meeting, Smeeth Parish Council commented that it would like to see the site remain with a secondary agricultural use, that subject to reviewing the results of the Applicant's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) it would like to see pollinators used on site and wanted assurances that the site would be environmentally friendly. The Applicant took these comments forward in progressing its design.

The Applicant also met with a site neighbour on 9 September 2021. These discussions focussed on potential treatments for their boundary with the solar farm, construction impacts and noise during operation.

Second round of consultation

Overview

The Applicant held a second round of consultation on proposals for East Stour Solar Farm between 26 October and 29 November 2021. The purpose of this round of consultation was to present detailed proposals and to gain feedback from the public following the further development of its proposals since the first round of consultation. This ensured that the community had the opportunity to inform the final design.

Given that the public health context had changed since the first consultation and a substantial number of respondents to the first consultation had indicated that they would attend an in-person exhibition, the applicant held two in-person public exhibition events, at Aldington Village Hall on 2 November 2021 (47 attendees) and at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall (26 attendees) on 3 November 2021.

More widely, to ensure that the public could participate in the consultation, the Applicant used a range of techniques to consult. These included:

- > Issuing a **newsletter** detailing the proposals and feedback form to 2,923 addresses;
- > Launching a **dedicated website** page and **virtual exhibition** with a feedback facility;
- > Publicising a **freephone number, email, and freepost address** for enquiries;
- > Publicising the consultation in the **print edition** of the Kentish Express;
- > Issuing a **press release** advertising the consultation; and
- > Offering **individual meetings** with identified stakeholders and on request.

Pre-consultation meetings

Prior to the start of the consultation, the Applicant invited local stakeholders to a briefing with the project team where they would have an opportunity to discuss the updated proposals. The Applicant issued invites to a number of people including the ward and neighbouring ward councillors in both the borough of Ashford and the district of Folkestone and Hythe as well as Aldington and Bonnington, Sellindge, Lympne and Smeeth parish councils. Prior to each of the public exhibition events, the Applicant held a one-hour dedicated preview for local councillors.

The Applicant also contacted neighbours living in close proximity to the site. Meetings were offered through video conferencing, telephone or as an in-person meeting.

Consultation publicity

To publicise the consultation, the Applicant placed advertisements in print in the Kentish Express on 28 October and online until 2 November. The adverts gave an overview of the consultation and detailed how people could get in touch with the project team, as well as how to view the virtual exhibition.

The Applicant issued a press release which outlined the proposals, the ways people could get involved in the consultation and find out more.

Copies of the print and online advertisements are included in Appendix 6.

Consultation newsletter

A consultation newsletter was posted to 2,923 addresses in the area around the proposed site on 26 October 2021. This increased figure accounted for additional addresses built or registered in the area during the intervening period. A map of the newsletter mailing area can be found in Figure 4 on page 9. In addition to providing a summary of the proposals, the newsletter encouraged the community to visit the dedicated project website (www.edf-re.co.uk/renewables/east-stour) and detailed how the community could contact the project team. The reverse page of the newsletter included a feedback form and each newsletter was enclosed with a Freepost envelope to allow recipients to respond to the consultation. This approach was replicated from the first round of consultation following the high volume of feedback received.

Alternatively, people were invited to submit their comments through a dedicated email address or by visiting the website and completing an online feedback form within the virtual exhibition hosted on the website. Hard copies of the virtual exhibition and website were made available on request through the dedicated Freephone line for anyone without access to the internet. A copy of the consultation newsletter can be found in Appendix 7.

Public exhibition events

Two public exhibition events were held as follows:

- > Tuesday 2 November, 3.30pm-7.30pm at Aldington Village Hall, The Corner, Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford, TN25 7EE. This event was attended by 47 attendees.
- > Wednesday 3 November, 2.30pm-6.30pm at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne, Ashford, TN25 5LF. This event was attended by 26 attendees.

Images of the public exhibition at Aldington Village Hall can be viewed in Appendix 8.

Consultation website and virtual exhibition

Upon launch of the second round of consultation, the Applicant updated its dedicated consultation page and virtual exhibition. The virtual exhibition hosted a feedback facility with an updated consultation questionnaire. The website operated for the duration of the consultation and is available to view at www.edf-re.co.uk/renewables/east-stour.

The webpage directed people to the virtual exhibition, detailed the ways in which people could respond to the consultation. The virtual exhibition detailed the Applicant's proposals across several themed exhibition boards covering topics including: an update since the first consultation, the site location, the solar farm and grid connection, the visual and landscape impact, heritage considerations, construction, the community, and next steps. It also hosted plans of the proposed Scheme, as well as copies of the consultation materials and a link to submit feedback via the online form.

Hard copies of the feedback form and exhibition boards were made available on request. The Applicant is pleased that a large number of people engaged with the consultation website. In January 2022 prior to submission of the planning application, there had been 1,121 unique visitors to the site.

Images of the website and virtual exhibition are included in Appendix 9. The exhibition boards which were featured within the virtual exhibition can be found in Appendix 10 and a copy of the plans of the updated Scheme design are in Appendix 12.

Stakeholder meetings

Ahead of the second round of consultation, the Applicant wrote to stakeholders that it met during the first round of consultation inviting them to a meeting with members of the project team or to attend one of the public exhibition events. A copy of this email can be found in Appendix 11.

As a result, the Applicant met with five neighbours/landowners directly during this round of the consultation, including residents of Church Lane. Each meeting covered a variety of topics including:

- > The visual impact of parts of the proposed solar farm from St Martin's Church, Aldington
- > The visual impact of the proposed solar farm
- > The scale of the proposed East Stour Solar Farm
- > Planting proposals around the project boundary
- > Property values and rights over land

Members of the project team also met with representatives of Otterpool Park LLP on 2 December 2021 to discuss the proposed Scheme in the context of the proposals for Otterpool Park Garden Town.

Consultation feedback: second round of consultation

Summary

A total of 161 responses were received by the end of the consultation on 29 November 2021. Of the feedback received, 138 were returned by Freepost using the physical feedback form, 14 were received through the online survey, four were received by email and five during the public exhibition events.

Section 1: The Scheme

The first two questions asked respondents to indicate their sentiment on the proposals for East Stour Solar Farm. For the first question, respondents were asked to answer 'Yes', 'No' or 'Unsure' to the question 'Do you support our proposals for East Stour Solar Farm?'. For the second question, respondents were asked to explain their answer through an open text response box.

Q1: Do you support our proposals for East Stour Solar Farm?

Table 15: Breakdown of responses received to Question 1

Response	Frequency
Yes	93 (59.2%)
Unsure	15 (9.6%)
No	48 (30.6%)

59.2% of respondents indicated that they were supportive of the proposals for East Stour Solar Farm which was higher than the response to the corresponding question in the initial round of consultation (50.8%). 15 respondents (9.6%) stated that they were unsure. 30.6% of respondents said that they were not supportive of the proposals (consistent with the response to the corresponding question in the initial round of consultation (30.8%).

Q2: Please use the space below to explain your answer to the previous questions

Table 16: Open text responses provided to Question 2

Theme	Frequency
Answer to Q1 - 'Yes'	
Renewable energy is needed.	56
This is a suitable location.	19
The development will create environmental benefits.	8
Answer to Q1 - 'No'	
Development will result in the loss of agricultural land.	20
Solar farms are not the way to increase renewable energy production.	13
There will be a negative visual impact.	12
The development will create environmental harm.	9

There is too much development in the area.	8
--	---

Respondents who indicated that they supported the proposals in their answer to Question 1 made comments that generally focussed on the need for renewable energy as part of the solution to climate change and to achieving the UK's net zero obligations. There were also a number of comments indicating that the site's location was suitable and that the proposals would deliver environmental benefits.

Respondents who indicated that they did not support the proposals in their answer to Question 1 explained their answers with reference to visual impact, environmental harm and concern about the location. The siting of the Scheme on land currently in agricultural was the most commonly cited concern. There were also comments that solar farms were not the best method to increase renewable energy production and others felt there was generally too much development in the area.

Question 3: Do you have any comments on our design for East Stour Solar Farm?

Question 3 invited respondents to provide comments on the design for East Stour Solar Farm. In total, 63 responses were received to this question. These responses spanned a wide variety of themes. The most common themes received through these responses included:

- > The proposed development is too large.
- > The development should be kept well away on the far side of Bested Hill from the Church using the area around the railway and motorway.
- > Solar development is unattractive and harms the character of the landscape.
- > This is the wrong location for such a solar farm.
- > The proposed design is acceptable given the location of the proposals.
- > It's imperative that public rights of way are maintained for those who regularly walk the routes passing through the sites.
- > Hope that current public paths can be added to so that pedestrian routes in the area are better linked.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our Environmental Impact Assessment?

Question 4 allowed respondents to provide any comments that they had on the Applicant's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). In total, 62 responses were received to this question. Again, responses spanned a wide variety of topics. The most common themes received through these responses included:

- > The proposals could impact upon local wildlife and plants.
- > This proposal is adjoined by another in Aldington. How will the two projects take account of one another?
- > Very little change seems to have been made to prevent the heritage asset and conservation area from being harmed, especially the south facing slope behind Lower Park Farm and Aldington Church.
- > The impact on the view from the area around Lower Park Farm appears to have been ignored.
- > Support for the Scheme as proposed.
- > The site between the motorway and the railway is undulating, how will the solar panels be "disguised" so as to reduce the visual impact of companies based in the area immediately north of the railway?

- > The proposals will result in the loss of farmland.
- > The level of cumulative development in the area is too much.
- > Will there be a loss of mature trees?

Question 5: Are there any other changes that you would like us to make in advance of submitting our planning application?

Question 5 allowed respondents to provide comments on potential changes that they would like to see to the design of the proposed East Stour Solar Farm. In total, 51 responses were received to this question. The most common themes received in response to this question included:

- > Reduce the size of the proposals.
- > Locate the proposals elsewhere.
- > The solar farm should be located as close as possible to the substation and railway line.
- > Ensure access to all existing footpaths is maintained.
- > Consult with the other solar farm proposal to limit the environmental impact through mutual use of infrastructure.
- > Incorporate additional distance between the solar sites and neighbouring properties to the south.
- > Locate the solar panels on alternative brownfield sites, such as the rooves of new developments.

Question 6: Please provide any other comments that you have below.

Question 6 invited respondents to provide any further comments that they had. There were 48 responses received to this question in total. These comments included:

- > The benefits of the proposals do not outweigh the harm to the countryside.
- > There is too much development happening in the area.
- > There is a need for new forms of renewable energy generation.
- > Pleased that access to footpaths is being maintained.
- > Support the provision of nuclear energy as an alternative.
- > Wind power is better, preferably offshore.
- > Will the Scheme impact upon energy costs?
- > The Scheme should be located on a brownfield site, such as the rooves of existing buildings.
- > The community benefit fund should be provided to the neighbouring parishes.

Section 2: About yourself

Question 7: Do you live locally?

Table 17: Breakdown of responses received to Question 7

Response	Frequency
Yes	152
No	1

Almost all respondents to Question 7 indicated that they lived locally, as shown in Table 17.

Which age category do you fall into?

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of their age if they wished. A breakdown of those who responded to this question by age is given in Table 18 below. Respondents were generally older, with 88% aged 50 or older. 71% of respondents were over the age of 60.

Table 18: Age breakdown of respondents as indicated on feedback form

Age	Frequency
20-29	2
30-39	6
40-49	10
50-59	25
60-69	42
70-79	44
80+	15

Responses received by email

In addition to the 157 responses that used the Applicant's feedback form, four responses were received in a letter format that did not follow the Applicant's questionnaire. These responses made reference to the themes identified in Table 19 below.

Table 19: Open text responses provided by email

Response	Frequency
The proposals will cause harm to wildlife	2
Use of agricultural land is not appropriate	1
The proposals will impact on The Cowshed at Port Lympne	1
The proposals will cause a negative impact on visual amenity	1

Consideration of Feedback: second round of consultation

The Applicant is pleased to have received such a large volume of feedback in response to the second round of consultation. This has influenced the content of the Applicant's planning application.

In preparing the final application layout of the solar farm, and the accompanying application documentation, the Applicant has responded to the key points raised in the feedback to the second round of consultation in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Key issues raised during the second round of consultation and the Applicant's response

Issue raised	The Applicant's response
Why is the proposal sited on agricultural land and not on a brownfield site?	A full description of the site identification and iterative layout design process is described in Chapter 3, Site Selection and Design of the Environmental Statement (ES).
What impact will the proposals have on public rights of way both during construction and operations?	Potential impacts on rights of way users have been assessed as part of Chapter 11, Landscape and Visual Impacts Assessment (supported by visualisations presented in Volume 4 of the ES, Visualisations) and also assessed in Chapter 8, Transport and Access of the ES.
Support for solar development in this location.	Public perceptions of renewable energy and solar energy specifically are considered in Chapter 15, Socio-economics and Sustainability and the findings of this report are summarised in Chapter 5 of the ES.
Do the proposals take account of the Stonestreet Green Solar Farm proposals?	At the point of drafting, there were no other schemes in the planning system. If any future schemes are presented, then we will be required as part of the planning process to undertake an assessment of cumulative impacts.
The proposals must consider the potential impact on local wildlife and habitats.	The potential impacts on ecology, in terms of habitats, species and designations are assessed in Chapter 10, Ecology of the ES.
The proposed solar farm encroaches too close to neighbouring properties to the south.	Potential visual impacts on residents are assessed as part of Chapter 11, Landscape and Visual Impacts Assessment with the assessment supported by visualisations presented in Volume 4 of the ES. Potential noise impacts are assessed in Chapter 13, Noise. Potential impacts from glint and glare are assessed in Chapter 14, Glint and Glare of the ES.

