



Frodsham Solar

Phase One Consultation Summary Report

August 2024

Introduction

Cubico Sustainable Investments is proposing Frodsham Solar, a new solar farm with energy storage, situated north of Frodsham in Cheshire.

Last year we undertook a first phase of community consultation on our early proposals. This ran for six weeks from Thursday 1 June to Thursday 13 July 2023. We would like to thank the hundreds of people who took part and engaged with us during this time. This included attending one of our information events, contacting our team through our communication lines, and providing valuable feedback on our early-stage proposals.

This feedback has been considered by our project team and, where possible, is informing the work to update and refine the proposals for Frodsham Solar. This document, our Consultation Summary Report (CSR) for the first phase of community consultation, provides an overview of the feedback that we received.

This includes the number of responses, the key themes raised, and how we are considering this feedback in our updated design as we prepare for our second phase of community consultation, now anticipated for Autumn 2024.

In this document, you can find:

- An overview of how we undertook our Phase One consultation and the level of engagement we received (pages 4 and 5).
- A presentation of the key statistics from the feedback we received (pages 6 to 9).
- A summary of the key themes emerging from feedback, and how these are being considered by the team (pages 10 to 17).
- An update on how the proposed project area has changed following our Phase One consultation (pages 18-19).
- An explanation of the next steps for the project, including our ongoing environmental assessments and second phase of consultation (pages 20 – 21).
- Our contact details for any questions you may have (page 22).



About Us

The proposals for Frodsham Solar were introduced last year by a joint venture known as Peel Cubico Renewables.

In January 2024, Cubico Sustainable Investments (Cubico) acquired Peel NRE's 50% stake in Peel Cubico Renewables Ltd. This includes the joint venture's solar development pipeline, meaning that Frodsham Solar is now a Cubico only project and Frodsham Solar Limited is wholly owned by Cubico.

The acquisition also includes the transfer of the North-West based Peel NRE renewables development team into the Cubico business, ensuring that those that know and have the experience of developing renewable energy in this area remain on the project.

It represents a significant step in Cubico's aspiration to establish itself as a prominent developer, owner, and operator of renewable energy assets within the country, aligning with the UK's pursuit of its own ambitious net zero targets.

Our First Stage of Community Consultation

Local knowledge and feedback is important in helping us to develop and shape the proposals for Frodsham Solar. To help ensure our Phase One consultation was accessible and meaningful, we designed it to include:

- Publishing a Statement of Community Consultation before the start of the consultation period. This is a document that Cheshire West and Chester Council and Halton Borough Council provided comments on which were taken into account. This document explained our commitments and methods for consultation, and publicised details of how to take part.
- Engaging with key stakeholders and representatives ahead of and during our of consultation. This included contacting and meeting with MPs, Officers and Councillors from Cheshire West and Chester Council and Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and parish and town councils across the area.
- Distributing our consultation postcard to over 11,000 local homes and businesses within the vicinity of the project.
- Hosting a dedicated website (www.frodshamsolar.co.uk) to display information on the project, including relevant maps and concept plans.
- Advertising our consultation in the Chester Chronicle and Chester Standard.
- Holding five in-person community information events in the towns and villages of Frodsham, Helsby, Elton and Runcorn across a range of days and times.
- Holding an online community webinar which included a presentation and Q&A opportunity with members of the project team.
- Inviting responses through an online and paper feedback form.
- Hosting free-to-use communication lines for any questions or feedback to be submitted by email, freephone, or freepost.

We are grateful to everyone who took part in our Phase One consultation by attending our events, providing feedback and asking questions.

During our Phase One consultation, we:

Welcomed

230

people to our series of in-person information events and our online community webinar.

Received a further

19 pieces of written feedback

via our communication channels in the form of emails and letters.

