



LIGHTSOURCE
RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



LAND EAST OF YAPTON LANE,
WALBERTON, BN18 0DW

DOC REFERENCE: Lower Farm, Binsted
SCI

DATE: June 2013

Lightsource Renewable Energy Limited
7th Floor, 33 Holborn
London
EC1N 2HT

Company Number 7129343

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Community Involvement summarises the pre-application engagement and consultation Lightsource has undertaken with the local community and stakeholders for the proposed solar farm at Land East of Yapton Lane, Walberton, BN18 0DW.

Details of our engagement with Arun District Council (including pre-application engagement and EIA screening) are provided in Section 2 of the Design and Access Statement.

2 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND METHODS

The aim and objectives of the engagement programme have been to inform and engage with the local community and stakeholders, in order to ensure local people are aware of the proposal and have the chance to find out more and express their views.

A range of methods have been employed to engage with stakeholders and the local community.

2.1 INFORMATION LEAFLET

A four page leaflet providing information on the proposal was mailed to 960 local residents and businesses in the area on 23rd October, 2014. Copies and personal invitations to our drop-in event were also sent to the local Ward Member, Councillor Norman Dingemans and the Walberton and Yapton Parish Councils.

This leaflet provided an introduction to the proposal, publicised the upcoming community engagement event, and included details for accessing the project website. The leaflet also provided details on how to contact the Lightsource team for further information.

A copy of the information leaflet is included in **Appendix A**.

The leaflet included details for accessing our online feedback form, hard copies of which were available at the community engagement event. A second information leaflet will be sent to all those who provided either an address or email contact with their feedback form, this will provide an update on amendments made to the project, as well as advising that the proposal has now been submitted to Arun District Council.

2.2 PROJECT WEBSITE

A Project Website was created through Lightsource's online Community Portal. The website was launched prior to the leaflet being sent out, and details on how to access it were provided in the leaflet. The website includes:

- Downloadable information packs;
- Site specific information;
- General solar PV information;
- Videos of existing operational solar farms; and
- An electronic feedback form.

The website will continue to be updated with relevant information as the project progresses.

2.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT

In order to engage with the local community, to inform them of our intended plans and gain feedback on our proposal, Lightsource organised a community information drop-in event. This was held at the Walberton Village Hall, on the 4th November, 2014, from 5.30pm to 8pm. The proposal presented at this event was a larger 10MW scheme – the proposal has since been reduced in response to identified flood risk and a change in the structure of the subsidy framework.

In addition to the leaflet mail out detailed above, an advertisement was placed in the West Sussex Gazette and the Chichester Observer advising of the event (see **Appendix B**), and a press release sent to all newspapers covering the local area (see **Appendix C**).

At the information event the following information was available:

- Display boards provided information about the proposal and solar technology, these included an indicative layout;
- Information packs and leaflets covering solar PV, the biodiversity enhancements seen at existing solar farms, and agricultural co-use options;
- Multimedia in the form of videos on various aspects of solar PV and solar farms; and
- Feedback forms.

Representatives from Lightsource were available throughout the drop-in event to provide information and answer questions, as well as take note of any concerns raised.

Approximately 25 people attended the drop-in event.

2.4 BRIEFINGS FOR PARISH COUNCILS AND WARD MEMBER

Prior to the community engagement event, Lightsource made contact with the Walberton and Yapton Parish Councils and the local Ward Member providing information regarding the proposal and offering to meet and discuss the proposals prior to the community engagement event.

Whilst initial meetings were not held, members of the Walberton Parish Council and Cllr Dingemans did attend the information evening.

The Warberton Parish Council have been re-approached prior to submission of this planning application, again offering to meet. It was advised that, at this stage, a meeting was deemed unnecessary, however contact will continue between Lightsource and the Parish Council post-submission.

2.5 MEDIA

As noted above, Lightsource sent out a press release in advance of the community engagement event in order to maximise awareness of the proposal and details for the drop-in event.

A copy of the Press Release is provided in **Appendix C**. This was featured on the Spirit FM website, along with an interview on the Spirit FM radio news show on the day of the information evening.

2.6 SERVICE PROVIDER REGISTER

As part of the community engagement, Lightsource has specifically sought contact with local suppliers and contractors who could provide services during the construction and post-construction maintenance of the solar farm. For example, local accommodation providers, landscapers, and tradesmen.

These details have been compiled in a local Service Provider Register, and Lightsource will seek to utilise these services where appropriate.

3 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Following the leaflet mail out, website launch and community engagement event we received 4 completed feedback forms. Lightsource representatives at the community engagement event also took note of matters and concerns raised during conversations with attendees.

Of those who completed feedback forms 100% were supportive of the proposal. It is however noted that some individuals did raise concern verbally at the meeting, and via feedback forms submitted prior to the event.

