1. Introduction

Stonestreet Green Solar

Thank you for attending this local information event about the proposed Stonestreet Green Solar project. These exhibition boards provide an overview of the project and information about how to take part in the Statutory Consultation.

Non-statutory consultation on the proposed Stonestreet Green Solar project (the “Project”) was undertaken over five weeks in spring 2022 with a further five weeks of Statutory Consultation undertaken in autumn 2022 (the “2022 Statutory Consultation”).

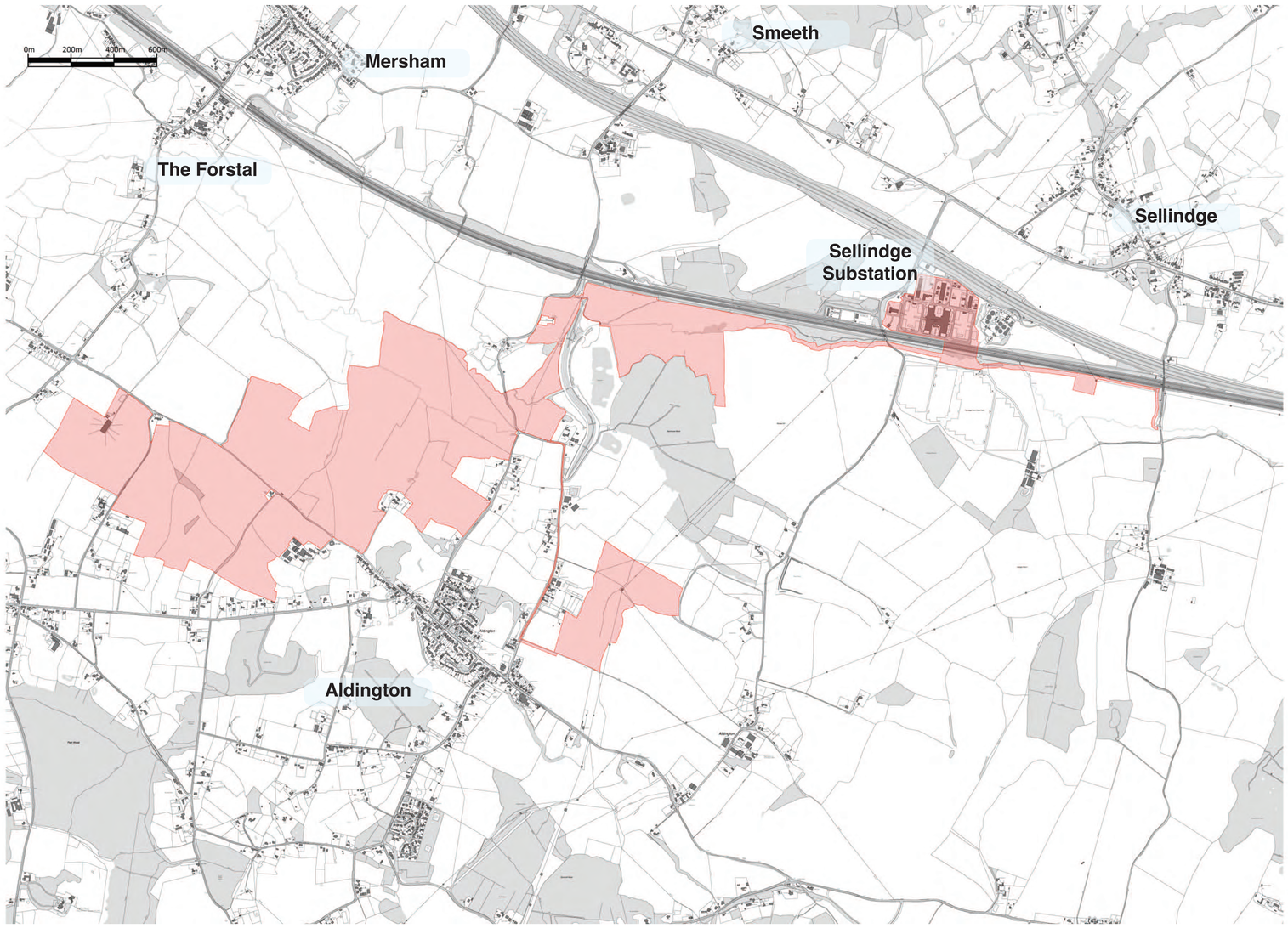
Having carefully considered the responses to both those consultations and made changes to the Project in light of those responses, further studies and surveys, ongoing environmental assessments and technical design work, EPL 001 Limited[1] (the "Applicant") has chosen to undertake a further five weeks of Statutory Consultation on the updated Project. The Applicant is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited.

These exhibition boards provide details of the changes made to the Project since the 2022 Statutory Consultation, along with further details about the Project and its anticipated effects.

This Statutory Consultation is being carried out in accordance with the Planning Act 2008 between 12th June and 17th July 2023.

Once the responses to this consultation have been considered, the Applicant will finalise the Project and then submit an application (the "Application") for a development consent order ("DCO") to the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008.

[1]Company name: EPL 001 Limited; company number: 12444050; registered office address: 2nd Floor, Regis House, 45 King William Street, London, United Kingdom, EC4R 9AN; registered in England and Wales.



We are consulting between 12th June 2023 and 17th July 2023.

Contact details

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to find out more information about Stonestreet Green Solar or to provide your feedback on the proposals.

You can contact our Community Relations Team by using the details below.

Email: info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
Call our Freephone information line: 08081 698335
Visit our website: www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk
Send us a letter: FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar
You can also follow us on Twitter: @SGS_solar



2. Our Proposals

Project overview

The Project comprises the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of solar photovoltaic ("PV") arrays and energy storage, together with associated infrastructure. The Project will be able to export and import up to 99.9 megawatts ("MW") of electricity to the electricity grid.

The Project will be a high quality and innovative solar farm. It will provide a domestic source of renewable energy for 40 years, making a meaningful addition to UK domestic energy security and contributing to the UK's climate change objectives. It has been carefully sited and designed, taking account of nearby receptors, and will provide significant biodiversity improvements in the area.