The proposals are too visible from local heritage assets, particularly St Martin's Church in Aldington.	An assessment of potential impacts on heritage assets, including their setting is presented in Chapter 12, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage and supported by visualisations presented in Volume 4 of the ES, Visualisations.
The proposed solar farm should be reduced in size.	The potential impacts associated with the proposed development at the scale of the proposed development are assessed within the ES. The national and local policy context against which the proposals will be assessed are examined within the Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement which accompany the application.
Other forms of renewable energy generation are superior to solar such as nuclear and wind.	The need for the development, the drivers in terms of the magnitude of effort required to decarbonise the economy and meet legislated net zero carbon emissions as well as the evolution of the UK energy mix during this process are described in Chapter 2, Development Rationale, Chapter 15, Socio-economics and Sustainability of the ES and the accompanying Planning Statement.
There is too much development in the area.	The existing level of development within the study area is considered as the baseline environment in the ES assessments and the potential impacts introduced by the proposal are assessed against this. Where it has been judged that there is the potential for significant cumulative impacts (in EIA terms), with other proposals in the planning system, these have been identified and assessed within the respective ES chapters. The Planning Statement reviews the development proposals and the impact assessments against the existing context in terms of the local and national planning framework and guidance.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Advertisement placed in Kentish Express and online (first consultation)

Public Consultation EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge Substation. We want to hear your views and are consulting until 9 August 2021.	Find out more: www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour east.stour@edf-re.uk 0800 0194 576 Take part in online Q&A sessions, you can register on our website. 
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Public Consultation 

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge Substation.

We want to hear your views and are consulting until **9 August 2021**.

Find out more:
www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour
east.stour@edf-re.uk
0800 0194 576

Take part in online Q&A sessions, you can register on our website.

Public Consultation



EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge Substation.

It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year.¹

EDF Renewables, through its battery storage team Pivot Power, is also considering land between the East Stour Solar Farm and Sellindge Substation for a battery energy storage system.

We want to hear your views while we are at an early stage in developing our proposals and are consulting until **9 August 2021**.

Following the consultation, we will carefully consider all of the views we receive, update our plans, and present a more detailed design as part of a further consultation in Autumn 2021.

Find out more

View a virtual public exhibition at our project website:
www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

Take part in online Q&A sessions, currently scheduled for **Saturday 17 July, 2:00pm** and **Thursday 22 July, 7:00pm**. You can register to take part at our website.

Contact us directly on east.stour@edf-re.uk or 0800 0194 576 and ask for a hard copy of the exhibition to be posted to you.



1. Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBEIS, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.

Appendix 2 - Consultation newsletter (first consultation)



We want your views while we are at an early stage in developing our proposals. This leaflet introduces the East Stour Solar Farm and sets out how you can respond to a public consultation on our proposals.

What is proposed?

East Stour Solar Farm would use photovoltaic (PV) panels to generate electricity from the sun. These would be mounted on the ground in rows. They would be set at an angle of around 20 degrees, with a maximum height of 3 metres and gaps between the rows. The panels would be surrounded by a two metre high deer fence with a field gate at the site entrance.

The solar farm would connect to the National Grid at the existing Sellindge substation. EDF Renewables, through its battery storage team Pivot Power, is also considering land between the East Stour Solar Farm and Sellindge Substation for a battery energy storage system.

We currently expect the battery storage to come forward as a separate planning application but recognise that they are related

and will share a common grid connection. We will be making sure that both schemes can be built separately and there are no additional impacts as a result of developing both schemes.

Where is it?

The East Stour Solar Farm site is located across several fields south of the M20 motorway, totalling approximately 102ha (252 acres).

We think this is an excellent location for a new solar farm because there are no historic, ecological or landscape designations within the site. It is also suitably sunny and next to the existing substation at Sellindge, where it could connect to the National Grid.

Who are EDF Renewables?

EDF Renewables is a leading renewable energy developer and operator in the UK. For more information, please see our website:

www.edf-re.uk

We carefully consider the environmental characteristics of a potential site when preparing proposals for a solar farm.

This involves carrying out surveys and assessments to understand potential impacts from development and any need for mitigation measures. Our site design will be informed by these assessments.

Building and running the solar farm

The construction process would take approximately 9 months. During this period, there would be a temporary compound for storage, worker welfare facilities and a site office. We would agree a Construction Management Plan with Ashford Borough Council setting out how we will manage construction activities.

Once operational, East Stour Solar Farm would be monitored and operated mostly remotely. Checks would take place monthly with staff accessing the site in a light vehicle.

Community and wider benefits

The East Stour Solar Farm would be able to generate up to 49.9MW of electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year¹ and offset approximately 16,100 tonnes of carbon in emissions². We also expect to put in place a community fund worth up to £20,000 a year over the lifetime of the scheme, as well as improving biodiversity and soil health.

1. Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBES, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.
2. Based on UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting (DBES, 2021)

Share your views

We are consulting on our proposals until **9 August 2021**. Under normal circumstances, we would invite people living near the scheme to public exhibitions – but we have decided not to do so in this case due to the ongoing uncertainty created by COVID 19.

We are making a range of other ways to find out more and respond to the consultation available. **You can:**

View a virtual public exhibition at our project website:

www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

If you do not have internet access and would like to view hard copies of the materials, please contact us using the details below and we will post a copy to you.

Take part in online Q&A sessions, currently scheduled for **Saturday 17 July, 2:00pm** and **Thursday 22 July, 7:00pm**. You can register to take part through our website.

Contacting us directly on east.stour@edf-re.uk or 0800 0194 576

You can share your views on our proposals by completing the final page of this leaflet and returning it using the enclosed Freepost envelope. Alternatively, you can visit our website and complete a questionnaire by the deadline of **9 August 2021**.



What happens next?

This is our first round of consultation. Once it closes on **9 August 2021**, we will carefully consider all of the views we receive, update our plans, and present a more detailed design as part of a further consultation in Autumn 2021. We would then seek planning permission from Ashford Borough Council later in the year.

This survey

You can complete this questionnaire and return it in the enclosed Freepost envelope by **9 August 2021**. Alternatively, the survey can also be completed online at www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

You can also return this by post to: FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUUJ-AGBY,
c/o SEC Newgate UK, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE

Please only answer the questions that you want to.

1. The project

Q1: Are you concerned about the effects of climate change?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Q2: Do you support the generation of renewable energy in Kent?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Q3: Do you support the development of solar farms?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Q4: Are you supportive of the East Stour Solar Farm proposal?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Q5: Please use the space below to explain your answer to the previous question.

Q6: What do you think we need to consider in preparing our detailed design for East Stour Solar Farm?



Q7: Please share any other thoughts that you have here.

2. Future consultation

We will be presenting a more detailed design at a further round of consultation in Autumn 2021. It is likely that we will be able to hold public meetings at that time.

Would you attend a public exhibition event locally if we were to hold one at our next consultation in the Autumn?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

3. About yourself

Do you live locally?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you're local please provide your postcode, so we can analyse whether we're reaching local people.

Are you responding as a representative of any organisation or group?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, which organisation?

If you'd like us to speak to your organisation, let us know by contacting us on Freephone 0800 0194 576 or east.stour@edf-re.uk and we can arrange to do this virtually.

What age category do you fall into?

Under 20 ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐
 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60+ ☐

Privacy

We take your privacy seriously. We have appointed SEC Newgate UK to assist us in carrying out this consultation. The consultant may collect the following data from you if you choose to share it; your name, address, email and the contents of the feedback you have given. They record this information about you for the purposes of asking for your views on the proposed East Stour Solar Farm. Your personal data will not be used for any other purposes without your consent. At the end of the project, the consultant will remove your contact details from their information systems. If you wish to review their privacy policy in more detail, please visit their website: secnewgate.co.uk

Appendix 3 - Stakeholder outreach email (first consultation)

Good afternoon,

I am writing to let you know that our website for the proposed East Stour Solar Farm is now live. It can be found here: [East Stour Solar Farm | EDF Renewables \(edf-re.uk\)](https://www.edf-re.uk/east-stour-solar-farm)

East Stour Solar Farm

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge Substation.

It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year.*

EDF Renewables, through its battery storage team Pivot Power, is also considering land between the East Stour Solar Farm and Sellindge Substation for a battery energy storage system.

First public consultation

We are carrying out our first public consultation at an early stage in the development of our design. This will run until **Monday 9 August 2021**.

During this time, we welcome feedback through the form on our website, by email to east.stour@edf-re.uk and in writing to *FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE*

For those without internet access, we can provide copies of the exhibition boards and feedback form in hard copy. These are available on request by calling 0800 0194 576.

We are holding two online Q&A Sessions in webinar format on **[Saturday 17 July at 2:00pm](#)** and **[Thursday 22 July at 7:00pm](#)**. You can register to join through our website or through the links in this email.

Following the consultation we will consider the feedback received, refine our design and hold a further public consultation in the Autumn of this year.

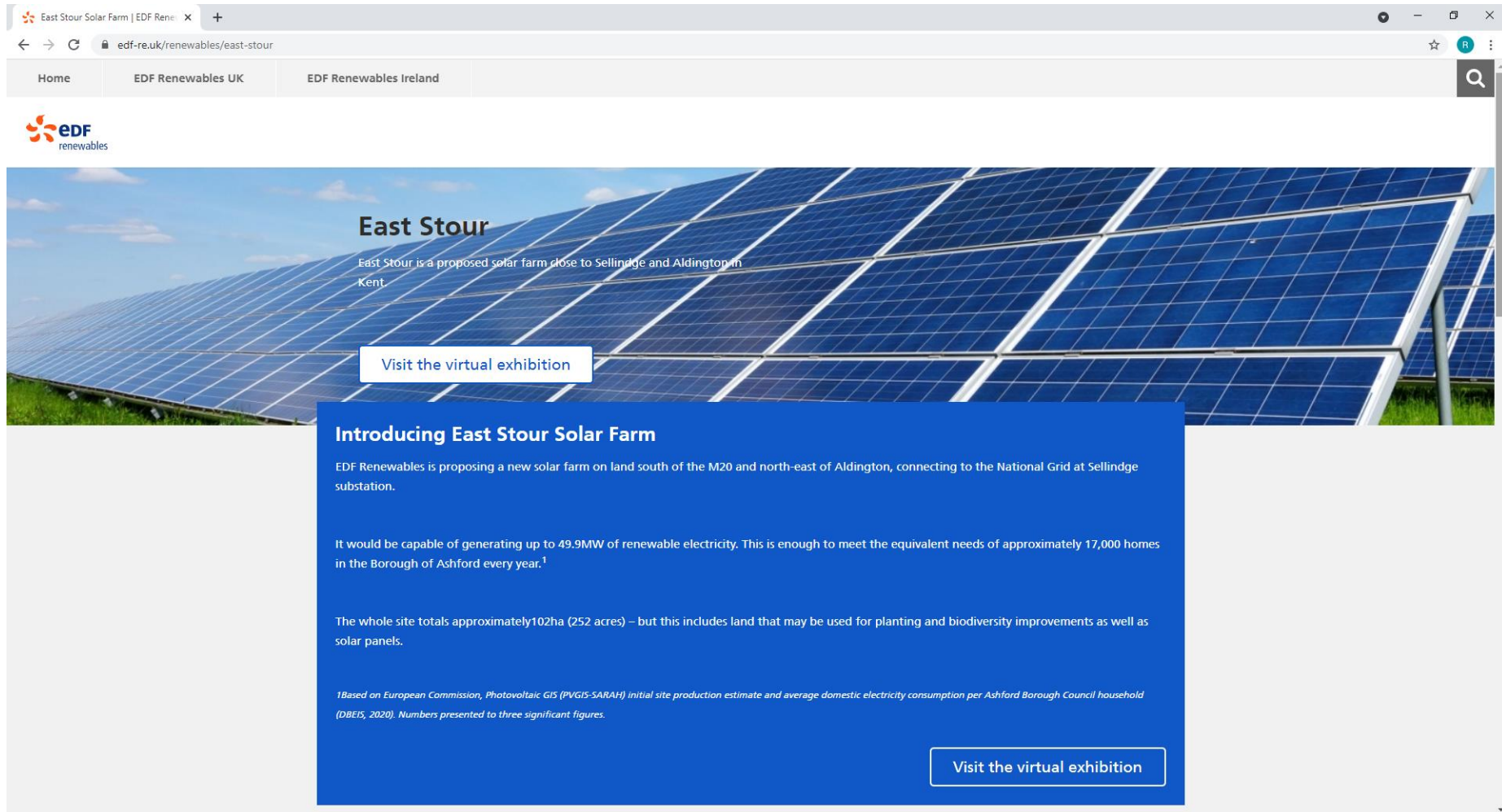
Meet with us

We would be happy to meet to discuss our proposals in further detail, either online or socially distanced in person. If you would like to meet with us please get in touch using the contact details above or at the end of this email.

Kind regards,

**Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBEIS, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.*

Appendix 4 - Consultation website and Virtual Exhibition (first consultation)



East Stour Solar Farm | EDF Renewables

edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

Home EDF Renewables UK EDF Renewables Ireland

EDF
renewables

East Stour

East Stour is a proposed solar farm close to Sellindge and Aldington in Kent.

[Visit the virtual exhibition](#)

Introducing East Stour Solar Farm

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge substation.

It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year.¹

The whole site totals approximately 102ha (252 acres) – but this includes land that may be used for planting and biodiversity improvements as well as solar panels.