The following matters were raised during the consultation process:

- Concern over potential views from residential properties
- Concern over visual impact and perceived ineffectiveness of solar energy
- General support of renewable energy schemes
- Interest in community energy schemes
- Interest in how the solar farm would fit in with the local Neighbourhood Plan

4 RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK

The community engagement process has allowed Lightsource to inform the local community of our proposal, and to gain feedback, thus enabling due consideration to be given to matters of importance to the local community.

As the feedback was largely positive, there was little to respond to. However, Lightsource has ensured that all feedback, both positive and negative was addressed, and has done so in the following ways.

4.1 PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A large amount of information was provided to interested stakeholders at the event, in the form of information brochures about solar in general. These included information on the ecological benefits of solar farms, information on how solar works, and information on farm diversification.

4.2 ISSUES ADDRESSED THROUGH PLANNING APPLICATION

Visual impact was raised by some concerned respondents. To address this, a Planting Plan has been included with the application, which aims to mitigate the visual impact of the development by providing additional screening along the site boundaries.

4.3 AMENDMENTS TO PROPOSAL

As discussed in section 2.3 above, the proposal has been reduced in size following the community information evening. This was not in direct response to feedback – rather it was a response to flood risk constraints and a change in the government subsidy structure for large scale solar.

5 CONCLUSION

Lightsource has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. Over 960 households were directly informed of the proposal, and many more were made aware through media articles as a result of our press release.

Overall, the scheme was received positively by the local community. Lightsource will continue to work with interested parties throughout the application process, to ensure any future issues are addressed satisfactorily.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION EVENING

Proposed Solar Farm Location:
Land at Lower Farm, Yapton Lane



Tuesday 4th November 5:30pm - 8.00pm

Come and visit us at:

Walberton Village Hall
The Street
Walberton
West Sussex

BN18 0PQ

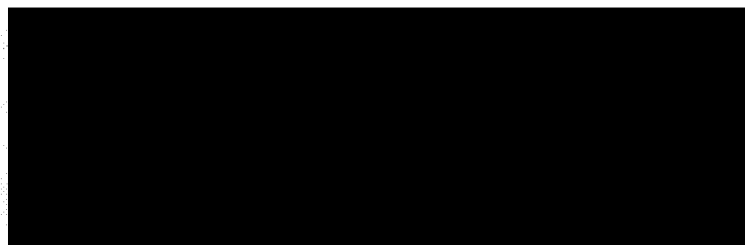


Get Involved!

A solar farm does
not only provide
green energy...

If you're a local
biodiversity specialist,
fencing expert,
accommodation provider
or wildlife enthusiast,
get involved with us and
let's champion the local
economy!

Information packs will be sent out in
the area. If you haven't received one
and would like to, please contact us:



 **LIGHTSOURCE**
RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED

UK's leading solar energy generator invites local community to help shape West Sussex solar farm proposals

Lightsource Renewable Energy, the UK's leading solar energy generator, will be hosting a community information evening to showcase plans for a new solar farm on Land at Lower Farm, between Yapton and Walberton, in West Sussex. The initial designs will be unveiled at the event at Walberton Village Hall, The Street, Walberton, on Tuesday 4th November, from 5.30pm until 8pm.

Keen to utilise local knowledge and expertise, Lightsource is inviting local residents to the event to discuss the proposals for the solar farm, which would be capable of generating enough clean energy to power 3,000 homes.

The passive nature of a solar farm makes it ideal for farmland diversification and Lightsource is working closely with the landowner to ensure that the agricultural use of the land is maintained. The entire solar farm site would be seeded with species-rich grass, including the area underneath the panels. The wide field margins and gaps between the rows of panels would allow a flock of sheep to graze happily on the solar farm site.

The new solar farm site could become a haven for wildlife and Lightsource is working closely with ecologists to create a bespoke Biodiversity Management Plan, which will be put in place to ensure that native species benefit from any planting, seeding and habitat creation. All trees and hedgerows around the solar farm site will be retained and enhancements such as bird boxes, 'bee-friendly' wildflowers and log piles would bring a further boost to local wildlife. Lightsource is also keen to hear from local school or wildlife groups who would like to assist with the on-going monitoring of habitats throughout the life of the solar farm.

Existing vegetation along the site boundaries would be bolstered with new planting and as the solar panels reach a maximum height of 2.5m, potential views of the solar farm from the surrounding area would be kept to a minimum. There is a field between the proposed site and Yapton Lane, but a new length of hedgerow could be planted along the site's western boundary to further decrease views of the solar farm from passing vehicles.