Received

196 — 122 & 74

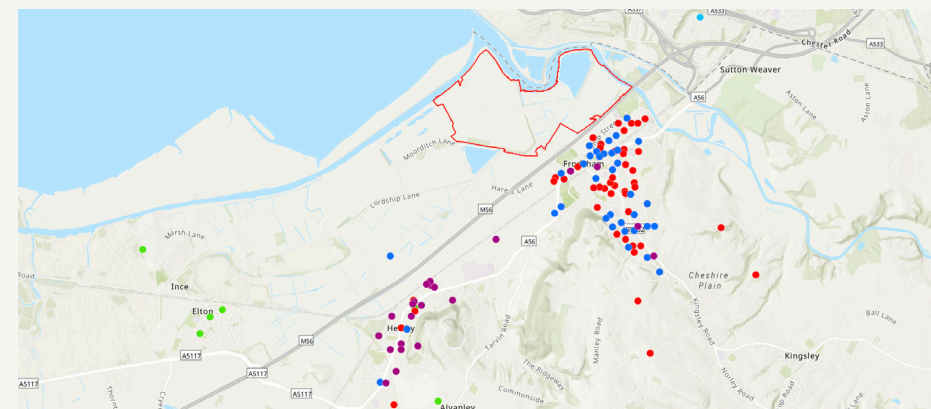
feedback forms

online feedback forms

paper feedback forms

When arriving at one of our in-person events, attendees had an option of providing their postcode to help us map where they had travelled from. The data shows that the majority of attendees were able to attend an event local to them, as shown by the graphic below.

Focussed map of event attendees by postcode:



● Helsby Event 17th June

● Weston (Runcorn) Event 20th June

● 1st Frodsham Event 21st June

● Elton Event 22nd June

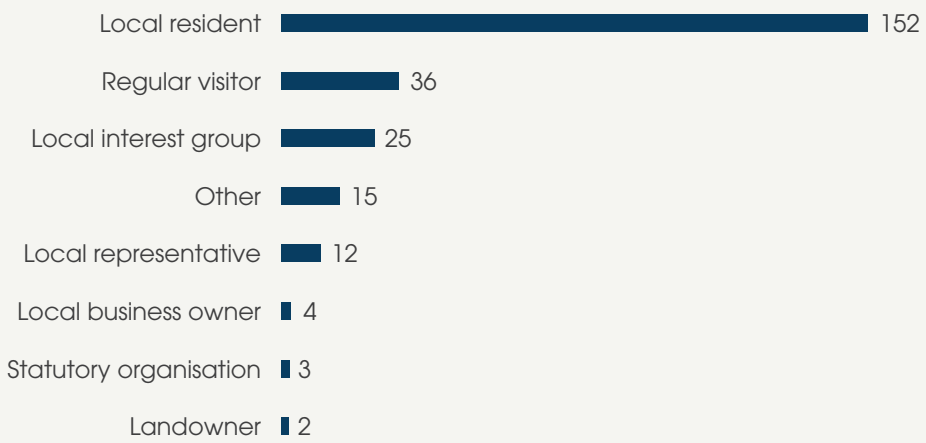
● 2nd Frodsham Event 23rd June

Key Statistics

Our feedback form asked a number of multiple-choice questions to better understand who was responding, the aspects of the project most important to them, and their overall views towards solar power and the project.

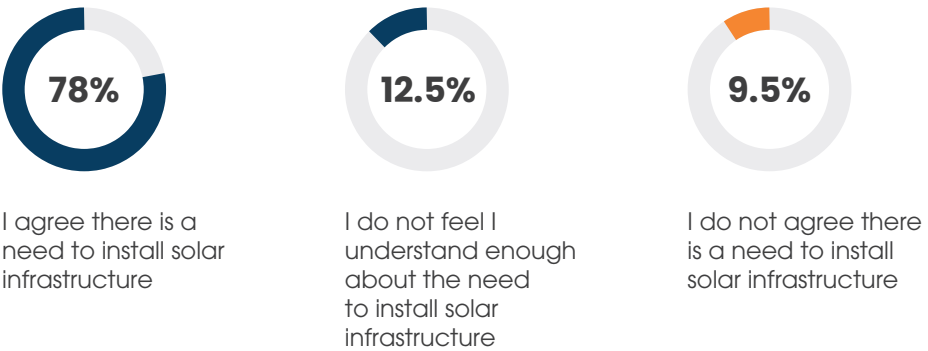
The charts on the following pages present the responses to these multiple-choice questions.