¹Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBEIS, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.

[Visit the virtual exhibition](#)

East Stour Solar Farm | EDF Renewables

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edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

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Home

EDF Renewables UK

EDF Renewables Ireland

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Find out more

We want your views while we are at an early stage in developing our proposals and are consulting until 9 August 2021. Under normal circumstances, we would invite people living near the scheme to public exhibitions – but we have decided not to do so in this case due to the ongoing uncertainty created by COVID 19.

We are making a range of other ways to find out more and respond to the consultation available. You can:

- View a virtual public exhibition. This presents more information about our proposals and how to take part in the consultation.
- Take part in an online Q&A session, currently scheduled for Saturday 17th July, 2:00pm and Thursday 22nd Jul, 7:00pm.
- Contact us directly on east.stour@edf-re.uk or 0800 0194 576.





East Stour Solar Farm | EDF Renewables

edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

HomeEDF Renewables UKEDF Renewables Ireland



Share your views

You can share your views by filling in the consultation questionnaire provided in the virtual public exhibition by the deadline of 9 August 2021.

You can also submit your response by email to east.stour@edf-re.uk or Freepost to East Stour Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUUI-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.

[Visit the virtual exhibition](#)

Related links

- Find another site
- Contact us
- EDF Renewables home

About us

- About EDF Renewables
- Contact us
- Our structure

Work with us

- Interested in working with us?
- Life at EDF
- Jobs at EDF Renewables & EDF

Legal information

- Website terms & conditions
- Privacy Notice and Policy
- Accessibility
- Copyright statement
- Tax Strategy Statement

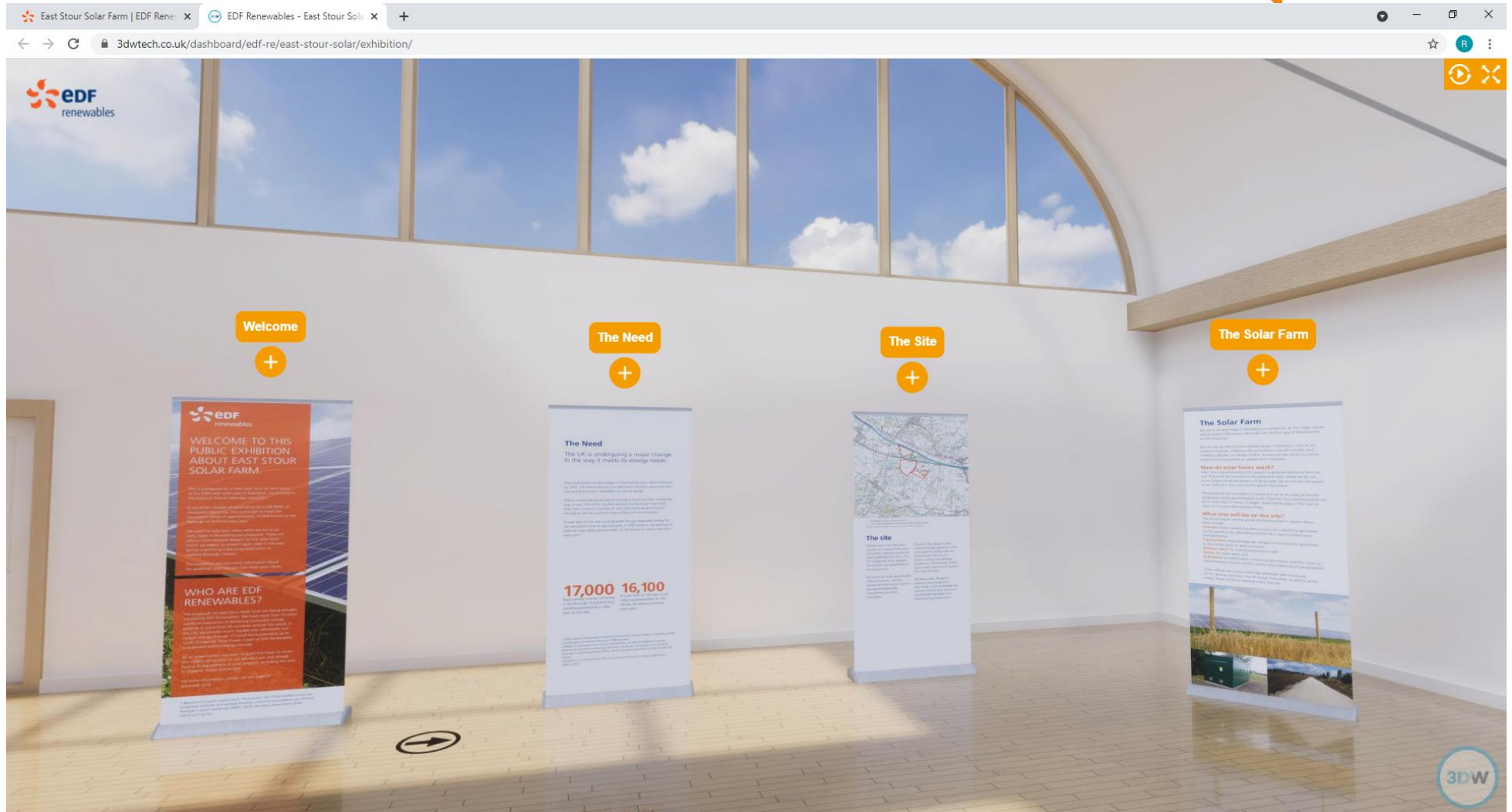
Emergency contacts

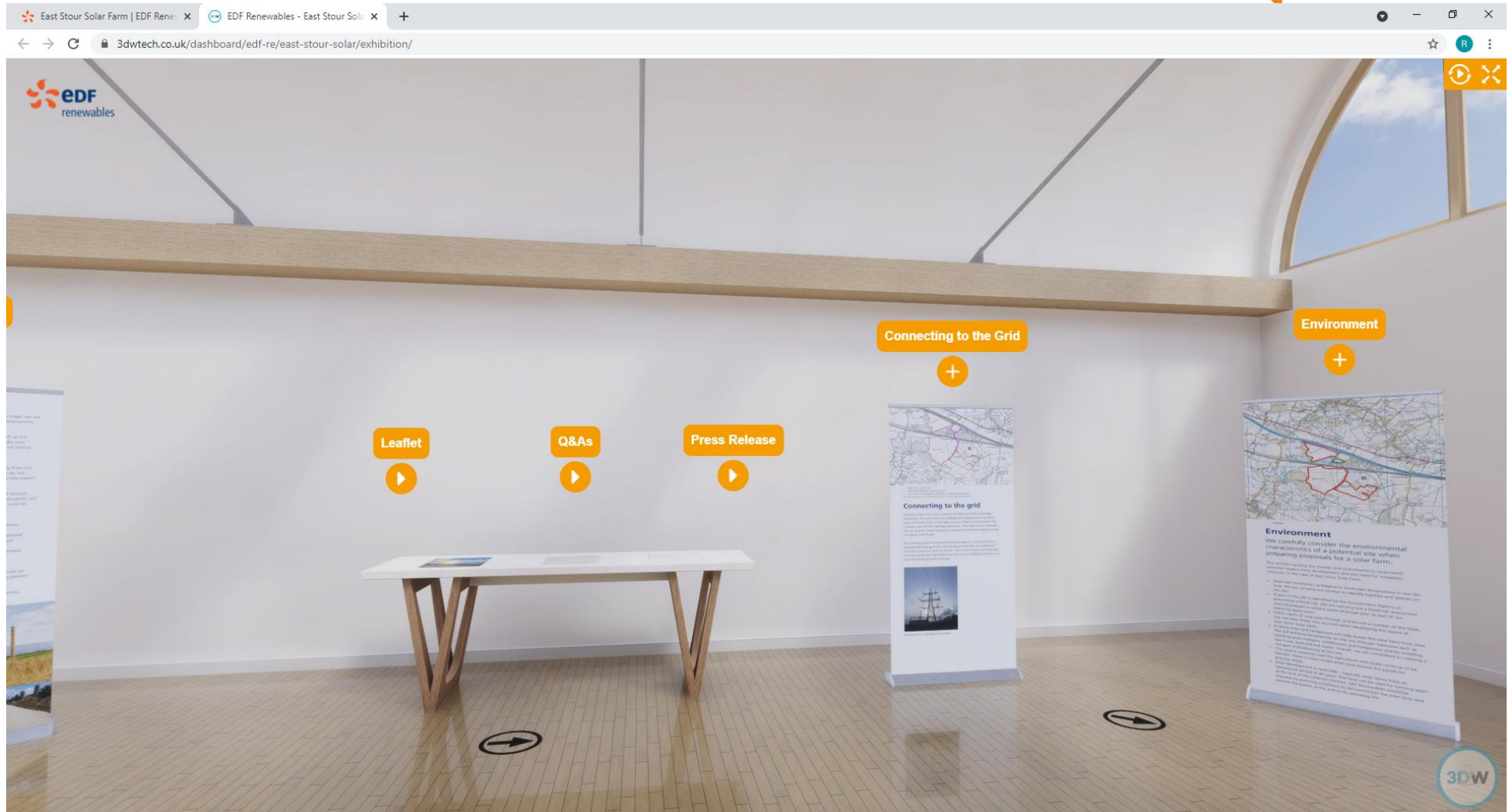
Want to report a problem?