The Project includes:

- Solar panel areas: including PV panels, mounting structures, converters, connecting cabling and safety and security measures;
- Inverter Stations: to convert direct current produced by the PV panels into alternating current that can be exported to the electricity network;
- Energy storage units: to provide grid balancing services and able to be charged directly by the PV panels;
- Project substation: to house switchgear, Project transformer, control equipment and site facilities;
- Cable connection route: to connect into the existing substation at Sellindge.

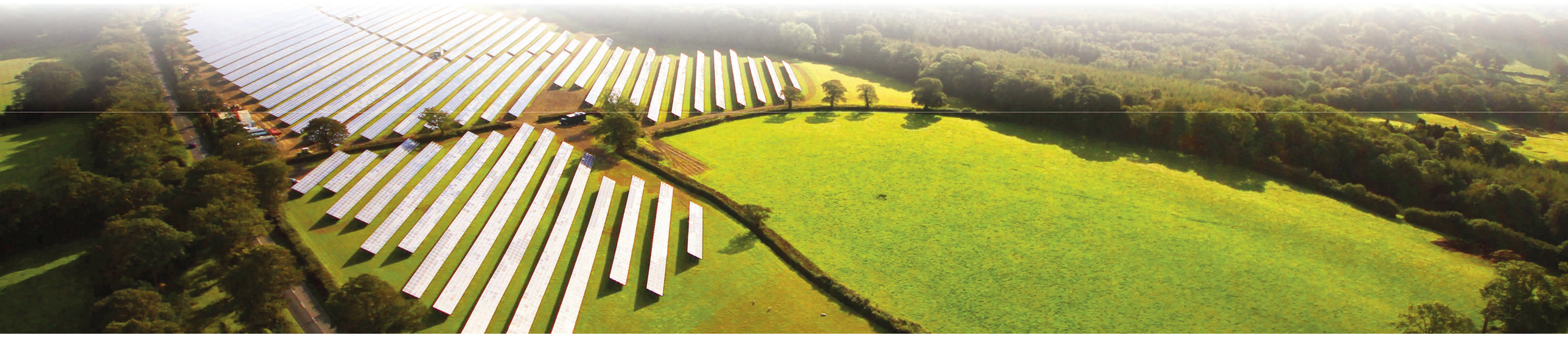
There are currently two potential points where the Project could connect to the electricity grid. The Applicant's preferred route is directly into the existing Sellindge Substation and lies entirely within the administrative area of Ashford Borough Council. The alternative route, which would connect into the Sellindge Substation via an existing nearby tower, would require additional land some of which would be located within the administrative boundary of Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

Why here?

The site has been selected for a number of reasons, including:

- The south east of England was identified as a suitable area due to the high levels of solar irradiation and the high level of regional energy demand. The Project will contribute to meeting local demand including from High Speed 1 and Otterpool Park;
- The securing of available capacity at the Sellindge Substation provides a point of connection for the scale of energy generation proposed;
- The site is not subject to any international, national, landscape, ecological or geological designations, or to any housing allocations or heritage designations;
- The site benefits from existing natural screening through vegetation and topography;
- The site is approximately 80% lower-quality agricultural land or non-agricultural land.

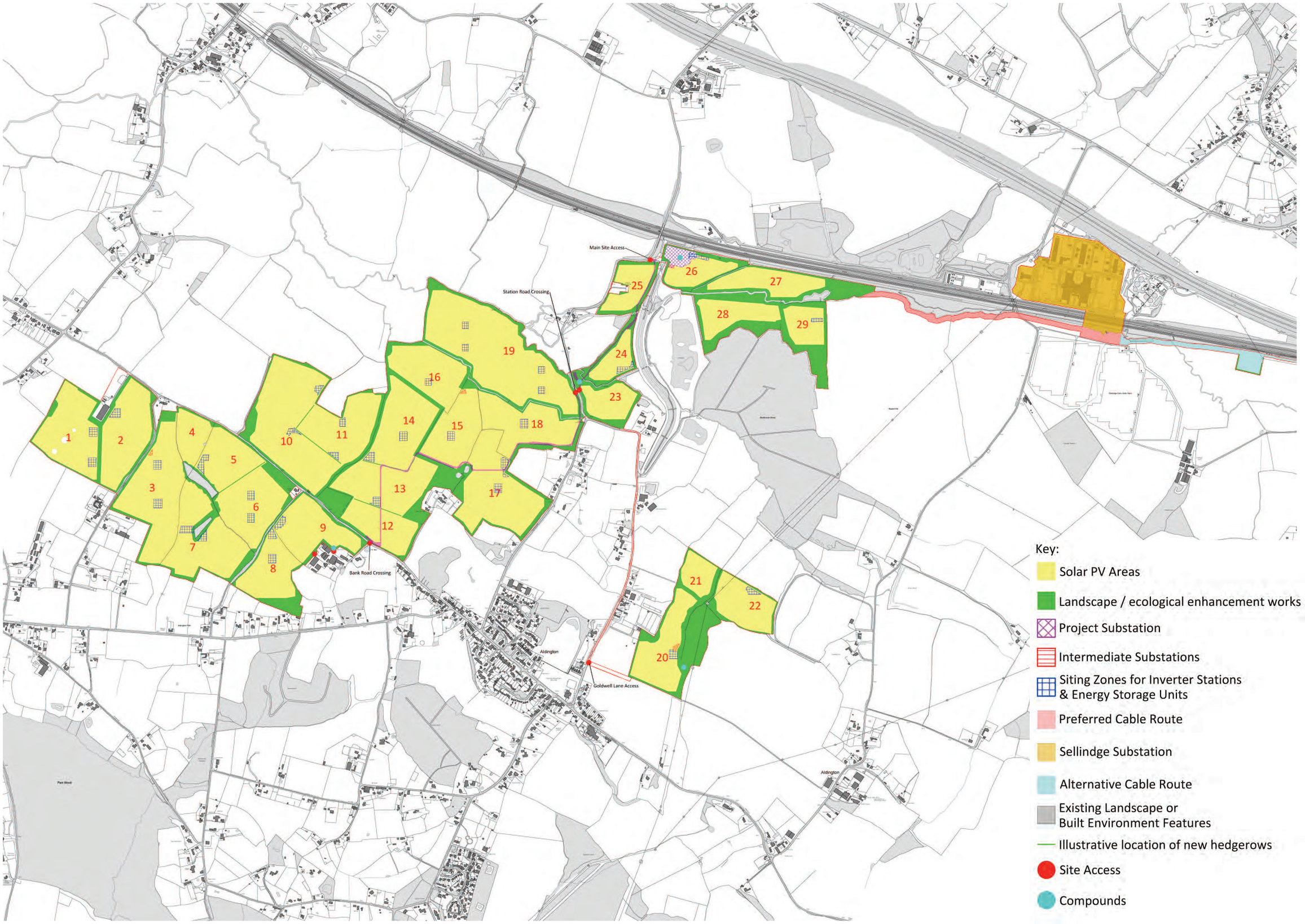
More information on the site selection process is set out in Chapter 4 of the PEIR Addendum which forms part of this consultation.