How would you describe your interest in Frodsham Solar?



Community engagement is a key part of our consultation process, and the majority of feedback through our feedback forms was submitted by local people. 78% of those who submitted a feedback form identified as a local resident. Other respondents included visitors and local representatives.

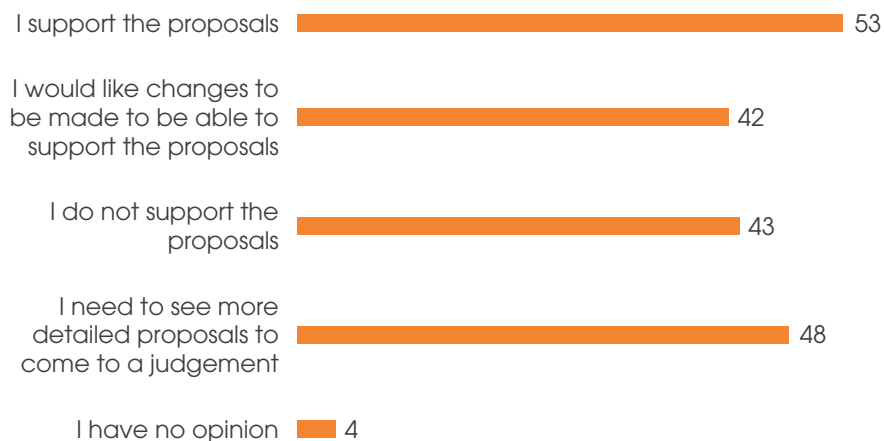
As a principle, do you agree there is need to install solar infrastructure?



We are really pleased to see that the overwhelming majority (78% of all respondents) agree with the need to install solar infrastructure. Solar is a key source of energy as we transition away from fossil fuels towards a decarbonised electricity supply, and projects like Frodsham Solar are required to help achieve this.

However, some respondents do not agree that there is a need to install solar infrastructure, and others do not feel informed enough to make a judgement. Through our ongoing communications we will look to continue providing information on the importance of solar technology as a source of renewable electricity.

What are your views on our initial proposals for Frodsham Solar?

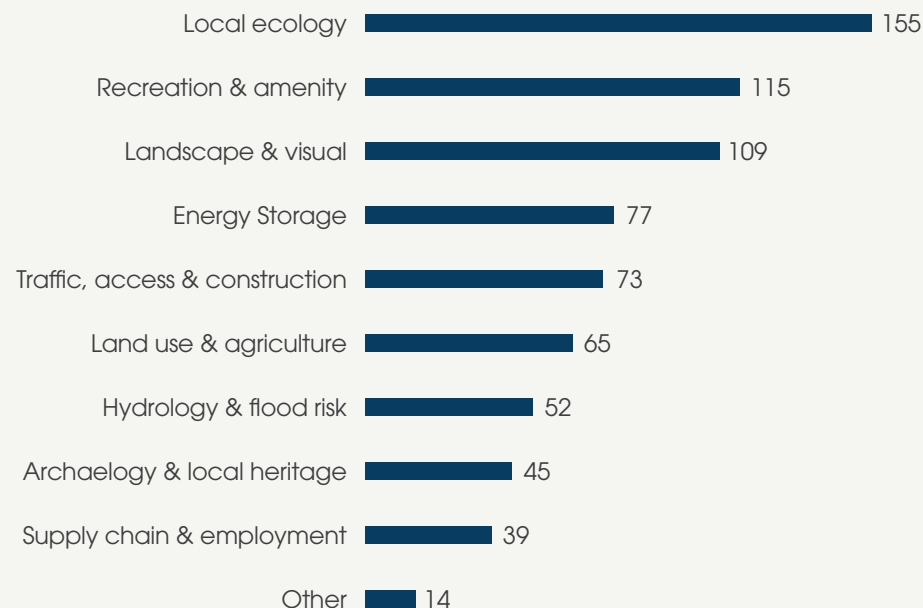


It's great to see that a significant number of respondents indicated support for the early-stage proposals – the single most popular response to this question. We also recognise, however, that other respondents indicated a lack of support and that a significant proportion (47% of all respondents) would either like to see more detail or would like changes to be made before being able to support the proposals.