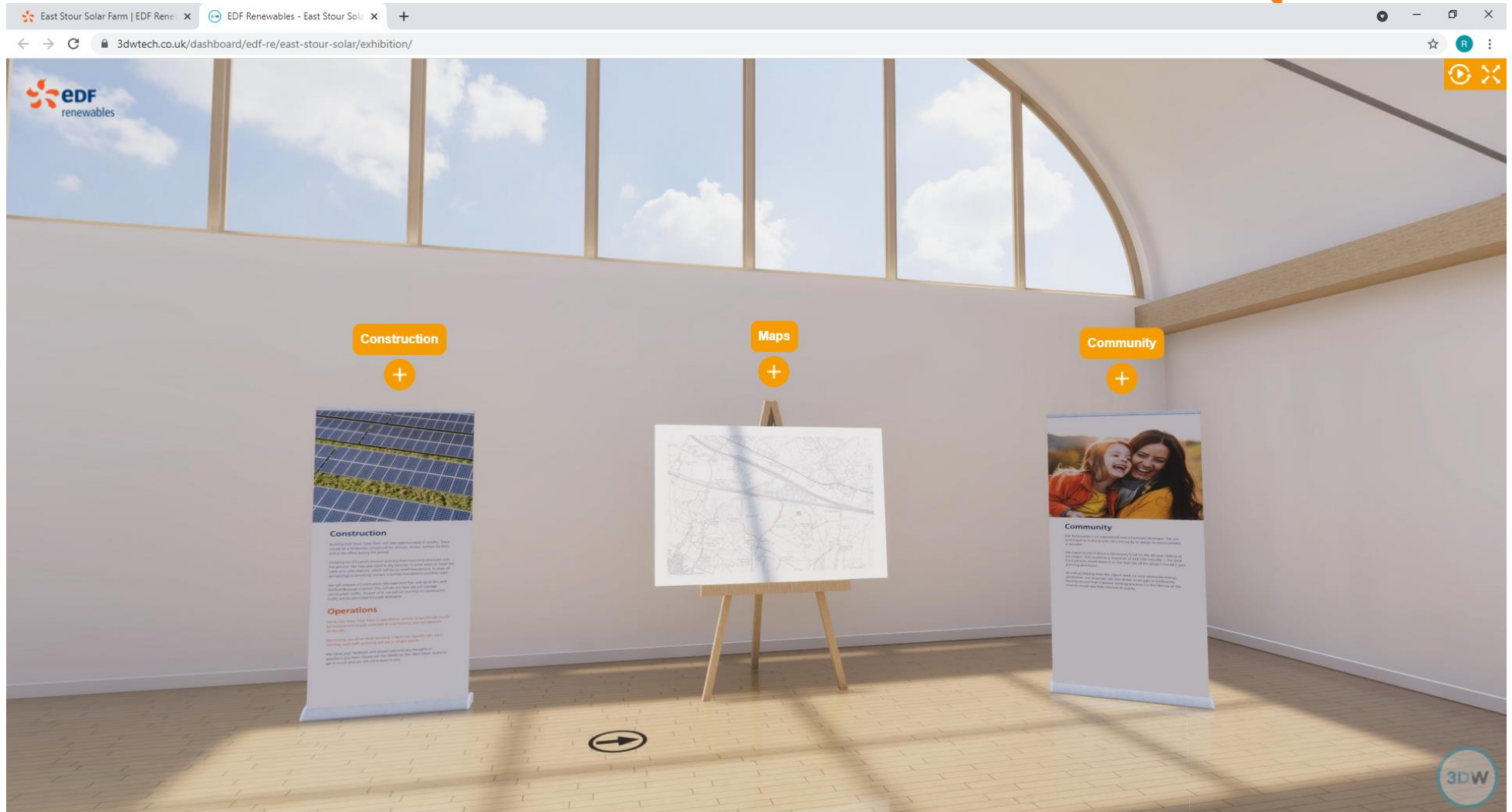
Call us on: **0800 056 6650**

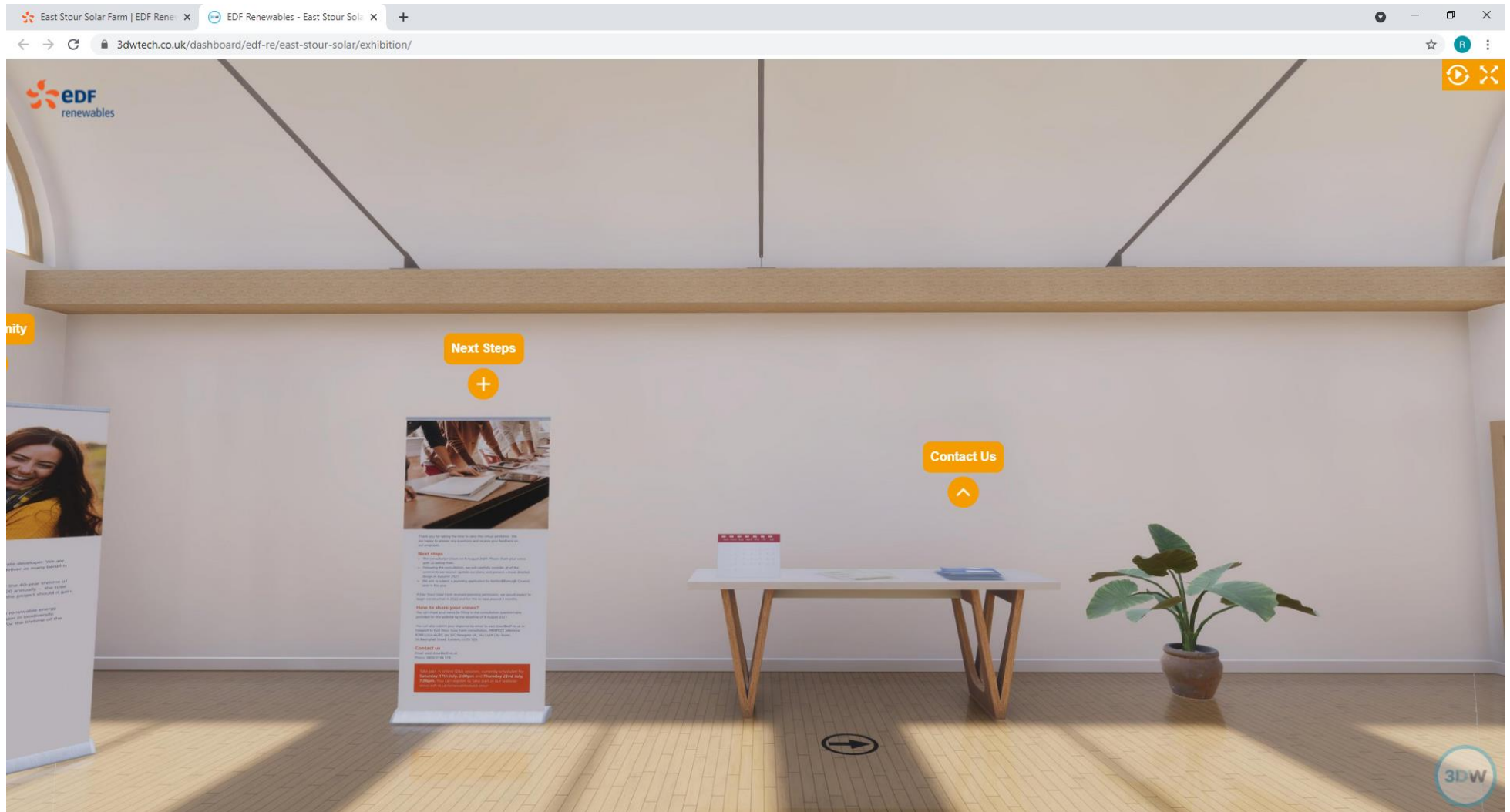
Email us at: info@edf-re.uk



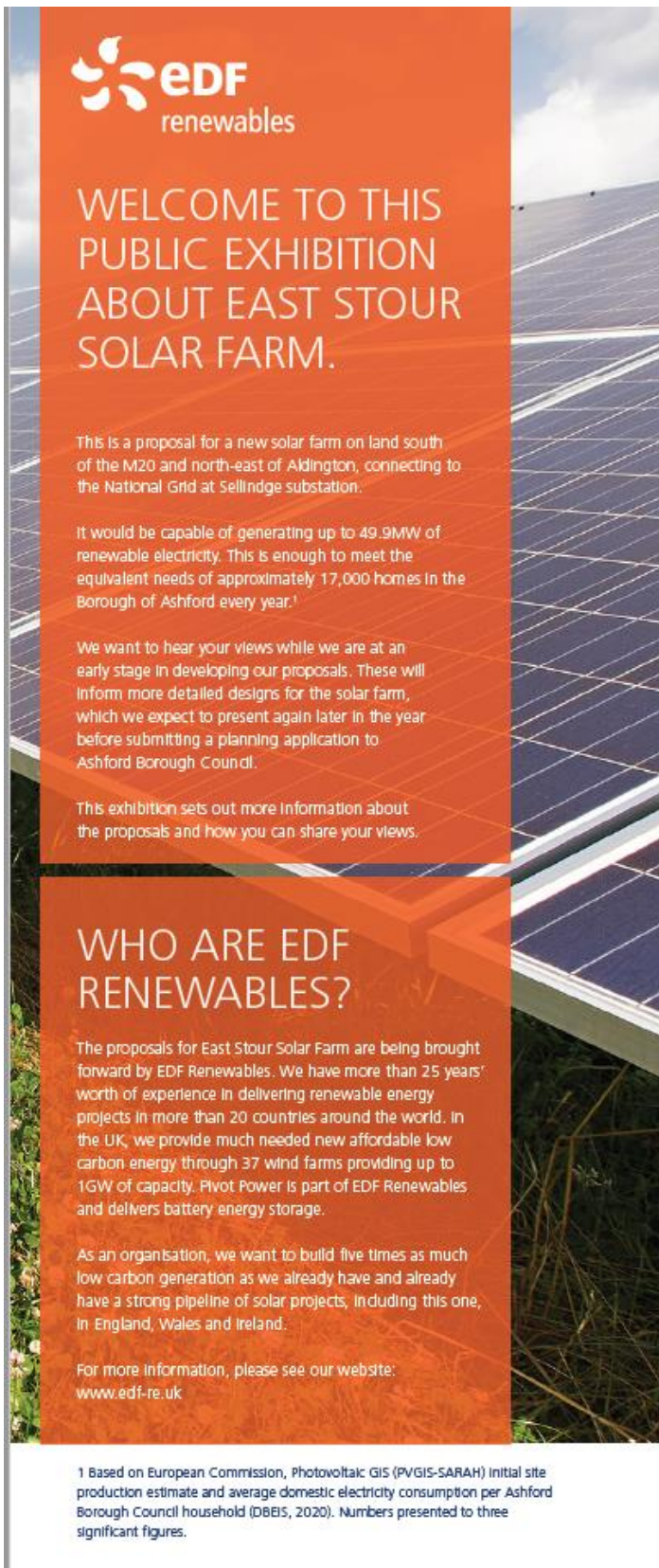








Appendix 5 - Exhibition boards (first consultation)



**EDF**
renewables

WELCOME TO THIS PUBLIC EXHIBITION ABOUT EAST STOUR SOLAR FARM.

This is a proposal for a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge substation.

It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year.¹

We want to hear your views while we are at an early stage in developing our proposals. These will inform more detailed designs for the solar farm, which we expect to present again later in the year before submitting a planning application to Ashford Borough Council.

This exhibition sets out more information about the proposals and how you can share your views.

WHO ARE EDF RENEWABLES?

The proposals for East Stour Solar Farm are being brought forward by EDF Renewables. We have more than 25 years' worth of experience in delivering renewable energy projects in more than 20 countries around the world. In the UK, we provide much needed new affordable low carbon energy through 37 wind farms providing up to 1GW of capacity. Pivot Power is part of EDF Renewables and delivers battery energy storage.

As an organisation, we want to build five times as much low carbon generation as we already have and already have a strong pipeline of solar projects, including this one, in England, Wales and Ireland.

For more information, please see our website:
www.edf-re.uk

¹ Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBES, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.

The Need

The UK is undergoing a major change in the way it meets its energy needs.

The Government has set a target of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This means phasing out older forms of power generation like coal and finding new, renewable, sources of energy.

Solar is a tried and tested way of helping to meet this need. In May last year, it met 11% of the country's demand for electricity.² East Stour Solar Farm is one of a number of new solar farms we are bringing forward across the country to help achieve net zero emissions.

A solar farm of this size could generate enough renewable energy for the equivalent of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford³ and offset approximately 16,100 tonnes of carbon emissions every year.⁴

17,000 **16,100**

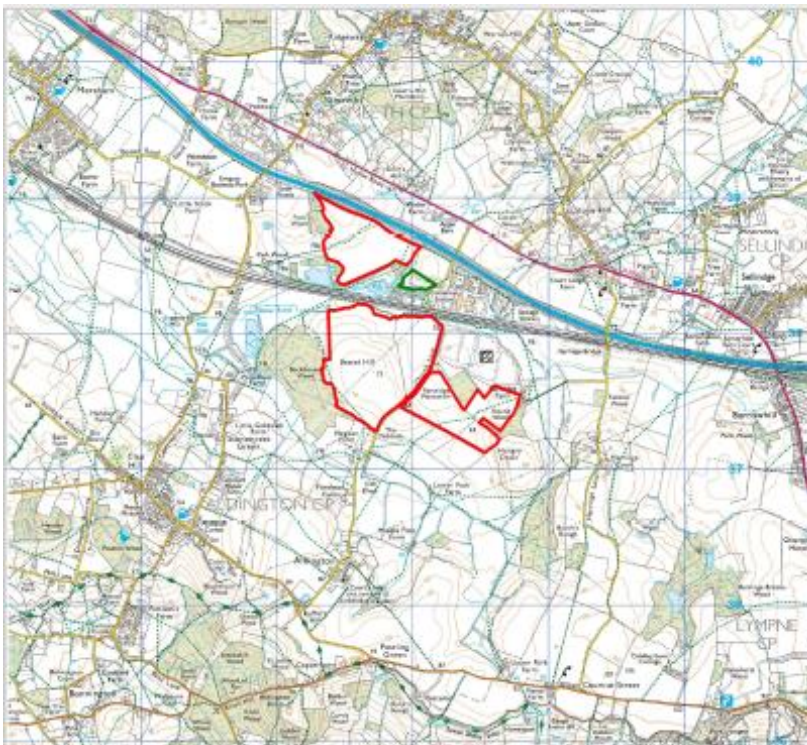
Approximate number of homes in the Borough of Ashford that could be powered by a solar farm of this size.

a solar farm of this size could offset approximately 16,100 tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/11/global-renewable-energy-industry-grew-at-fastest-rate-since-1999-last-year>

³ Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) Initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBEIS, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.

⁴ Based on UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting (DBEIS, 2021)



— Proposed East Stour Solar Farm site
— Site under consideration for energy storage system
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The site

The East Stour Solar Farm site is located across several fields south of the M20 motorway. The HS1 railway line passes between the northern and central fields of the proposed site.

The whole site totals approximately 102ha (252 acres) – but this includes land that may be used for planting and biodiversity improvements as well as solar panels.

The site is also adjacent to the existing Sellindge substation, where it is possible to connect with the National Grid. There are no historic, ecological or landscape designations within the site. These factors make it an excellent location for a new solar farm.

EDF Renewables, through its battery energy storage team Pivot Power, is also considering land between the East Stour Solar Farm and Sellindge Substation for a battery energy storage system.

The Solar Farm

We are at an early stage in developing our proposals. At this stage, we are able to present information about the site and the type of development we are proposing.

We are not yet able to share detailed design information, such as the location of panels. Following this consultation, we will consider your feedback, develop our design further, incorporate the results of various assessments and present an update later in the year.

How do solar farms work?

Solar farms use photovoltaic (PV) panels to generate electricity from the sun. These will be mounted on the ground in rows. While we do not know where exactly the panels will be located, we would typically expect to use 30% of a site's area for the panels themselves.

The panels will be mounted on a frame and set at an angle of around 20 degrees facing approximately south. Together, the mounted panels will be no more than 3 metres in height. There will be gaps in the rows to allow us to access and maintain them.

What else will be on the site?

The panels require several pieces of infrastructure to support them, these include:

Inverters: these convert the direct current (DC) electricity generated by the panels to the alternating current (AC) used in transmission and distribution

Transformers: these change the voltage of the electricity generated to that at the point of grid connection

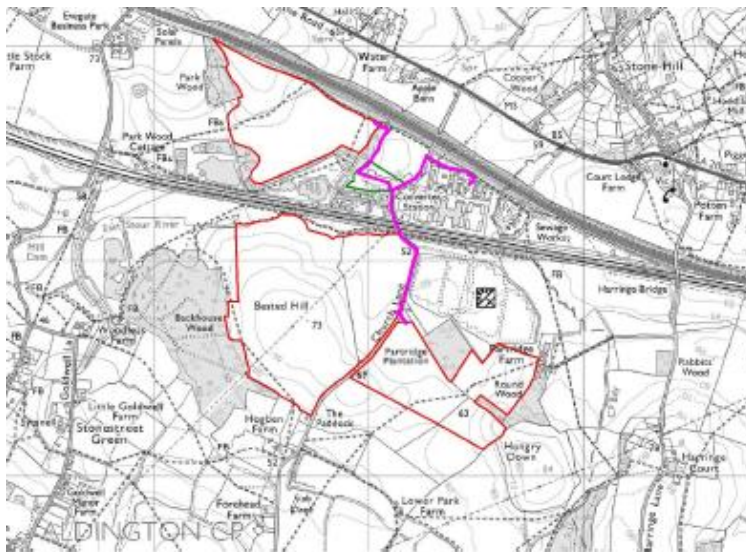
Welfare cabin: for visiting maintenance staff

Stores: for spare parts; and

Substation: A combination of electrical disconnect switches, fuses or circuit breakers used to control, protect and isolate electrical equipment.