3. Indicative Proposed Layout

Stonestreet Green Solar





4. Need & Project Benefits

Project Need

The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the Secretary of State to ensure that the net carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline in the UK (known as net zero). This is the overarching carbon reduction target for the Government.

In October 2021, the Government published a report entitled 'Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener'. One of the key policies in this report is for the UK to be powered entirely by clean electricity by 2035, which would also help ensure UK security of electricity supply and result in a reduction in energy costs.

In April 2022, the Government published the British Energy Security Strategy which forecast an increase in UK solar from the current level of approximately 15,000 MW to 70,000 MW by 2035.

In March 2023, the Government published for consultation the updated draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3).

This explains that there is an urgent need for new renewable electricity generating capacity and that the Government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to meet net zero emissions and achieve low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector. It notes that solar farms are one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK and the cheapest form of electricity generation.

Whilst a portion of the additional 55,000 MW of capacity may be delivered by rooftop solar the Government does not consider that this would be sufficient to address the urgent need for new renewable energy in the UK.

Even under highly optimistic projections it is likely that the UK will require over 200 projects of a similar size to the Project by 2035.

Benefits

The Project will deliver the following key benefits:

- It will make a meaningful contribution to the UK's legally binding net zero commitment;
- It will provide an additional source of domestic energy security that is not impacted by gas prices;
- It will displace the generation of electricity from other conventional power sources, including fossil-fuel reliant sources, resulting in a saving of approximately 34,500 tonnes of carbon per year;
- It will result in a biodiversity net gain of more than 100%, significantly above the 10% national biodiversity net gain target or the 20% Kent County target;
- It will provide for the additional planting of new hedgerows and woodland, with additional planting in already established areas. The updated Project design includes over 30,000 new hedgerow plants and over 16,000 new woodland shrubs/trees;
- It will introduce new public rights of way in the local area to improve connectivity;
- It will result in a reduction in nitrate emissions to the East Stour river; and
- It will provide a community benefit fund to be used locally for social and environmental projects.





5. Consultation Overview

Consultation to date

Non-Statutory Consultation took place over five weeks between 25 March and 29 April 2022.

Statutory Consultation under the Planning Act 2008 was then carried out over a further five weeks between 25 October and 29 November 2022 (the “2022 Statutory Consultation”). This provided detailed information about the Project, including a Preliminary Environmental Information Report ("PEIR").

In each case the Applicant held four, three hour exhibition events at each of Aldington, Bonnington, Mersham, and Sellindge.

As part of the 2022 Statutory Consultation a two hour public presentation was held, which included a Q&A session where the Applicant responded to over 40 questions received from the local community.

Feedback from the 2022 Statutory Consultation

We received 168 responses overall to the Statutory Consultation, including from statutory consultees, local authorities and the local community.

Common themes raised included:

- Support for the principle of new solar energy generation
- Concern about the overall scale of development and potential loss of agricultural land
- Questions over the need for the development
- Questions regarding site suitability and the consideration of alternative sites
- Concern about impacts to public rights of way
- Concern about HGV access
- A desire for all cables associated with the scheme to be buried underground
- Requests for more information about landscape and visual impact, ecology and local job creation

Our Response

Since the 2022 Statutory Consultation we have refined the Project, having regard to all consultation responses received, as well as the results of further studies and surveys and ongoing environmental assessments. These have included further ecological surveys and mitigation, viewpoint analysis, landscape improvements, archaeological redesign and public rights of way refinement.

We have therefore:

- Developed a Book of Plans to support this consultation that provides further detail on our proposals;
- Provided further information on the need for the Project, site suitability and alternative sites;
- Developed our package of landscaping and biodiversity enhancements, to include additional hedgerow and woodland planting and habitat creation;
- Reconfigured proposed public rights of way diversions;
- Increased and enhanced setbacks from residential dwellings to reduce visual amenity impacts;
- Updated the proposals to provide additional habitat for wildlife, in particular skylark and yellowhammer, to mitigate impacts identified in the previous design;
- Relocated electrical infrastructure and provided mitigation to reduce any noise, visual amenity and archaeological impacts;
- Updated the scheme boundary (Order Limits) to remove small areas not considered necessary for development and to add land at Sellindge Substation to allow installation of new ducting, if required; and
- Undertaken further assessment of the potential for any cumulative effects of the Project together with other schemes in the vicinity of the Project.





6. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Stonestreet Green Solar

The Project is an Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") development. We are committed to improving the local environment and the Project will be supported by a long-term landscape and ecological management plan (“LEMP”) to ensure this is achieved.

We are required to carry out an environmental impact assessment of our proposals as part of the planning process. The preliminary outcomes from the EIA have informed the site design and content of this consultation.

The topics in the EIA include:

- Cultural heritage
- Landscape and views
- Biodiversity
- Water environment
- Land contamination
- Socio-economics
- Traffic and access
- Noise
- Climate change
- Cumulative effects

Summary of effects

A summary of each EIA topic is set out below. For further information and conclusions on residual effects please refer to the Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR Addendum that has been published to support this Statutory Consultation. More detailed information can be found in the topic-specific chapters of the PEIR, as updated by the PEIR Addendum.