Our first phase of consultation was based on our early-stage proposals, and therefore the plans did not include as much detail as will be presented at our second phase of consultation.

The purpose of holding our first phase of consultation was to understand the initial views of the public and stakeholders to inform the development of our proposals. We are grateful for the changes that have been suggested and all feedback we have received will be considered in shaping the proposals for Frodsham Solar.

Which aspects of the project are most important to you?



Respondents were asked to indicate the environmental aspects of Frodsham Solar that they consider to be most important.

The most commonly selected topic was 'local ecology and wildlife' – selected by 81% of respondents. The other most frequently selected topics were 'recreation and amenity' and 'landscape and visual impact'. Respondents had the opportunity to explain their views on these topics and Frodsham Solar more generally. The themes emerging from these responses are set out in the following pages.

How We Are Listening

The table below is an overview of the feedback received during the first phase of consultation and how this is being considered by our team.

The information below is a summary of key themes. We want to assure those who have responded that we have read all the responses received in detail.

What we heard	How we are considering this
Local Ecology and Biodiversity	
Feedback showed us there is concern that installing a solar farm may cause impacts to ecology and biodiversity.	We recognise that the site is currently home to various forms of wildlife and is adjacent to the Mersey Estuary SSSI, SPA (Special Protection Area) and Ramsar site. We therefore understand that there is interest in this area. Well-designed solar projects can help to improve biodiversity through opportunities to support new and existing plant and animal life.
Many respondents feel that there is a high level of ecology and biodiversity in the area, and that Frodsham Solar could reduce this.	
Feedback included comments on impacts to habitat, food supply, safety, and species, as well as the importance of wildlife corridors.	For Frodsham Solar, we are committed to there being more biodiversity across the site during the life of the project compared to today. This is often referred to as creating a 'net gain' in biodiversity.
A particular theme emerged around birdlife, including wading birds, wildfowl, geese, and marsh harriers.	We are continuing to undertake surveys of existing wildlife and ecology across the site. This helps us to understand the existing presence of birds and other wildlife in the area and assess the potential effect installing a solar farm may have.
Respondents expressed concern regarding the impact on hedgerows across the site, alongside requests for more hedgerows, wildflowers, and trees to be planted.	We will be sharing these results, along with proposed measures to help manage any potential adverse effects, during further consultation later this year.
	Enhancement and mitigation measures are expected to include planting of new vegetation and creating wildflower grassland and wetland habitat. The solar farm is being designed to minimise loss of hedgerow by maintaining a buffer from existing field boundaries. The landscaping scheme will also look to improve the structure and diversity of the hedgerows on the site.

Recreation and Amenity

Concerns were raised regarding public access to the site and potential impacts to existing footpaths, trails, and routes.	We would like to reassure you that all public rights of way will remain open during the operation of the solar farm. We will be looking to maintain access throughout the construction period where this is safe to do so. Where any closures are necessary, they will be kept as short as possible, and measures to protect PROW users will be included within the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan submitted as part of the application.
We received feedback requesting for more or improved footpaths and cycle paths on site.	
Respondents also asked for more open spaces and recreational opportunities near the site. The specific areas most often mentioned were Ince, Frodsham, Helsby, Hapsford, Elton and Ellesmere Port.	We would like to thank you for the many suggestions of new footpaths and cycle path routes. For the second phase of consultation, we will be developing a Landscape Masterplan, which will include new permissive paths that will give additional access to the public across Frodsham Marshes for the lifetime of the project.