Conor McGuigan, Planning and Development Director at Lightsource, said: "Drawing on local knowledge during consultation is an important part of our development process. In addition to gaining important feedback from the surrounding community, we want to give any residents an opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the development or solar energy in general. It's a great chance to get involved and to help refine the plans. Our plans will make as little impact on the surroundings as possible and the passive nature of the solar farm will mean that agricultural activities can continue on site. It is this ability to generate clean, safe electricity whilst maintaining a respect for rural traditions that makes solar power such a viable renewable energy source."

Due to the numerous opportunities that this development will present to the local community, Lightsource is looking for the following regional expertise to get involved:-

- Local residents to provide input into the initial design and planning
- Wildlife enthusiasts – solar farms provide excellent opportunities to enhance biodiversity and support local initiatives
- Residents with local knowledge which will help inform the route of daytime deliveries whilst the solar farms are being installed
- Security personnel
- Civil roadways experts
- Storage and logistics businesses
- Fencing experts
- Accommodation & food and beverage providers
- Landscapers specialising in local/native species

Conor concludes: “Generating energy locally means the UK can reduce its reliance on international fossil fuel markets, but it also opens opportunities for championing the local businesses, skills and wildlife habitats by responsibly managing the land. This is still early days for these proposals and we would welcome the views of the community to help these plans evolve. We would also encourage anyone who can’t attend the community event to visit our website where the plans can be viewed and suggestions for the proposals can be put forward.”

Residents wishing to view the initial proposal in more detail or make suggestions to the Lightsource Planning team can visit the Planning Portal at: www.lightsource-re.co.uk, click ‘In-House Planning’ and type the site name “Lower Farm” into the search box. An online feedback form is also available on the page.

-ends-

Notes to editor/frequently asked questions:

How much energy will the solar farm produce?

The designs will evolve with the results of our assessments and community feedback. The statistics of the current designs are:

Lower Farm, Yapton Lane, Walberton, Arundel, West Sussex, BN13 0AS.

Generation Capacity: 10MWp

Capable of powering: 3,000 homes

Carbon emissions saved annually: 5,185 tonnes... the equivalent of taking 1,152 large family cars off the road

Where does the electricity go?

Chris Buckland, Technical Director at Lightsource: “The energy generated by a solar farm enters the electricity grid at a local point of connection - usually the closest substation. It is then distributed by the local District Network Operator (DNO) and the National Grid. Local

energy consumption take-off will consume some, if not the majority, of the energy generated. The influx of energy from the solar farm can be equated to a stream entering a lake which has multiple distributaries. The majority of the water from the stream will flow out of the lake again via the closest distributary. If this narrows, more of the water continues into the lake and onto the next closest exit point.

“Depending on the voltage level at which the generated energy is connected to the Grid, and where this is in the local distribution network, there may well be a voltage reinforcement or stabilisation of the line to which the power is connected. So local consumers might see any ‘voltage drop’ problems, such as dim lights, much improved whilst the solar farm is generating.”

Why harvest energy instead of food?

It isn’t a choice - solar farms can do both. The site at Lower Farm is being designed to accommodate sheep grazing, enabling the solar farm to produce energy whilst continuing the land’s agricultural use.

Are solar farms irreversible development?

No - the panels are mounted on an aluminium framework with steel legs which are pile driven into the soil. At the end of our lease period (usually about 25-30 years) the installation will be dismantled and removed without harming the land.

Is solar power suited to the UK climate?

Yes - solar panels do not require direct sunlight to produce electricity, only daylight. So they still work well on cloudy days, and actually perform more efficiently in cooler temperatures.

How will the equipment be protected?

The solar farm would be enclosed by a timber and wire agricultural fence of about 2 metres in height, appropriate to its rural setting. This is positioned within the current field pattern and on the inside of any hedgerow planting. No flood lighting is required.

Are solar farms noisy?

No - you would not expect to hear any noise beyond the site boundary.

Is there a danger to motorists or aircraft as a result of reflection from the panels?

No - solar panels are designed to absorb light rather than reflect it. Lightsource has commissioned several ‘glint and glare’ assessments as part of our planning process, and it is generally accepted that solar farms are not dangerous to aircraft.

What will the impact be on wildlife?

Solar farms have the potential to bring about significant increases in wildlife populations on agricultural land. They are essentially secure sites with little disturbance from humans or machinery once installation is complete. Additionally, we often plant new trees and hedgerows, and seed wild flowers and grasses, all of which enhance prospects for local wildlife.

Is there an impact on flood risk?

No - the posts on which the panels are mounted typically take up less than 1% of the land area, with the majority of the site being grassland.

Will the solar farm cause traffic disruption?

No - once the solar farm is in place it would require very little maintenance, with access only needed occasionally using regular cars, vans or 4x4s. This should cause no disruption at all. During installation, a Traffic Management Plan is followed to avoid peak times and unsafe routes as the equipment is being delivered.

How can people find out more?

For more information about Lightsource Renewable Energy and its proposals, contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] quoting 'Lower Farm'.