There will also be a two metre high perimeter deer fence and CCTV cameras to protect the PV panels from theft, as well as access tracks. There will be no lighting within the site.





— Cable route
— Proposed East Stour Solar Farm site
— Site under consideration for energy storage system
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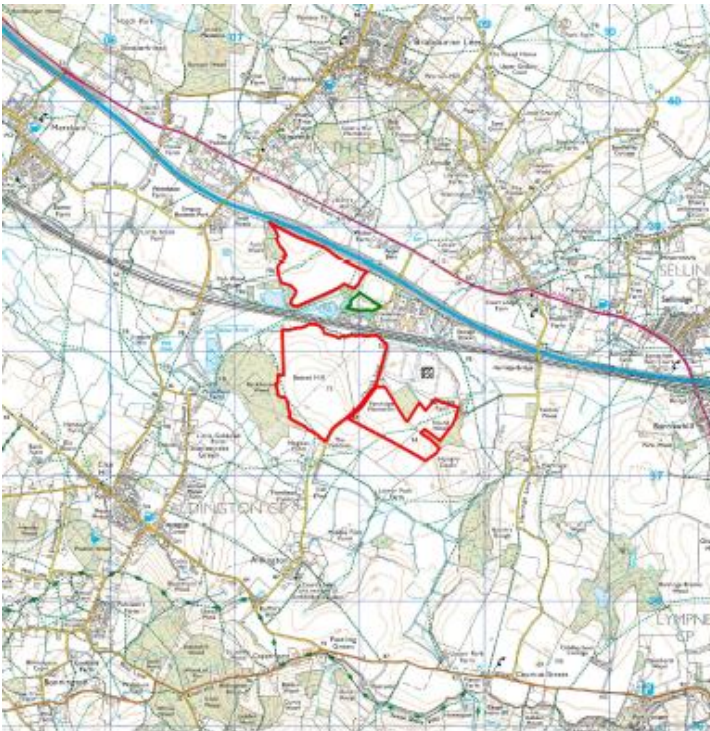
Connecting to the grid

East Stour Solar Farm will connect to the National Grid at Sellindge substation. This will involve an underground cable between the three areas of the site, with a final cable running underground between the northern area and the Sellindge substation. This cable will run beneath the site west of Church Lane that is being considered for battery energy storage by Pivot Power.

We currently expect the battery energy storage to come forward as a separate planning application but recognise that they are related and will share a common grid connection. We will be making sure that both schemes can be built separately and there are no additional impacts as a result of developing both schemes.



National Grid Sellindge Substation



..... PROW

Environment

We carefully consider the environmental characteristics of a potential site when preparing proposals for a solar farm.

This involves carrying out surveys and assessments to understand potential impacts from development and any need for mitigation measures. In the case of East Stour Solar Farm:

- > There are no historic, ecological landscape designations in the site area. We are carrying out surveys to identify habitats and species on the site.
- > A part of the site is identified by the Environment Agency as presenting a flood risk. We are carrying out a flood risk assessment and will prepare a surface water drainage plan as part of our planning application.
- > The northern field is crossed by a public right of way, while public rights of way also run along the boundary of several other fields. We will take these into account when developing the layout of East Stour Solar Farm.
- > Existing trees and hedgerows will help screen the solar farm from view. We will enhance biodiversity on the site through measures such as planting grass margins, wildflowers and hedgerows and installing bee hives. Overall, we are committed to creating a net gain in biodiversity at the site.
- > The land is currently used for agriculture and could continue to be farmed. There is room underneath and around the panels for grazing sheep.
- > Solar development is reversible – typically, solar farms have an operational period of 40 years. The land can be used for farming again at the end of the scheme's lifetime. EDF Renewables would be required by planning conditions to decommission the solar farm and remove the panels at the end of its operating life.



Construction

Building East Stour Solar Farm will take approximately 9 months. There would be a temporary compound for storage, worker welfare facilities and a site office during this period.

Installing the PV panels involves pushing their mounting structures into the ground. We may also need to dig trenches in some areas to install the cable and solar stations, which will be on small foundations. In areas of archaeological sensitivity, surface mounted foundations could be used.

We will prepare a Construction Management Plan and agree this with Ashford Borough Council. This will set out how we will manage construction traffic. As part of it, we will set out that no construction traffic will be permitted through Aldington.

Operations

While East Stour Solar Farm is operational, activity across the site would be minimal and largely restricted to monitoring, maintenance and management of the site.

Monitoring would be done remotely. Checks will typically take place monthly, with staff accessing the site in a light vehicle.

We value your feedback and would welcome any thoughts or questions you have. Please use the details on the 'Next Steps' board to get in touch and we will come back to you.



Community

EDF Renewables is an experienced and considerate developer. We are committed to working with the community to deliver as many benefits as possible.

We expect to put in place a community fund for the 40-year lifetime of the project. This would be a maximum of £20,000 annually – the total fund amount would depend on the final size of the project should it gain planning permission.

As well as helping meet the urgent need for new renewable energy generation, our proposals will also deliver a net gain in biodiversity. Resting the soil from intensive farming practices for the lifetime of the scheme would also help improve its quality.



Thank you for taking the time to view this virtual exhibition. We are happy to answer any questions and receive your feedback on our proposals.

Next steps

- > The consultation closes on 9 August 2021. Please share your views with us before then.
- > Following the consultation, we will carefully consider all of the comments we receive, update our plans, and present a more detailed design in Autumn 2021.
- > We aim to submit a planning application to Ashford Borough Council later in the year.

If East Stour Solar Farm received planning permission, we would expect to begin construction in 2022 and for this to take around 9 months.

How to share your views?

You can share your views by filling in the consultation questionnaire provided on this website by the deadline of 9 August 2021.

You can also submit your response by email to east.stour@edf-re.uk or Freepost to East Stour Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.

Contact us

Email: east.stour@edf-re.uk
Phone: 0800 0194 576

Take part in online Q&A sessions, currently scheduled for **Saturday 17th July, 2:00pm** and **Thursday 22nd July, 7:00pm**. You can register to take part at our website: www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour

Appendix 6 - Online and print advertisements (second consultation)

Public Consultation

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington. We are holding a second round of consultation and are consulting until 29 November 2021.

We are hosting two public exhibition events on the following dates:

Tuesday 2 November, 3:30pm to 7:30pm

Aldington Village Hall, The Corner, Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford TN25 7EE

Wednesday 3 November, 2:30pm to 6:30pm

Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne, Ashford TN25 5LF

Find out more

edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour
east.stour@edf-re.uk
0800 0194 576



Public Consultation

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge substation.

We are hosting two public exhibition events on the following dates:

Tuesday 2 November, 3:30pm to 7:30pm

Aldington Village Hall, The Corner, Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford TN25 7EE

Wednesday 3 November, 2:30pm to 6:30pm

Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne, Ashford TN25 5LF

Find out more:

edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour
east.stour@edf-re.uk
0800 0194 576





How PureGym is set to look on the Warren Retail Park

New 24-hour gym set to finally open

A new 24/7 gym will finally open in Ashford in December – almost two years after plans were approved by the council.

Bosses at PureGym gained permission to convert the ex-Office Outlet site on the Warren Retail Park in March 2020.

Their plans were delayed by the ongoing national lockdown – and were then thrown into doubt when the unit was put on the market.

But staff are now preparing to open the site before the end of the year, with a new mezzanine floor installed to increase floor space.

The site off Skene Well Avenue will feature more than 200 pieces of equipment, 50kg dumbbells and free will.

Visitors won't have to pay for parking, but will share the same car park used by shoppers heading to the adjacent M&S Foodhall and Home Bargains.



The Amber Foundation gives homeless and unemployed young people new skills; right, the 13-bedroom Downsview Guesthouse was put on the market for £1.5m earlier this year



Homeless centre approved

By Rhys Griffiths
rgriffiths@thekmgroupp.co.uk

A national charity supporting young homeless and unemployed people has completed the purchase of what will be its first centre in Kent.

Amber Foundation has acquired the 13-bedroom Downsview Guesthouse in Kennington after securing planning permission to convert the building into

a supported accommodation for young people aged 16-30.

The property in Wilkesborough Road will provide temporary housing for up to 28 residents at any one time, following referral by charities, hotels, local housing authorities and probation services.

Paul Rouse, chief executive of Amber Foundation, said: "This is great news as we know there is a growing need across Kent for the support we offer."

"Work on converting the guest house can get under way immediately and we hope to open its doors to the early part of 2022."

"The last couple of years have been particularly difficult for young people, especially those who may not have had the best start in life. Our Ashford centre means we will be able to help some of the county's estimated 3,500 young homeless get their lives back on track."

The Ashford centre will add

to the charity's existing centres in Devon, Surrey and Wiltshire, from where it provides education, training and employment support, and works closely with local authorities and other charity partners.

Ashford Borough Council's planning officers granted permission in September, without the need to go to planning committee.

Funding for the Ashford centre has been provided by the Henry

Oldfield Trust, a grant-giving charity chaired by Richard Oldfield, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent and former High Sheriff, and a trustee of Amber Foundation.

The Downsview site, which was put on the market for £1.5m earlier this year, triumphed on Channel 4's 'Three in a Bed' programme in 2021.

The young people using the facility will stay in shared rooms with communal cooking and dining facilities.

Second public consultation



Following our first public consultation earlier this year, we have updated our design and are now consulting on our detailed design proposals.

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-west of Adington, connecting to the National Grid at Selridge substation. It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year.

EDF Renewables' battery storage team, Power Power, is bringing forward a battery energy storage system on land immediately to the west of the substation. This will come forward as a separate planning application.

Following this consultation, we will consider the feedback that we receive and further refine our proposals before submitting a planning application to Ashford Borough Council. We are consulting until 29 November 2021.

Find out more

Official consultation information is on our website: www.edf-renewables.co.uk/ashford

Official consultation events:
Tuesday 2 November, 5.30pm to 7.30pm
2nd Floor, Ashford Town Hall, The Forum, Ashford Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 1JF
Wednesday 3 November, 2.30pm to 4.30pm
The Ashford Community Centre, Ashford Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 1JF

Contact your local councillor:
ashford@edf-renewables.co.uk or
0300 0194 576 and ask for a local councillor to be contacted on your behalf.



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Do you dream of being an HGV driver?

If you can dream it, you can do it with

KentJobs.co.uk

Appendix 7 - Consultation newsletter (second consultation)



Second public consultation

Following on from our first public consultation earlier this year, we are now consulting on our detailed design proposals.

What is proposed?

East Stour Solar Farm would use photovoltaic (PV) panels to generate electricity from the sun. These would be mounted on the ground in rows and set at an angle of around 20 degrees. The PV panels would have a maximum height of 3 metres and gaps between the rows. The site itself would be surrounded by a 2 metre high deer fence with a field gate at the site entrance.

EDF Renewables' battery storage team, Pivot Power, is bringing forward a battery energy storage system on land immediately to the west of the substation. This will come forward as a separate planning application. We are considering the potential impacts of each of the schemes together.

Who are EDF Renewables?

EDF Renewables is a leading renewable energy developer and operator in the UK. For more information, please see our website: edf-re.uk

Why here?

We believe that this is an excellent site for solar development. The site is located close to the point of grid connection and existing infrastructure at Sellindge substation. The site is also suitably sunny, enabling efficient energy generation.

Our amended plans avoid areas of high flood risk along the East Stour river, and avoid features of particular ecological value.

We have arranged site tracks to minimise the disruption to Church Lane - exiting the highway as close to the railway line as possible and crossing Church Lane once at a point with appropriate visibility.

We are also proposing to locate the panels as close as possible to the existing electricity infrastructure, the M20 and the railway line.

Our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Based upon the feedback we received during the first round of consultation, and our engagement with officers at Ashford Borough Council, we have been carrying out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This assesses the impact of our proposals on the environment, identifies significant impacts (both positive and negative) and ensures that these are considered in the decision-making process.

Our detailed design

Since the previous consultation we have updated our design to include the following changes:

- Setting the solar panels back from neighbouring properties
- Introducing areas for new wildlife habitats within the scheme boundary
- Placing solar panels in areas of the site with less visual impact from local heritage assets

Find out more and share your views

To view our site layout and updated maps, please visit our virtual exhibition at edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour or attend one of our public exhibition events.

You can also contact us by calling Freephone 0800 0194 576 or by emailing east.stour@edf-re.uk

Please find details of our public exhibition events below:

Tuesday 2 November, 3:30pm to 7:30pm

Aldington Village Hall, The Corner,
Roman Road, Aldington,
Ashford TN25 7EE

Wednesday 3 November, 2:30pm to 6:30pm

Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall,
Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne,
Ashford TN25 5LF

We are conscious of the current public health situation. Hand sanitizer and masks will be made available, although not mandatory. It may be necessary to limit access to the venues at particularly busy times to ensure appropriate social distancing and we appreciate your understanding should there be a short wait before you can enter.

You can respond to our consultation by filling in our consultation questionnaire and posting it by Freepost to:

East Stour Solar Farm consultation,
FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY,
c/o SEC Newgate UK, Sky Light City Tower,
50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.

Filling in our online questionnaire on our project website:

edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour
Emailing us your response to
east.stour@edf-re.uk



Consultation Questionnaire

Please only answer the questions that you want to.