Landscape and Visual

Feedback included a concern that views of Frodsham Solar could affect the landscape character of Frodsham and surrounding area.	We have seen in both the feedback received and through our knowledge of the site area that landscape and visual impact are a key matter of interest for Frodsham Solar.
Building on this, some respondents commented that the area currently has a rural character, but Frodsham Solar could change this to a more industrial feel after construction.	The fact the site is relatively open at present is one of the reasons it provides an opportunity for the development of a solar farm. Its proximity to other large scale industrial developments and the M56 / M53 makes it a suitable site for development.
Specific viewpoints from the Sandstone Trail, Frodsham / Overton Hill and Helsby Hill were cited, including a focus on the viewpoint from the Frodsham War Memorial on Frodsham Hill as a place from where the site is particularly visible.	Existing trees and hedges on site would help to reduce the visual change from site users at ground level. However, we know that from some elevated viewpoints such as Frodsham Hill, much of the solar farm will be visible.

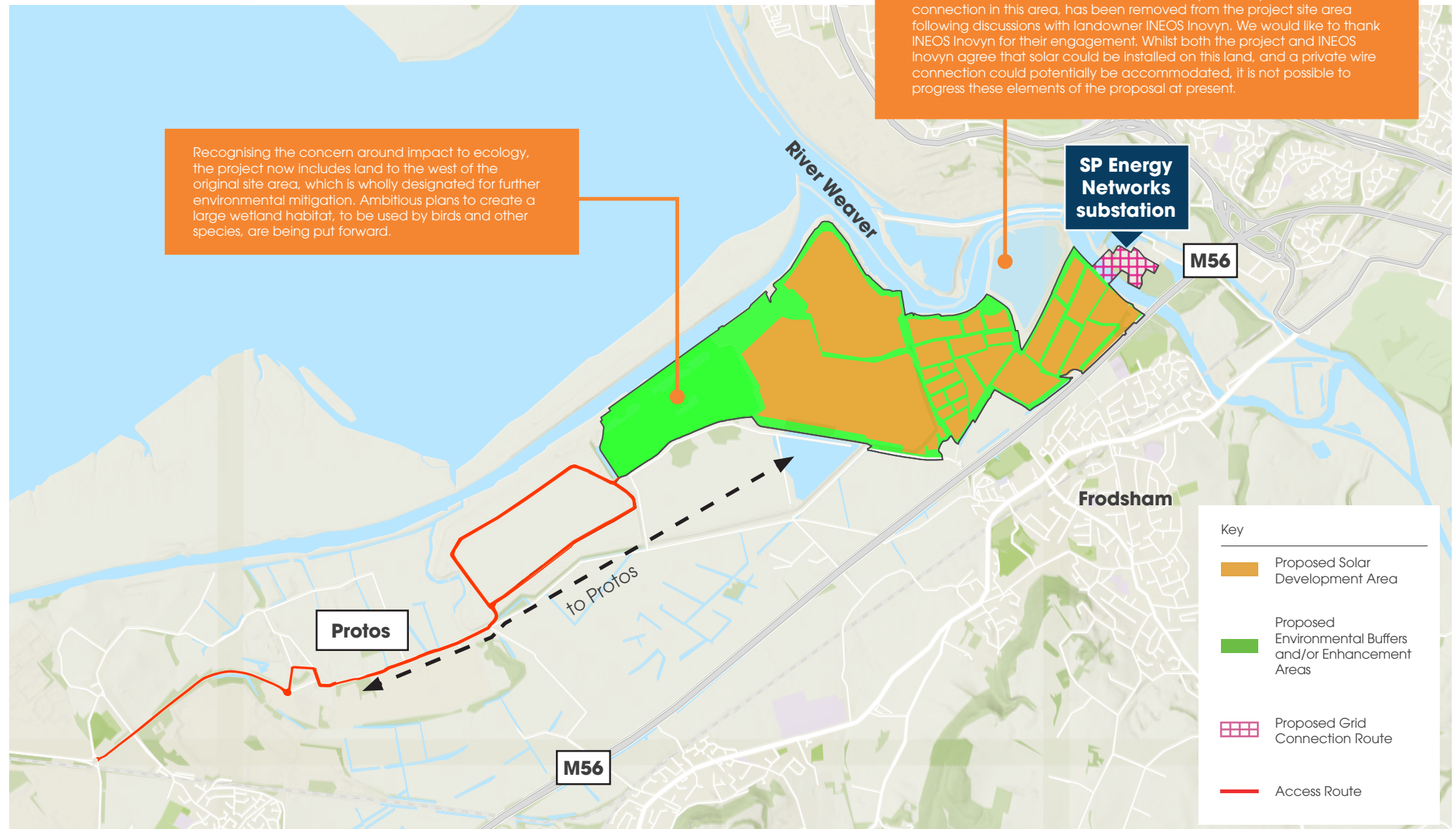
What we heard	How we are considering this
Landscape and Visual	
Feedback also included questions regarding the potential impact of glint and glare from solar panels on drivers on the M56. Glint and glare concerns were also noted in relation to the towns and villages of Frodsham, Helsby and Dunham-on-the-Hill.	<p>Part of our ongoing assessments include examining the impact that the solar farm would have from both a landscape and visual perspective. We are looking at proposing additional planting on site to bolster existing trees and hedgerows.</p> <p>A number of visualisations and photomontages will be developed showing how the solar farm may look, which will be available to view at the second phase of consultation.</p> <p>Glint and glare are also topics that are being looked at and we will share more detail at the second phase of consultation. In particular, we will update on our design work that will ensure the safety of road users, including those on the M56 motorway, is not compromised.</p>
Traffic, Access, and Construction	
<p>Respondents stated concerns that construction could increase the level of traffic, congestion, and pollution on roads across the site. Within this feedback, respondents specifically cited St Hilda's Drive and Ship Street, Marsh Lane (in both Frodsham and Elton), and the villages of Elton and Ince.</p> <p>Respondents raised concerns about the impact of construction traffic on Public Rights of Way.</p>	<p>We would like to confirm and reassure you that roads through towns and villages such as Frodsham, Helsby, Elton and Ince will be not used for construction traffic. Instead, we will utilise the M56 and the existing roads through the Protos site and the existing wind farm,, via the A5117 and onto Pool Lane, to the west of Frodsham Solar. We will be exploring measures to improve surfacing of footpaths within the site.</p>