Cultural heritage

Limited effects on archaeological remains and the historical landscape character of the area have been identified during construction.

These effects will be mitigated via a a programme of archaeological works and the use of native species for the reinstatement of hedgerows.

During the operational phase potential effects have been identified on the setting of nearby designated heritage assets which will be mitigated by planting hedgerows to screen views and minimise the potential for glint from the solar panels.

Landscape and views

Mitigation of impacts has been considered as part of the Project design. Taking this into account, the effects during construction and decommissioning are considered to be of moderate adverse significance; operational effects on features of the landscape will be of moderate beneficial significance, effects on landscape character will be of moderate to minor adverse significance and effects on visual receptors will be of moderate to minor adverse significance.

The establishment of new landscape features will result in improvements such as enhanced management and reinforcement of existing hedgerows, new habitat planting for the East Stour River and new shrub planting for woodland margins.

Biodiversity

Any impacts on the Stodmarsh Special Area of Conservation will be avoided by tankering any foul water to a location beyond the Stour River catchment and implementation of pollution prevention measures.

During construction suitable protection zones will be set up around veteran trees, Backhouse Wood and the East Stour River to ensure no adverse impacts.

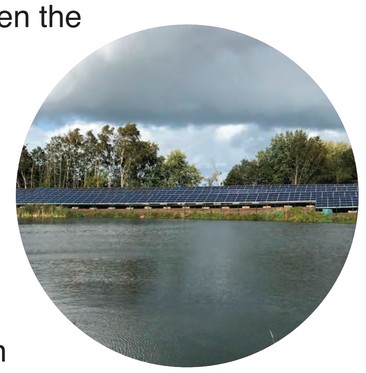
Operational phase mitigation includes the creation of new habitats adjacent to Backhouse Wood and the East Stour River and additional foraging habitat to reduce the impact of the effects on skylark, yellowhammer and brown hare that were identified and reported in the 2022 Statutory Consultation.



The Project will deliver a material Biodiversity Net Gain over its 40 year life, expected to be significantly higher than the 10% national requirement and the 20% Kent County target.

Water environment

Minor impacts have been identified with mitigation to include standoff distances between the Project and the East Stour River, ponds, lakes and drains. During construction and decommissioning phases a best practice approach will be implemented under a Construction/Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (“CEMP/DEMP”) to ensure disruption to watercourses is minimised. Operational mitigation includes a surface water drainage system that that will maintain existing rates of surface water runoff.

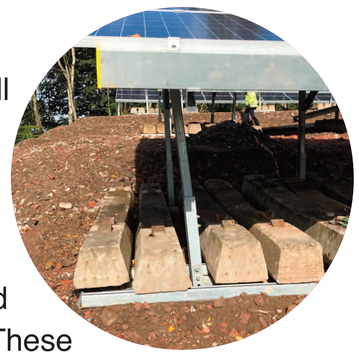




7. Environmental Impact Assessment (cont.)

Stonestreet Green Solar

Land contamination



Potential impacts during construction/decommissioning will be managed via the CEMP/DEMP which will include minimisation of dust generation and the storage of fuel, oil and chemicals within a secure bunded area or secondary containment. These measures will be carried through to the operational phase where beneficial.

Socio-economics

During construction/decommissioning the Construction/Decommissioning Traffic Management Plan ("CTMP/DTMP") and the CEMP/DEMP will minimise any impacts on local amenity. During the operational phase, the LEMP will ensure the proposed planting is maintained. Changes to improve local connectivity will be introduced to offset any negative impact from public right of way diversion.

Traffic and access

The CTMP will ensure effects of additional traffic are avoided/minimised by controlling hours of site operation/access, provision of wheel washing facilities, minibus collection and drop-off arrangements and parking strategies for construction workers. Construction traffic is planned for outside of peak hours to minimise impacts in terms of traffic flow volume and highway network capacity. A similar approach will be adopted during the decommissioning phase, controlled under the DTMP.

Noise

Mitigation is proposed to reduce potential impacts. During construction, this will include the CEMP, regular maintenance of machinery to control noise and vibration and siting of activities to avoid noise-sensitive locations. Localised noise barriers will be installed at the outset of development to shield noise-sensitive receptors as far as reasonably possible. These measures will be carried through to the operation phase where beneficial. Mitigation for the decommissioning phase will be controlled by the DEMP.

Climate change



Measures will be implemented to minimise vehicle movements and emissions during construction including the promotion of the most sustainable transport methods for construction workers to access the site. During the operational stage the approach to habitat creation, enhancement, monitoring and mitigation measures will be agreed with the local authority.

Cumulative effects

The potential effects of the project have also been considered in the context of other approved or emerging schemes. These are set out in further detail in the PEIR Addendum.

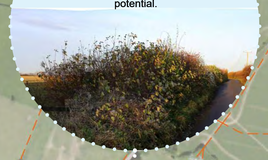




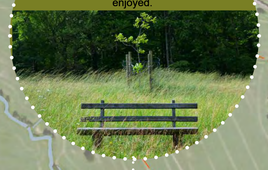
8. Landscape Strategy

Stonestreet Green Solar

Around 13km of ***Existing Hedgerows*** across the site will be reinforced with over 10,000 native hedgerow plants, and will be managed for maximum height and wildlife potential.



A ***Seating Area*** will be provided along the public footpath next to Bank Road, to allow views towards the North Downs to be enjoyed.



A minimum 10m buffer has been established to the ***East Stour River Corridor***, with over 150 new native wetland trees to be planted, including characteristic alder, birch and willow. In some places this extends to over 30m.



Over 100 hectares of ***New Grazing Pasture*** will be created on existing intensively farmed arable farmland. These areas will be managed with conservation grazing methods.



A series of ***Biodiversity Improvement Areas*** have been included within the scheme to maximise wildlife benefits.



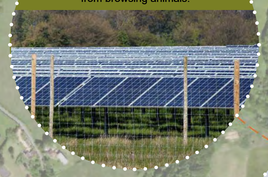
Field margins will be managed to create ***Tussocky Native Grassland*** and ***Wild Bird Seed*** to provide habitat for wildlife and maintain a sense of openness from public footpaths.