We recommend that you view our virtual exhibition at edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour or attend one of our public exhibitions before completing this questionnaire.

Please return this questionnaire to

East Stour Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUJJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK,
Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.

The consultation deadline is Monday 29 November.

1. The project

Q1 Do you support our proposals for East Stour Solar Farm?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Q2 Please use the space below to explain your answer to the previous question.

Q3 Do you have any comments on our design for East Stour Solar Farm?

Q4 Do you have any comments on our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) activity?



Q5 Are there any changes that you would like us to make in advance of submitting our planning application?

Q6 Please provide any other comments that you have below.

2. About yourself

Do you live locally?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you're local please provide your postcode, so we can analyse whether we're reaching local people.

Are you responding as a representative of any organisation or group?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, which organisation?

If you'd like us to speak to your organisation, let us know by contacting us on Freephone 0800 0194 576 or east.stour@edf-re.uk and we can arrange to do this.

What age category do you fall into?

Under 20 ☐	20-29 ☐	30-39 ☐	40-49 ☐
50-59 ☐	60-69 ☐	70-79 ☐	80+ ☐

Privacy

We take your privacy seriously. We have appointed SEC Newgate UK to assist us in carrying out this consultation. The consultant may collect the following data from you if you choose to share it: your name, address, email and the contents of the feedback you have given. They record this information about you for the purposes of asking for your views on the proposed East Stour Solar Farm. Your personal data will not be used for any other purposes without your consent. At the end of the project, the consultant will remove your contact details from their information systems. If you wish to review their privacy policy in more detail, please visit their website: secnewgate.co.uk

Appendix 8 - Images of Aldington public exhibition event



Appendix 9 - Consultation website and Virtual Exhibition (second consultation)

[Home](#) | [EDF Renewables UK](#) | [EDF Renewables Ireland](#)





East Stour

East Stour is a proposed solar farm close to Sellindge and Aldington in Kent.

[Visit the virtual exhibition](#)

East Stour Solar Farm – Second public consultation

Earlier this year, we introduced our proposals for East Stour Solar Farm and held an initial public consultation. We are grateful to everyone who took the time to share their feedback with us. We are now consulting on our detailed design proposals ahead of submitting a planning application to Ashford Borough Council later this year.

Having reviewed the feedback received during our first consultation, we have incorporated the following details into our design:

- Setting the solar panels back from neighbouring properties
- Introducing areas for new wildlife habitats within the scheme boundary
- Placing solar panels in areas of the site with less visual impact from local heritage assets

[Visit the virtual exhibition](#)

About East Stour Solar Farm

EDF Renewables is proposing a new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge substation.

It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of approximately 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year.¹

The whole site totals approximately 102ha (252 acres) – but this includes land that may be used for planting and biodiversity improvements as well as solar panels.

¹Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBEIS, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.

Find out more

We want your views on our updated proposals and are consulting until 29 November 2021.

We are making a range of other ways to find out more and respond to the consultation available. You can:

- View a virtual public exhibition using the links on this page. This presents more information about our proposals (including our latest site plans) and how to take part in the consultation.
- Visit one of our public exhibition events that we are holding in the area at the below dates and times –

Tuesday 2 November, 3:30pm to 7:30pm

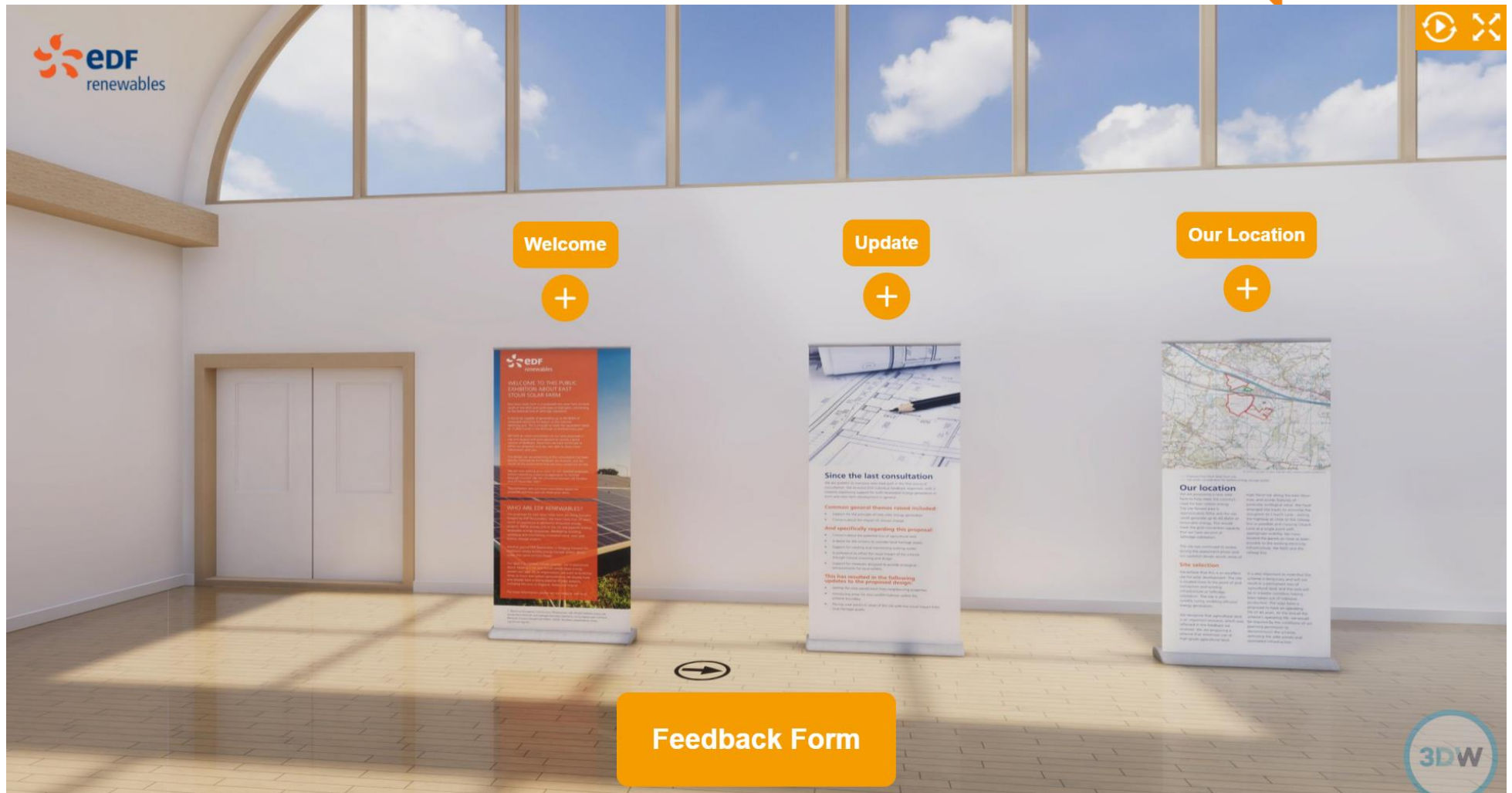
Aldington Village Hall, The Corner, Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford TN25 7EE

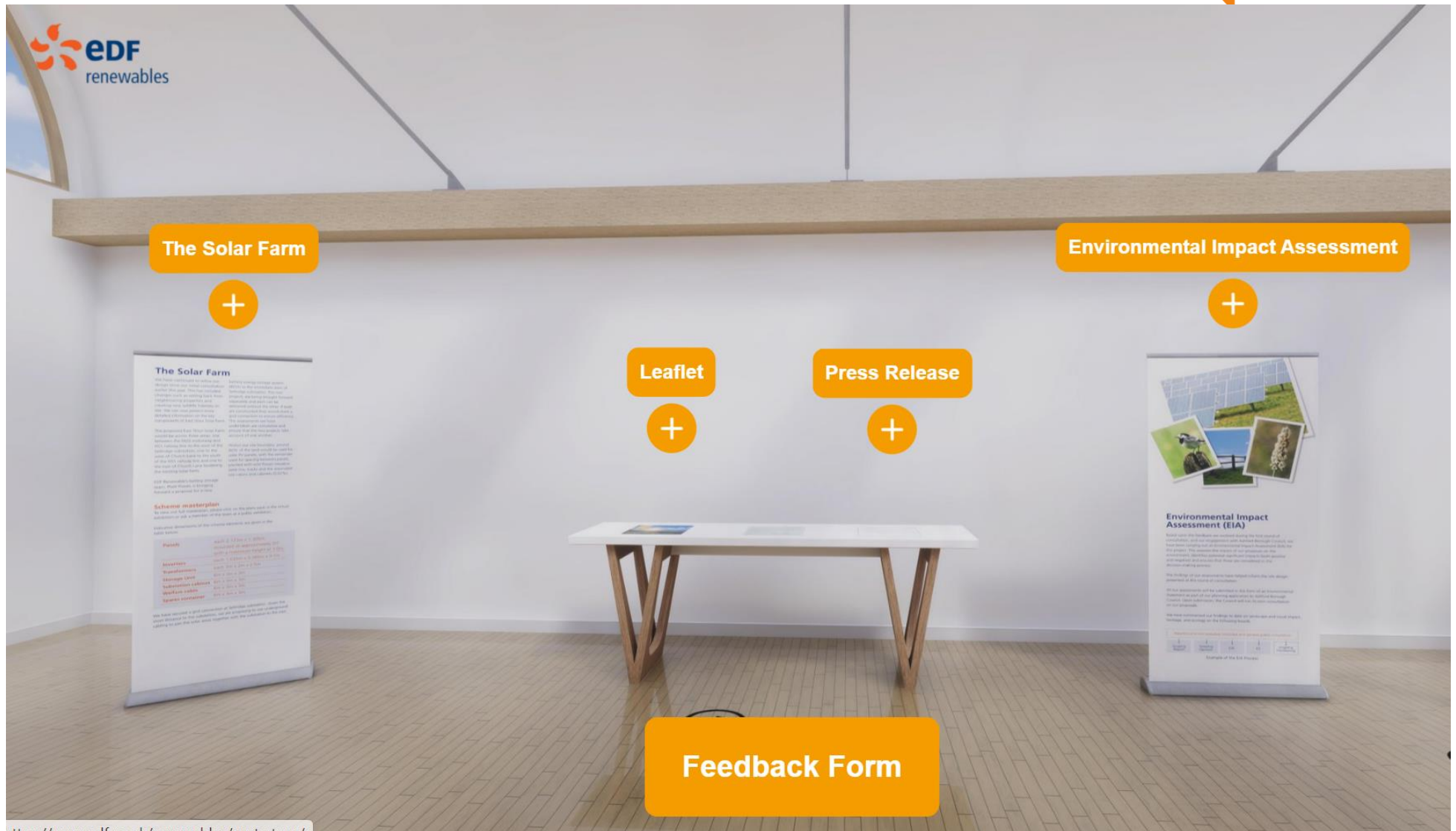
Wednesday 3 November, 2:30pm to 6:30pm

Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne, Ashford TN25 5LF

- Contact us directly on east.stour@edf-re.uk or 0800 0194 576.

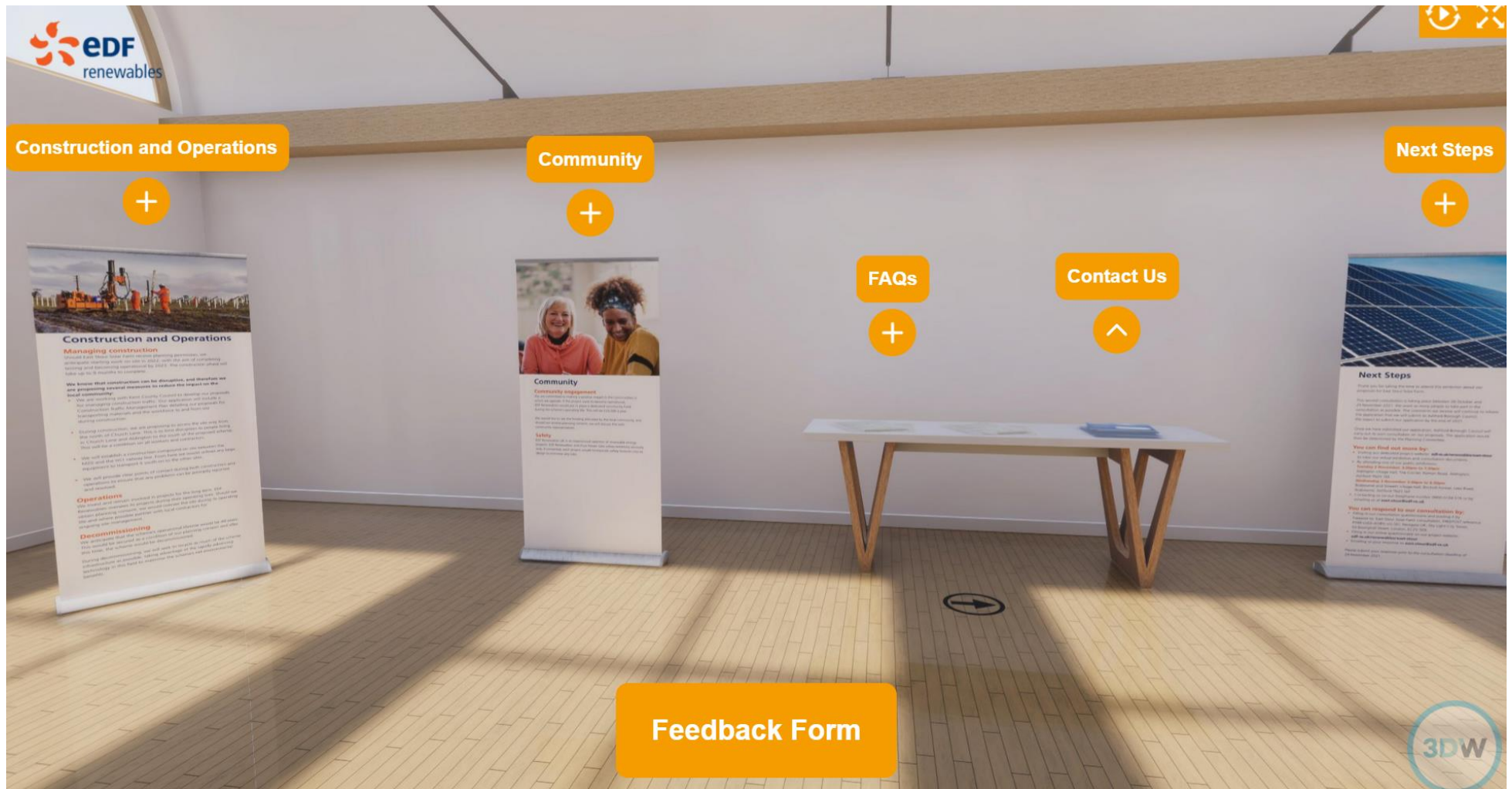
[Visit the virtual exhibition](#)