Land Use and Agriculture	
<p>Overall, we have seen feedback that suggests that the land is not productive as agricultural land, and that it could be better utilised.</p> <p>Some respondents considered the proposed land to already be redundant, with Frodsham Solar being a good use of underutilised land.</p> <p>However, feedback has also stated that the land still has ecological value despite its agricultural land grading.</p> <p>Respondents raised concern that, following decommissioning of the solar farm, the land may not be returned to its original use and instead become brownfield land.</p> <p>Some respondents expressed concern that the land could be contaminated with toxins and therefore would not be able to be returned to agricultural use once the solar farm has been removed.</p>	<p>Generating electricity from solar and producing food on agricultural land can go hand-in-hand. Bodies such as Defra and the National Farmers Union have advised that the greatest threat to food production is climate change. Solar Energy UK has advised that large-scale solar can help to improve land conditions, allowing farmers to continue to keep livestock or grow food. It is intended for sheep grazing to continue during the operation of the solar farm.</p> <p>Our initial assessments have found that none of the site is classed as Best and Most Versatile, which is land the government would prefer solar farms to be located on.</p> <p>We would like to reassure people that our application will include a sufficient decommissioning plan, so that following the operation of Frodsham Solar the land can be returned to its current state. Approval for Frodsham Solar would not change the land to brownfield status.</p> <p>Soil surveys are being carried out as part of the environmental assessment to understand the nature of the soil and the land on site, and will inform how the solar farm is designed to mitigate any impacts to the ground.</p>
Hydrology and Flood Risk	
<p>Respondents commented that the site area is prone to flooding. The lower ground near the Marshes in the eastern half of the site was mentioned in particular.</p>	<p>Typically, solar farms do not increase flood risk on site as the panels are raised above the ground.</p>