A minimum buffer of approximately 25m will be provided to ***Backhouse Wood Ancient Woodland*** planted with native woodland edge planting.



Proposed ***Security Fencing*** will be timber post and wire, a type used for protecting new forestry planting from browsing animals.



Approximately 5.1km of ***New Hedgerows*** are proposed with over 20,000 plants to break up the extent of solar arrays. This includes the reinstatement of a number of historic field boundaries that have been removed through agricultural intensification.



Over 10 hectares of species rich ***Wildflower Grassland*** will be created, including wetland meadows and mixes to provide habitat for skylark and brown hare, as well as other species of wildlife.



A series of ***Ecological Scrapes and Ponds*** will be created on the site, with a total area equivalent to 15 full size tennis courts.



Two areas of ***New Broadleaved Woodland*** will be established along Calleywell to screen the development and provide new woodland habitat, with over 2500 new trees and shrubs from a palette of 12 carefully selected native and naturalised species.



An ***Apple Tree Orchard*** with 262 new trees of British origin planted in a local area where orchards were once a common feature.





9. Construction, operation & decommissioning

Stonestreet Green Solar

Construction

If the scheme were to receive consent, we anticipate that the total construction period would last approximately 12 months, including 3 months of site preparation.

We expect to build the Project in phases which should mean that we will not be working across the whole site for the entire construction period.

Early in the construction period, we will establish the main site entrance, internal roads for moving around the site, construction compounds and security fencing.

There will be vehicles travelling to and from the site while we are building the scheme, which will vary day to day. These will access the site using an entrance from Station Road, where the main site construction compound will be located. We will build the majority of the Project using an internal access track, meaning we will not need to rely on public roads. The only exception to this will be the access to the southern section which will be via Goldwell Lane.

Where public rights of way are impacted we will provide temporary signage for users and implement a 5mph speed limit for construction traffic to ensure public safety.

Construction activities will be carried out during the core hours of 08:00 – 18:00 on weekdays and 08:00 – 13:00 on Saturdays. There will be no construction activities on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

A full description of the anticipated construction works is set out in Chapter 5 of the PEIR Addendum which forms part of this Statutory Consultation.

Operations and Maintenance

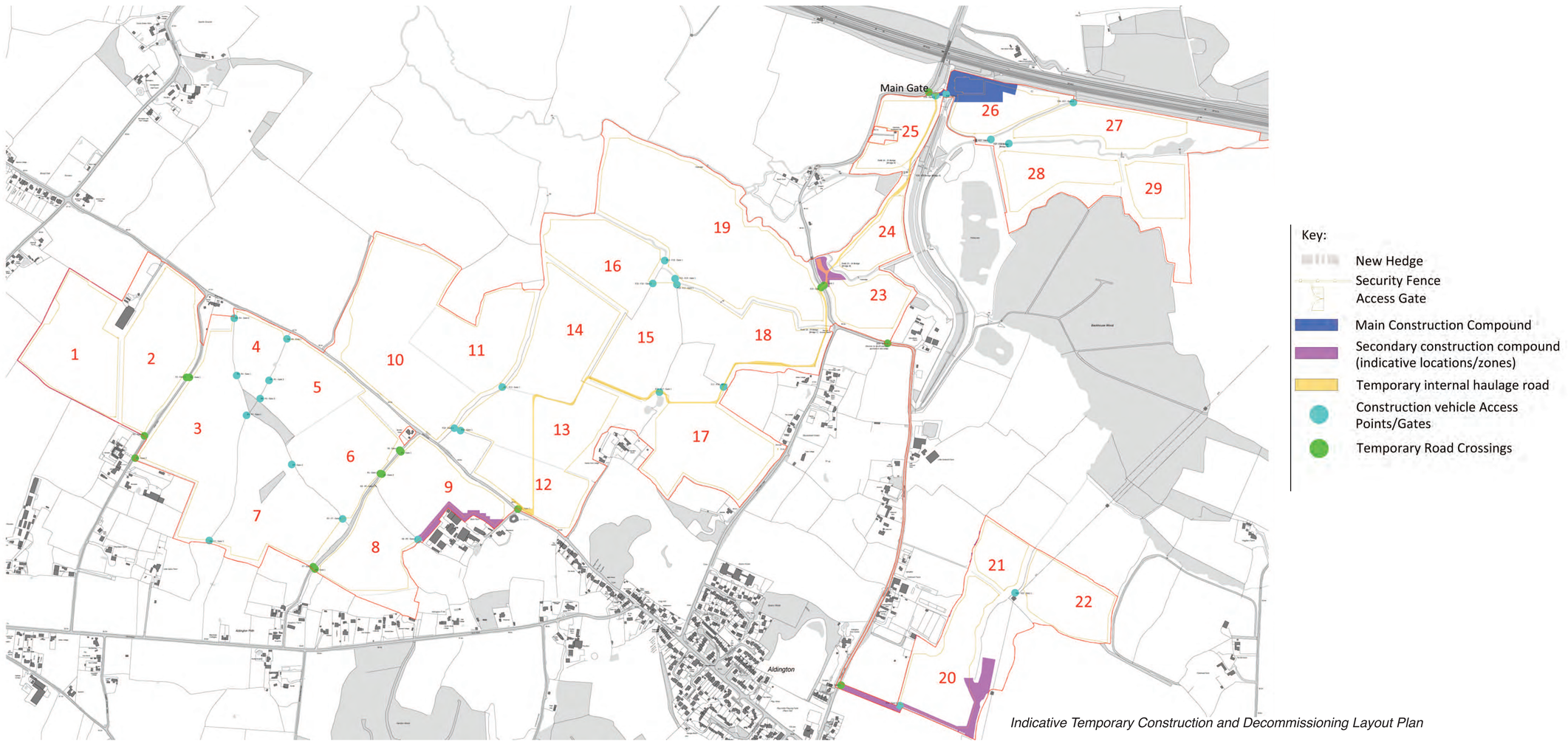
The Applicant is committed to operating the Project in a responsible way. Once the Project is operational, activity across the site will be minimal and largely restricted to monitoring, maintenance and the management of the visual and ecological mitigation features.