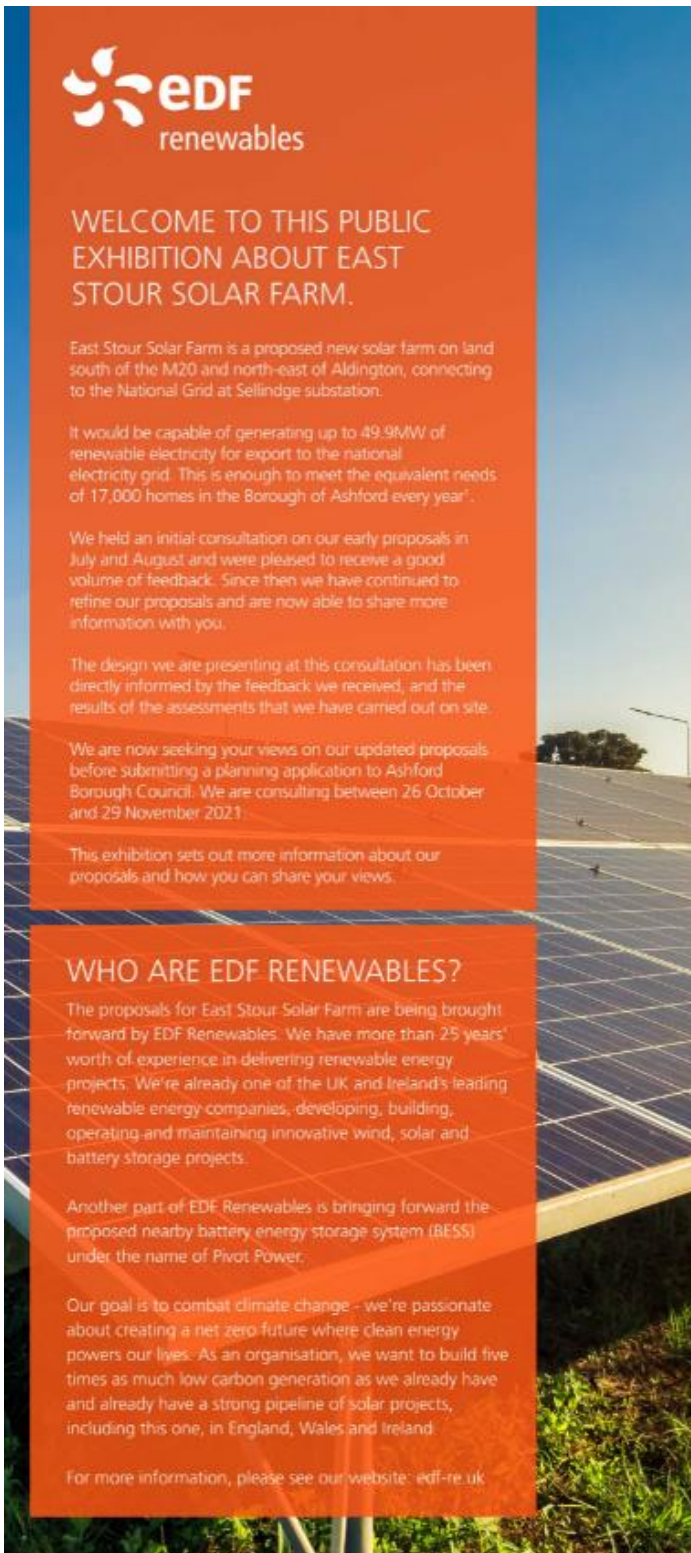


<https://www.edf-renewables.co.uk/about-us/>





Appendix 10 - Virtual exhibition boards (second consultation)



edf
renewables

WELCOME TO THIS PUBLIC EXHIBITION ABOUT EAST STOUR SOLAR FARM.

East Stour Solar Farm is a proposed new solar farm on land south of the M20 and north-east of Aldington, connecting to the National Grid at Sellindge substation.

It would be capable of generating up to 49.9MW of renewable electricity for export to the national electricity grid. This is enough to meet the equivalent needs of 17,000 homes in the Borough of Ashford every year¹.

We held an initial consultation on our early proposals in July and August and were pleased to receive a good volume of feedback. Since then we have continued to refine our proposals and are now able to share more information with you.

The design we are presenting at this consultation has been directly informed by the feedback we received, and the results of the assessments that we have carried out on site.

We are now seeking your views on our updated proposals before submitting a planning application to Ashford Borough Council. We are consulting between 26 October and 29 November 2021.

This exhibition sets out more information about our proposals and how you can share your views.

WHO ARE EDF RENEWABLES?

The proposals for East Stour Solar Farm are being brought forward by EDF Renewables. We have more than 25 years' worth of experience in delivering renewable energy projects. We're already one of the UK and Ireland's leading renewable energy companies, developing, building, operating and maintaining innovative wind, solar and battery storage projects.

Another part of EDF Renewables is bringing forward the proposed nearby battery energy storage system (BESS) under the name of Pivot Power.

Our goal is to combat climate change - we're passionate about creating a net zero future where clean energy powers our lives. As an organisation, we want to build five times as much low carbon generation as we already have and already have a strong pipeline of solar projects, including this one, in England, Wales and Ireland.

For more information, please see our website: edf-re.uk

¹. Based on European Commission, Photovoltaic GIS (PVGIS-SARAH) initial site production estimate and average domestic electricity consumption per Ashford Borough Council household (DBEIS, 2020). Numbers presented to three significant figures.



Since the last consultation

We are grateful to everyone who took part in the first round of consultation. We received 254 individual feedback responses, with a majority expressing support for both renewable energy generation in Kent and solar farm development in general.

Common general themes raised included:

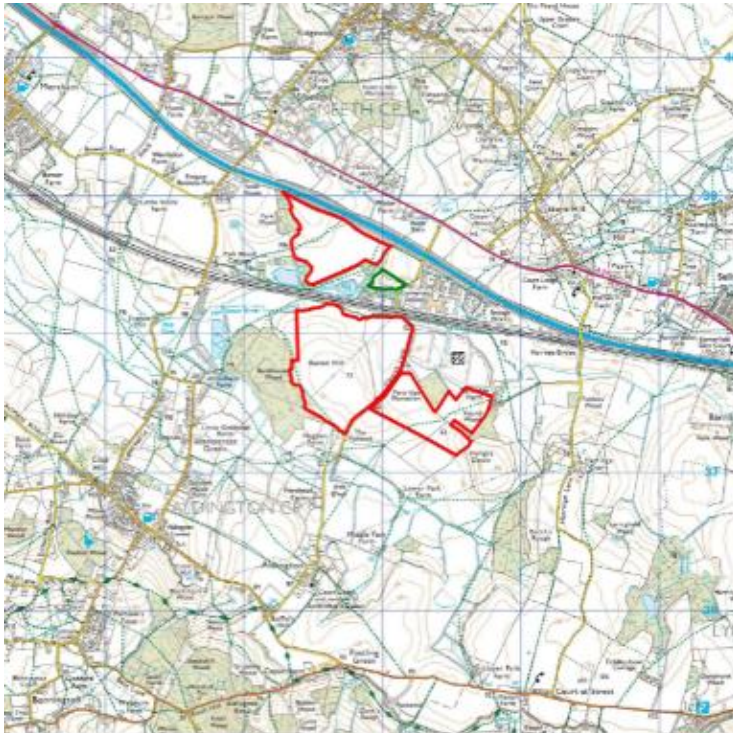
- Support for the principle of new solar energy generation
- Concern about the impact of climate change

And specifically regarding this proposal:

- Concern about the potential loss of agricultural land
- A desire for the scheme to consider local heritage assets
- Support for creating and maintaining walking routes
- A preference to offset the visual impact of the scheme through natural screening and design
- Support for measures designed to provide ecological enhancements for local wildlife

This has resulted in the following updates to the proposed design:

- Setting the solar panels back from neighbouring properties
- Introducing areas for new wildlife habitats within the scheme boundary
- Placing solar panels in areas of the site with less visual impact from local heritage assets



- Proposed East Stour Solar Farm site
- Site under consideration for battery energy storage system

Our location

We are proposing a new solar farm to help meet the country's need for low carbon energy. The site fenced area is approximately 92ha and the site could generate up to 49.9MW of renewable energy. This would meet the grid connection capacity that we have secured at Sellindge substation.

The site has continued to evolve during the assessment phase and our updated design avoids areas of

high flood risk along the East Stour river, and avoids features of particular ecological value. We have arranged site tracks to minimise the disruption to Church Lane - exiting the highway as close to the railway line as possible and crossing Church Lane at a single point with appropriate visibility. We have located the panels as close as been possible to the existing electricity infrastructure, the M20 and the railway line.

Site selection

We believe that this is an excellent site for solar development. The site is located close to the point of grid connection and existing infrastructure at Sellindge substation. The site is also suitably sunny, enabling efficient energy generation.

We recognise that agricultural land is an important resource, which was reflected in the feedback we received. We are proposing a scheme that minimises use of high-grade agricultural land.

It is also important to note that the scheme is temporary and will not result in a permanent loss of agricultural land, and the soils will be in a better condition having been taken out of intensive production. The solar farm is proposed to have an operating life of 40 years. At the end of the scheme's operating life, we would be required by the conditions of our planning permission to decommission the scheme, removing the solar panels and associated infrastructure.

The Solar Farm

We have continued to refine our design since our initial consultation earlier this year. This has included changes such as setting back from neighbouring properties and creating new wildlife habitats on site. We can now present more detailed information on the key components of East Stour Solar Farm.

The proposed East Stour Solar Farm would be across three areas: one between the M20 motorway and HS1 railway line to the west of the Sellindge substation, one to the west of Church Lane to the south of the HS1 railway line and one to the east of Church Lane bordering the existing solar farm.

EDF Renewable's battery storage team, Pivot Power, is bringing forward a proposal for a new

battery energy storage system (BESS) to the immediate west of Sellindge substation. The two projects are being brought forward separately and each can be delivered without the other. If both are constructed they would share a grid connection to ensure efficiency. The assessments we have undertaken are cumulative and ensure that the two projects take account of one another.

Within our site boundary, around 60% of the land would be used for solar PV panels, with the remainder used for spacing between panels, planted with wild flower meadow seed mix, tracks and the associated site cabins and cabinets (0.02%).

Scheme masterplan

To view our full masterplan, please click on the plans pack in the virtual exhibition or ask a member of the team at a public exhibition.

Indicative dimensions of the scheme elements are given in the table below.

Panels	each 2.173m x 1.305m, mounted at approximately 20° with a maximum height of 3.0m
Inverters	each 1.035m x 0.365m x 0.7m
Transformers	each 3m x 2m x 2.5m
Storage Unit	6m x 3m x 3m
Substation cabinet	6m x 3m x 3m
Welfare cabin	6m x 3m x 3m
Spares container	6m x 3m x 3m

We have secured a grid connection at Sellindge substation. Given the short distance to the substation, we are proposing to use underground cabling to join the solar areas together with the substation to the east.



Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Based upon the feedback we received during the first round of consultation, and our engagement with Ashford Borough Council, we have been carrying out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for this project. This assesses the impact of our proposals on the environment, identifies potential significant impacts (both positive and negative) and ensures that these are considered in the decision-making process.