What we heard	How we are considering this
Hydrology and Flood Risk	
Respondents expressed concern about the potential contamination entering the water from disturbing the land.	<p>Frodsham Solar will be subject to a Flood Risk Assessment and our studies include looking at ground conditions and contamination. The consenting process will ensure that people and the environment are not subject to increased risk from flooding or contamination. The findings to date will be presented at the second phase of consultation.</p> <p>There is relatively minor disturbance of soils during the construction of a solar farm. However, an assessment of the ground conditions and the potential for impacts on water quality, users of the site and construction workers will be undertaken.</p>
Archaeology and Local Heritage	
A small number of respondents suggested that the site is made up of valuable ancient land. A respondent suggested that this heritage is important to the local community, and this could become more restricted due to the project's construction.	Our ongoing assessment will fully address this matter, and our preliminary results will be available at the second phase of consultation.
Site Selection and Alternatives	
<p>Some respondents suggested that the location of the site is appropriate to build a solar farm. It was commented that the proximity to existing industrial sites will help support an area that uses high levels of energy.</p> <p>However, other respondents suggested that the location is not appropriate. Reasons for this include the proximity to residential homes and the Marshes, and that there is already other infrastructure in the area, such as the wind farm.</p> <p>Alternative sites proposed by respondents include brownfield sites, rooftops, industrial units, or warehouses.</p>	<p>We appreciate the support that some residents have provided regarding where this project is being located.</p> <p>Frodsham Solar has the benefit of being located in close proximity to both a grid connection at Frodsham Substation, as well as to local industry that has a high energy demand. This provides opportunities to support both the decarbonisation of the UK's energy supply, as well as the ambitions set by industry within targets set out by Net Zero North West.</p> <p>We are supportive of the deployment of all renewable energy technologies, including solar on brownfield sites, rooftops, and warehouses.</p>

Site Selection and Alternatives	
	Frodsham Solar is a proposal for ground-mounted solar with a battery energy storage system, which is an important part of the energy mix required to meet the UK Government's target of achieving net zero by 2050. There is a need for both ground mounted solar as well as rooftop solar. The government has also expressed support for solar to be co-located with other functions e.g. onshore wind generation to maximise efficient use of land. As part of the application for development consent, an assessment will be produced on how alternative sites have been considered.
Community Benefits	
<p>Respondents contributed many ideas for investments for schools, local charities, and community organisations.</p> <p>Some respondents have requested for more detail to be provided about how community benefits could be delivered.</p> <p>Some residents have requested that those living near to the project receive financial compensation.</p>	<p>We would like to thank everyone who has provided valuable feedback on the different community initiatives that Frodsham Solar could help deliver across the local area. As stated at Phase One, the project is committed to delivering a community benefits contribution that is tailored to benefit the local community as much as possible.</p> <p>As part of the second phase of consultation, we will be providing more detail on what community benefits could look like, building on what was proposed at Phase One as well as the feedback received.</p>

Our Updated Site Area



Next Steps

Alongside considering the feedback we have received, our team has also been undertaking further environmental surveys across the site area. The results are helping the project team to understand how best to develop the proposals for Frodsham Solar in consideration of its surroundings.

We will be publishing summaries of these results, alongside a preliminary assessment of our impacts and a description of our updated proposals, in a document called a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR).

We are expecting to be in a position to publish this report as part of our second phase of community consultation in Autumn 2024. This will enable us to receive feedback on our proposals and our assessments.

Phase Two Consultation

We will be holding our Phase Two consultation in a similar manner to Phase One, in terms of widely publicising opportunities to take part, holding a series of information events to meet with our team, and inviting written feedback across a range of channels. Specific details will be publicised closer to the time.

The feedback we receive to the second phase of consultation will then be considered as we prepare to submit a Development Consent Order application. This application will include a Consultation Report setting out the feedback we have received at the second phase of consultation and how this has been considered. The application will also include an Environmental Statement, containing the full details of the environmental assessments undertaken for Frodsham Solar and the mitigation and enhancement measures proposed.

Our indicative project timeline, presented on the next page, shows the process of developing proposals for Frodsham Solar is over a significant period of time and involves ongoing consultation with a variety of stakeholders.

Indicative Project Timeline



Contact Us

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to find out more information about Frodsham Solar using any of the methods below.



Email: info@frodshamsolar.co.uk



Freephone information line: 0808 175 4004



Freepost: FREEPOST FRODSHAM SOLAR



Website: www.frodshamsolar.co.uk

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