Decomissioning

Solar farms typically have a design lifespan of 40 years. The Project has been designed so that once it has reached the end of its lifespan it can be dismantled. A decommissioning plan will be prepared in advance of decommissioning activities beginning and agreed with Ashford Borough Council.

Jobs and skills

The Project will create jobs and skills, as well as creating wider economic benefits. Overall, we expect to create an average of 130 new jobs in the construction and decommissioning phases and between 182 and 279 direct and indirect roles once the Project is operational.



Indicative Temporary Construction and Decommissioning Layout Plan



10. Planning, consultation & questions

Planning process

The Project is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ("NSIP") pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 because its generating capacity will be more than 50MW.

Unlike applications for planning permission, which are considered by the relevant local planning authority, a DCO application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate ("PINS"). PINS manages the application process on behalf of the Secretary of State. In this case, the relevant Government Department is the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero ("ESNZ"). The final decision on the Application will be made by the Secretary of State for ESNZ.

The Planning Act 2008 requires consultation with the local community before we submit our Application.

We are carrying out this consultation in accordance with this requirement – it is therefore referred to as a 'Statutory Consultation'.

You can find out more about the DCO process at PINS' website:
https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/

2023 Statutory Consultation

We have developed our approach to this consultation through engagement with Ashford Borough Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council and Kent County Council.

Consultation on the Project will take place from **9:00am on 12 June 2023 until 11:59pm on 17 July 2023.**

The following documents have been prepared to support the consultation:

- a Consultation Booklet;
- a Book of Plans, including (amongst other things) a Site Location Plan and Landscape Masterplan;
- the PEIR (originally published as part of the statutory consultation that took place in October and November 2022);
- the PEIR Addendum (which updates the PEIR and includes an updated non-technical summary);
- a 'You said, we did' document outlining responses to feedback received to date;
- a consultation leaflet; and
- the exhibition boards.

A full set of consultation documents can also be provided on a USB memory stick upon request, free of charge. Hard copies of the consultation documents can be obtained upon request at a cost of £500 per copy. Requests for large print, audio or braille versions of the consultation documents will be considered on a case-by-case basis and appropriate charges may apply.

Requests for documents should be made to the Applicant by telephone on 08081 698335 (free of charge) or by email at info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk. Reasonable postage charges may apply.

How to respond

Any person may respond to the consultation. Comments must be received by the Applicant by **no later than 11:59pm on Monday 17 July 2023**. When providing your comments please include your name and address, or if you would prefer your comments to be anonymous your postcode only, and confirm the nature of your interest in the Project.

Please submit any comments by:

- Completing an online feedback form on the Applicant's website at www.stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk/consultation
- Completing a hard copy feedback form (available at the local information events, the deposit locations and upon request to the Applicant using the contact details below) and either handing it to the Project team at the local information event or submitting it by post (free of charge; no stamp required) to FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar.
- Submitting comments by email to info@stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk, by post (free of charge; no stamp required) to **FREEPOST Stonestreet Green Solar** or by telephone (free of charge) at **08081 698335**.

The Applicant will have regard to all responses received by the above deadline when finalising the proposals and submitting the Application. A Consultation Report will be submitted as part of the Application that will provide the details of the pre-application consultation undertaken by the Applicant, summarise any relevant responses received by the Applicant and explain the account taken by the Applicant of those relevant responses.

The Applicant may be required to submit copies of the consultation responses to the Planning Inspectorate and if so the Applicant will comply with all applicable data protection legislation.

Consultation Questions

We are seeking your views on the following questions as part of the consultation:

1) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the solar energy generation element of the scheme?

2) Do you have any comments on our proposals for the energy storage element of the scheme?

3) Do you have any comments on our proposals for connecting to the national electricity system?

4) Do you have any comments on the potential environmental impacts and our proposals for enhancements and mitigation during:

- **The construction of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?**
- **The operation of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?**
- **The decommissioning of Stonestreet Green Solar Farm?**

5) Do you have any comments on the contribution that the scheme will make to the local community?

6) Do you have any comments on the landscape strategy and the proposed biodiversity enhancements set out in the Consultation Booklet, the PEIR and PEIR Addendum?

7) Do you have any comments on the changes made to the Project following the previous statutory consultation in 2022?

8) Do you have any comments on the information presented in our Preliminary Environmental Information Report ("PEIR") as updated by our PEIR Addendum?

9) Do you have any comments on potential projects that the Community Benefit Fund could contribute towards?

10) Do you have any further comments?

As part of our previous statutory consultation in 2022, we asked questions around the use of solar energy generation in the UK. A data error in our online consultation form meant that answers to the following question were not recorded, and we would be grateful for your response as part of this 2023 statutory consultation:

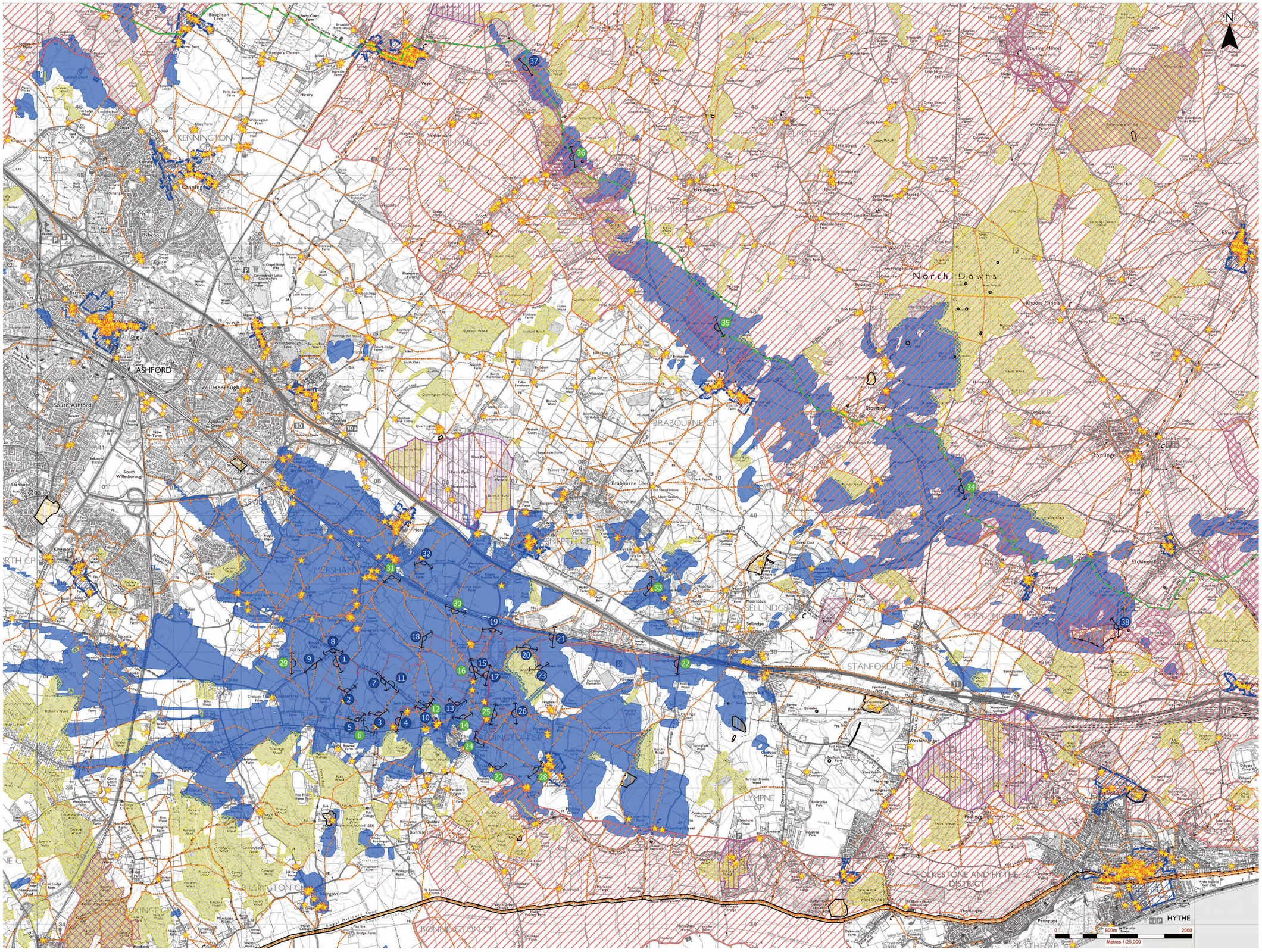
Please explain why you support/do not support the use of solar energy as part of the UK energy mix?



11. Visual appraisal plan

Stonestreet Green Solar

The plan below identifies the viewpoints which will be used to provide visualisations showing winter and summer views which will be included in the Application.



NOTES

Sources:
^ OS Mapping
Natural England GIS Data Set
~ Historic England National Monument Recor
GIS Data Set
* Kent County Council GIS Data Set
+ Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data

Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Barton Willmore shall not be liable for the accuracy of dat derived from external sources.

LEGEND

- INDICATIVE REDLINE BOUNDARY
- ANCIENT WOODLAND
- EXISTING WOODLAND, COPSES AND TREE BELTS
- EXISTING SCRUB
- EXISTING WATER COURSES AND FEATURES
- PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY
- NATIONAL TRAILS
- COUNTRYSIDE RIGHTS OF WAY ACCESS AREAS
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- CONSERVATION AREA
- REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS
- SCHEDULED MONUMENTS
- AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
- LOCATION OF REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS (SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPHS: 1-38 EXCLUDING VIEWPOINTS FOR WHICH VISUALISATIONS WILL BE PREPARED)
- LOCATION OF REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS FOR WHICH VISUALISATIONS WILL BE PREPARED (SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPHS: 6 12, 14, 16, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36)

ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ZTV)