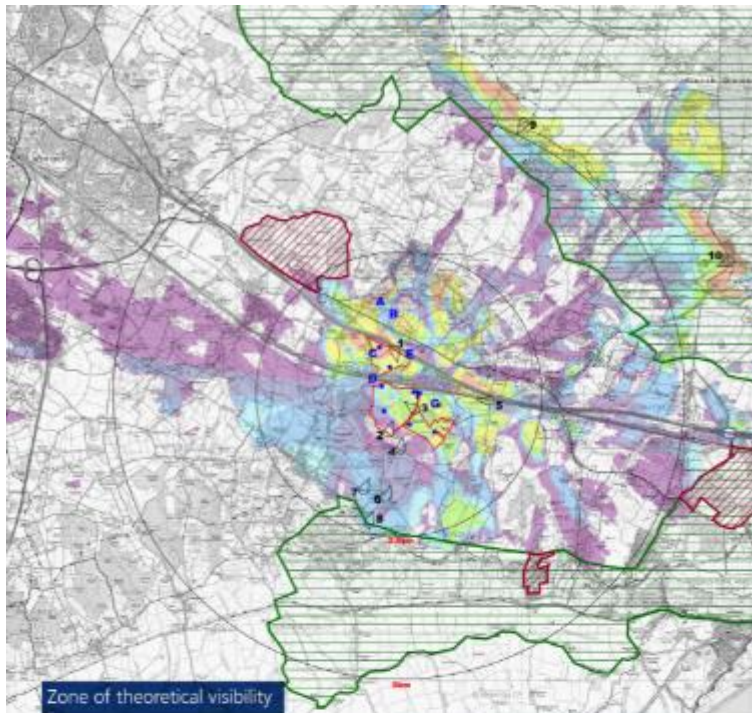
The findings of our assessments have helped inform the site design presented at this round of consultation.

All our assessments will be submitted in the form of an Environmental Statement as part of our planning application to Ashford Borough Council. Upon submission, the Council will run its own consultation on our proposals.

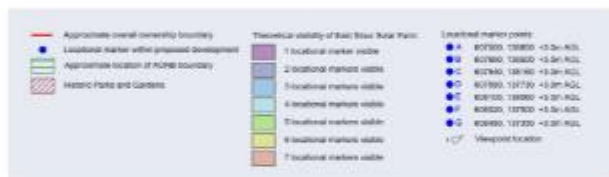
We have summarised our findings to date on landscape and visual impact, heritage, and ecology on the following boards.



Example of the EIA Process



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Landscape and Visual Impact

Landscape and views

Our design seeks to minimise the scheme's impacts on our neighbours and the surrounding environment.

This has included working with a landscape architect to design a layout that best fits within the local landscape, terrain and screening and responds to the feedback that we received.

We have refined our design to set the scheme back from the edge of fields and neighbouring properties. We are proposing to locate inverters and transformers away from the site boundary to minimise any noise impacts from the site during operations.

The scheme design will also include a regime of planting to appropriately screen the scheme infrastructure from certain viewpoints.

As part of our planning application that we will submit to Ashford Borough Council, we will include detailed analysis of viewpoints that we have agreed with the Council.



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Heritage and Ecology

Heritage

The feedback that we received in the first round of consultation highlighted the need to consider heritage assets in the scheme design, such as St Martin's Church in Aldington.

Our application will include a full assessment of the scheme's heritage impacts both in terms of archaeology on the site and other features in the landscape. The need to protect these assets will continue to guide the content of our proposals.

A detailed geophysical scan of the site was undertaken over a number of weeks to identify specific below-ground anomalies. Where analysis suggests there may be sensitive archaeological features, we can use surface mounted foundations to avoid disturbing the ground.

Ecology and biodiversity

We are committed to improving the local environment through the development of East Stour Solar Farm and are aiming to achieve a biodiversity net gain.

The principal ecological benefit is the removal of the site from intensive farming and the planting of wildflower meadow across the site. Additionally, there will be hedge planting and the installation of bat and bird boxes.

The site security fence will have a gap at its base to allow small mammals to pass through and larger gaps will be located at established badger commuting points.

We will continue to consult with local authorities and conservation groups as we refine our proposals for submission.



Construction and Operations

Managing construction

Should East Stour Solar Farm receive planning permission, we anticipate starting work on site in 2022, with the aim of completing testing and becoming operational by 2023. The construction phase will take up to 9 months to complete.

We know that construction can be disruptive, and therefore we are proposing several measures to reduce the impact on the local community:

- We are working with Kent County Council to develop our proposals for managing construction traffic. Our application will include a Construction Traffic Management Plan detailing our proposals for transporting materials and the workforce to and from site during construction.
- During construction, we are proposing to access the site only from the north of Church Lane. This is to limit disruption to people living in Church Lane and Aldington to the south of the proposed scheme. This will be a condition on all workers and contractors.
- We will establish a construction compound on site between the M20 and the HS1 railway line. From here we would unload any large equipment to transport it south on to the other sites.
- We will provide clear points of contact during both construction and operations to ensure that any problems can be promptly reported and resolved.

Operations

We invest and remain involved in projects for the long term. EDF Renewables oversees its projects during their operating lives. Should we obtain planning consent, we would oversee the site during its operating life and where possible partner with local contractors for ongoing site management.

Decommissioning

We anticipate that the scheme's operational lifetime would be 40 years. This would be secured as a condition of our planning consent and after this time, the scheme would be decommissioned.

During decommissioning, we will seek to recycle as much of the scheme infrastructure as possible, taking advantage of the rapidly advancing technology in this field to maximise the scheme's net environmental benefits.



Community

Community engagement

We are committed to making a positive impact in the communities in which we operate. If the project were to become operational, EDF Renewables would put in place a dedicated community fund during the scheme's operating life. This will be £20,000 a year.

We would like to see the funding allocated by the local community, and should we receive planning consent, we will discuss this with community representatives.

Safety

EDF Renewables UK is an experienced operator of renewable energy projects. EDF Renewables and Pivot Power take safety extremely seriously and, if consented, each project would incorporate safety features into its design to minimise any risks.



Next Steps

Thank you for taking the time to attend this exhibition about our proposals for East Stour Solar Farm.

This second consultation is taking place between 26 October and 29 November 2021. We want as many people to take part in the consultation as possible. The comments we receive will continue to inform the application that we will submit to Ashford Borough Council. We expect to submit our application by the end of 2021.

Once we have submitted our application, Ashford Borough Council will carry out its own consultation on our proposals. The application would then be determined by the Planning Committee.

You can find out more by:

- Visiting our dedicated project website: edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour to view our virtual exhibition and consultation documents.
- By attending one of our public exhibitions:
Tuesday 2 November, 3:30pm to 7:30pm
Aldington Village Hall, The Corner, Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford TN25 7EE
Wednesday 3 November 2:30pm to 6:30pm
Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne, Ashford TN25 5LF
- Contacting us on our freephone number 0800 0194 576 or by emailing us at east.stour@edf-re.uk

You can respond to our consultation by:

- Filling in our consultation questionnaire and posting it by
Freepost to: East Stour Solar Farm consultation, FREEPOST reference RTRB-LUUJ-AGBY, c/o SEC Newgate UK, Sky Light City Tower, 50 Basinghall Street, London, EC2V 5DE.
- Filling in our online questionnaire on our project website: edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour
- Emailing us your response to east.stour@edf-re.uk

Please submit your response prior to the consultation deadline of 29 November 2021

Appendix 11 - Stakeholder outreach email (second consultation)

I hope that this email finds you well. We will shortly be launching the second round of public consultation on our proposals for East Stour Solar Farm.

We wanted to get in touch in advance of our newsletter landing to let you know and to invite you to a preview session with the project team ahead of our exhibitions.

We plan to hold public events at the following dates and times:

- **Tuesday 2nd November 3:30pm to 7:30pm** at Aldington Village Hall, The Corner, Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford TN25 7EE
- **Wednesday 3rd November 2:30pm to 6:30pm** at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, Bircholt Forstal, Lees Road, Brabourne, Ashford TN25 5LF

As was the case with our previous consultation, we will also be making copies of the consultation materials available online at www.edf-re.uk/renewables/east-stour alongside a digital feedback form. The latest information will be on the website from tomorrow.

We will be holding a dedicated preview event for councillors in advance of each exhibition: from 2:30pm to 3:30pm at Aldington Village Hall on 2nd November and from 1:30pm to 2:30pm at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall on 3rd November.

If you plan to attend either, do let me know.

If you are unable to attend either event, we would very much like to meet with you to discuss our latest proposals. Do let me know if you would like to meet and we can look to arrange a suitable date and time either virtually or in person.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Appendix 12 - Plans of Scheme design included within virtual exhibition (second consultation)



East Stour Solar Farm



Site Layout and Design

The site was identified from its proximity to available grid connection capacity at the Sellindge substation. Environmental and technical factors such as flood zones, existing infrastructure and land use were considered in the subsequent design of the layout.



The detailed site design process has incorporated constraints identified by through consultation and the environmental assessments. In particular, the proposed layout was informed by:

- restricting the height of the panels to 3m to minimise visual impact;
- avoiding areas at risk of flooding;
- avoiding and accommodating the existing infrastructure crossing the site;
- footpaths; and
- providing separation between the solar farm and its neighbours.



East Stour Solar Farm

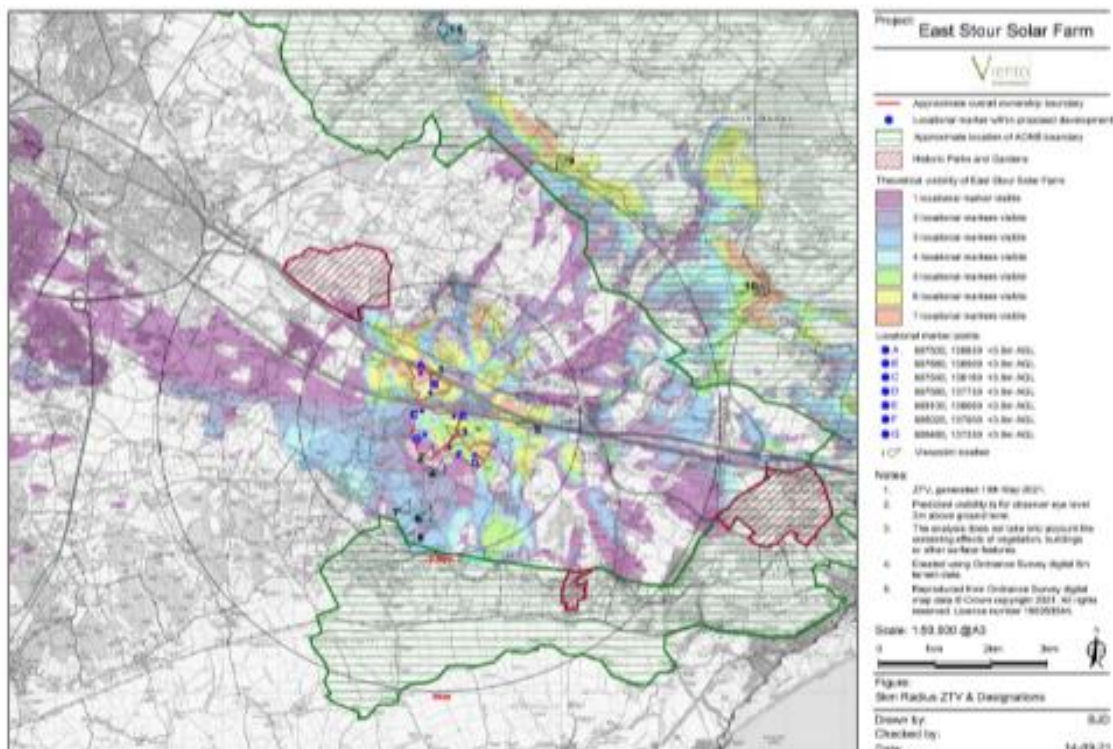


Visualisations

Photomontages 4 and 5, produced for this exhibition, are intended to illustrate the scale and context of the proposal from the representative viewpoints agreed with the Local Planning Authority. They are produced using Ordnance Survey terrain data to accurately locate the solar farm over the existing view.

These viewpoints form a small part of a larger landscape and visual assessment which is being undertaken, focussing on a 5km study area around the site to identify all significant impacts upon landscape and visual amenity from the proposal. The full set of viewpoints will be submitted with the planning application.

The diagram below shows the location of the viewpoints as well as where the site could be theoretically visible from, based on landform alone (excluding existing vegetation and built form).



Visualisations



Junction of Footpaths AE459 and AE460 near Lower Park Farm

4

Existing View



Predicted View



Footpath AE477 near Grove Cottage, Aldington

6

Existing View



Predicted View

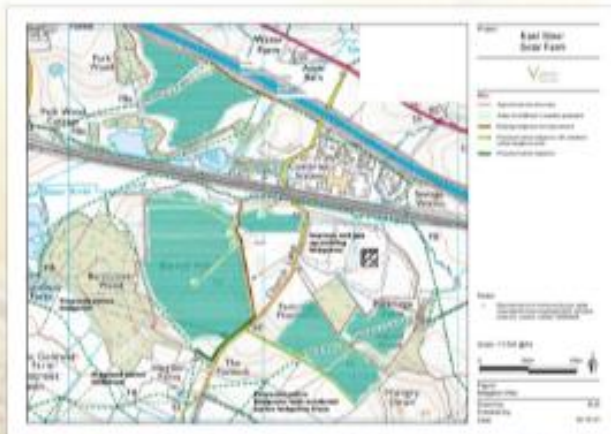


East Stour Solar Farm



Ecological Enhancements

In addition to the renewable energy generation benefits, and associated savings in Carbon Dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, the East Stour solar farm will bring a number of other ecological benefits.



Meadow planting

As shown on the proposed planting plan, there will be species-rich wild flower meadow created around, under and between the solar panels, providing habitat for birds and insects. The planted areas will be managed with cutting at appropriate times of the year.

Hedge planting and improvements

In addition to the above, a series of new and regenerated hedgerows are included within the layout. The species mix to be utilised will be discussed with Ashford Borough Council but will comprise local native species appropriate to the local soils.

Other ecological enhancements

The ecological surveys have informed a series of further proposed habitat enhancement measures including sky lark nesting plots, bird and bat boxes as well as 'bug hotel' habitat to encourage and support local native bee and other invertebrate populations.





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