- VISUAL ENVELOPE



12. Public Rights of Way plans

Stonestreet Green Solar

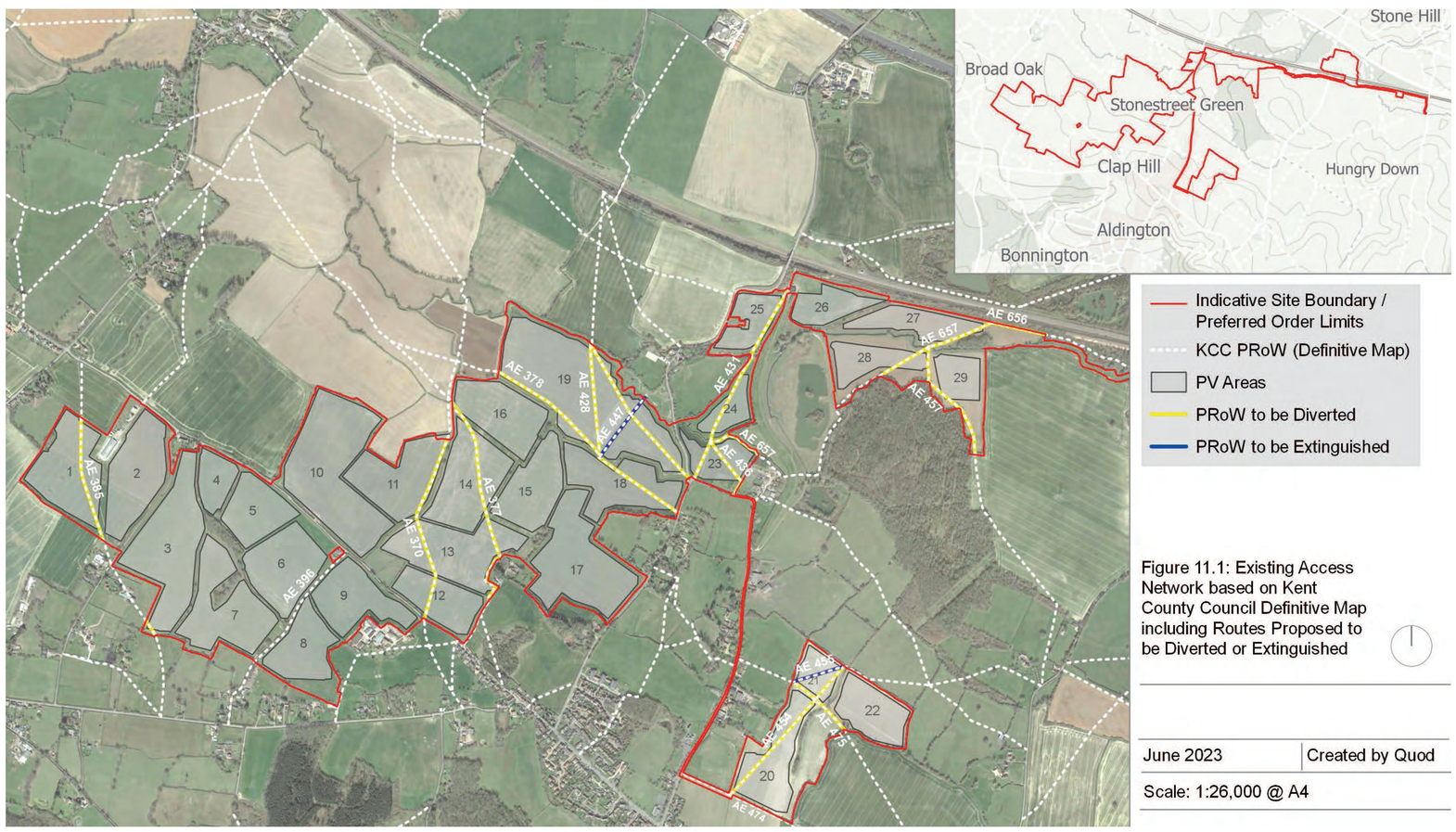
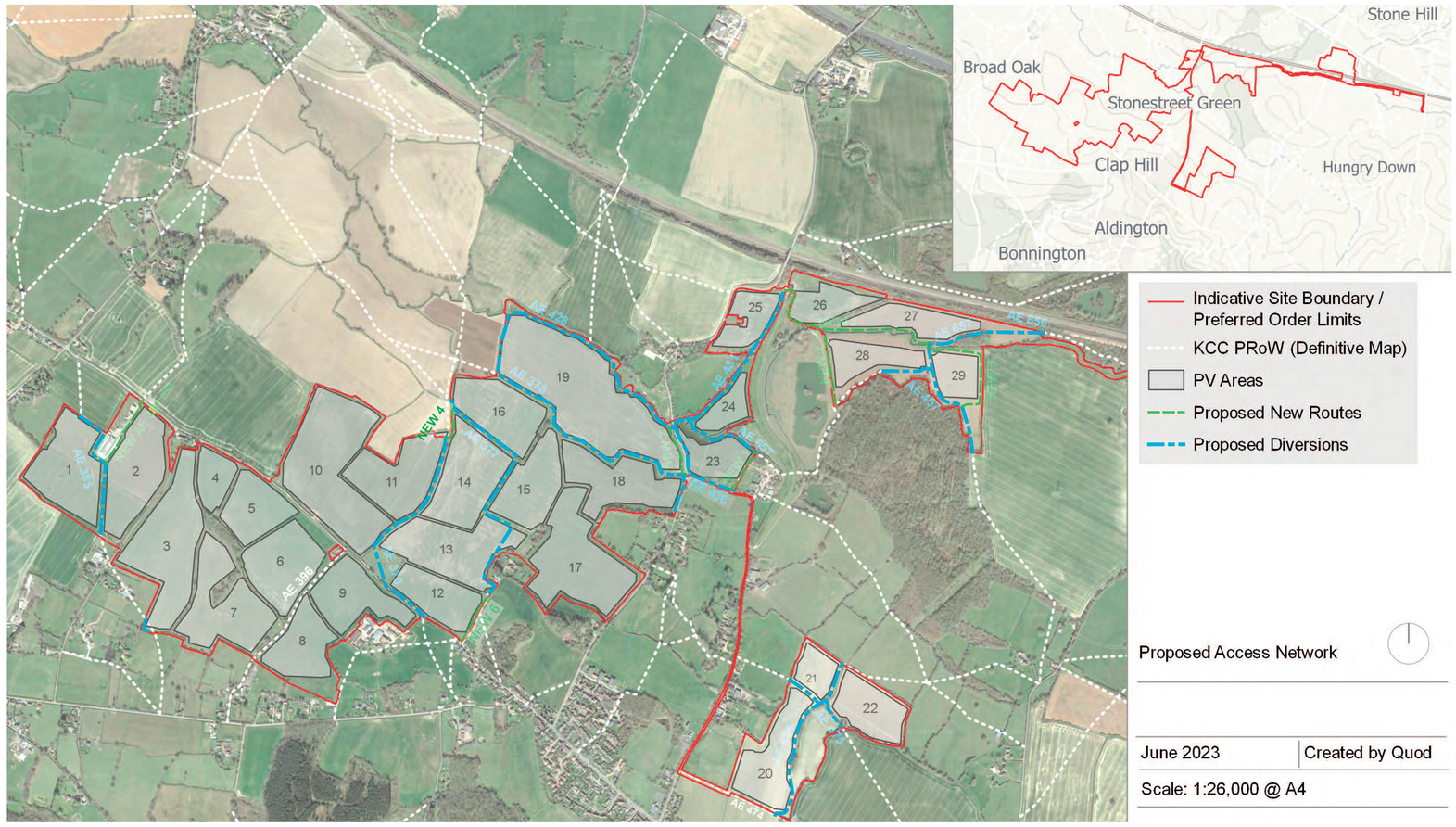


Figure 11.1: Existing Access Network based on Kent County Council Definitive Map including Routes Proposed to be Diverted or Extinguished

June 2023 | Created by Quod

Scale: 1:26,000 @ A4



Proposed Access Network

June 2023 | Created by Quod

Scale: 1:26,000 @ A4

