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# FENWICK SOLAR FARM

Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Volume I Chapter 4: Consultation

March 2024

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Prepared for:  
Fenwick Solar Project Limited

Prepared by:  
AECOM Limited

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## 4. Consultation

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Effective stakeholder engagement and consultation is a key part of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1) pre-application process and fundamental to the success of Fenwick Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as ‘the Scheme’). This chapter of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) explains the Development Consent Order (DCO) consultation requirements, and details of the non-statutory consultation undertaken, and the planned statutory consultation.
- 4.1.2 The process of consultation is critical to the development of an appropriate design of the Scheme and a comprehensive and balanced Environmental Statement (ES). The views of prescribed and non-prescribed consultees serve to focus the environmental studies and to identify specific issues that require further investigation. Consultation is an ongoing process which considers the views of all relevant consultees as part of the Scheme’s design and development, enabling measures to be incorporated to mitigate adverse effects and enhancing environmental benefits.
- 4.1.3 The Scheme has a wide range of stakeholders (including landowners, statutory consultees, local communities and special interest groups) with potentially differing interests. Consultation activities have been designed to be accessible and to allow differing stakeholders the ability to engage with the Scheme in a way that is appropriate to them. As required by the Planning Act 2008, engagement has also taken place with City of Doncaster Council (the Host Authority) to inform the development of the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) (see Section 4.6).
- 4.1.4 Stakeholder engagement and consultation for the Scheme is based on the following principles:
- a. Early and ongoing engagement to inform and influence the Scheme design process;
  - b. Seeking feedback in the iterative design process and taking this feedback into consideration;
  - c. Building long-term relationships with key stakeholders throughout the different stages of the Scheme to help better understand their views;
  - d. Where practicable, ensuring concerns are addressed; and
  - e. Ensuring appropriate statutory consultation is undertaken in compliance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1), Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 14 (Ref. 4-2), the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Ref. 4-3) (hereafter referred to as the EIA Regulations), and associated guidance.

### 4.2 DCO Consultation Requirements

- 4.2.1 The DCO process has a number of statutory requirements regarding consultation. These requirements stipulate that certain stakeholder groups

and the community must be consulted as part of the pre-application process, as set out in Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1), Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations (Ref. 4-4) and the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations (2009) (Ref. 4-5 (the APFP Regulations)). Further requirements set out how the Scheme must be publicised, and specific documents produced, including a SoCC, PEIR and a Consultation Report. The latter will be produced and submitted with the DCO Application.

- 4.2.2 There are several requirements as to how consultation must be undertaken, and which the Applicant has adhered to – these are set out in the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1) and related regulations, as follows:
- a. Section 42 (Ref. 4-6) requires the Applicant to consult on the proposed DCO Application with certain categories of persons, including ‘such persons as may be prescribed’. These include certain prescribed bodies, including the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England, relevant statutory undertakers, relevant local authorities, those with an interest in land comprised within the Site, and persons who would or might be able to make a relevant claim for compensation;
  - b. Section 47 (Ref. 4-7) requires the Applicant to consult with the local community on the proposed DCO Application. Prior to this, the Applicant must prepare a SoCC and consult on it with the Host Authority and have regard to its responses. The SoCC must set out the proposed community consultation including (pursuant to regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations) how the preliminary environmental information will be publicised and consulted on. Once finalised, a Section 47 Notice must be published in a local newspaper circulating within the vicinity of the land in question and the SoCC itself made available for inspection by the public in a way that is reasonably convenient for people living in the vicinity of the land. The statutory pre-application community consultation must then be carried out in accordance with the final SoCC;
  - c. Section 48 (Ref. 4-8) requires the Applicant to publicise the proposed application in the ‘prescribed manner’. The APFP Regulations prescribe the manner in which the Applicant must publicise the proposed application including in a national newspaper, The London Gazette, and (for at least two consecutive weeks) in one or more local newspapers circulating within the vicinity of the land. In addition, regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations requires that certain prescribed consultees are sent a copy of the Section 48 notice; and
  - d. Section 49 (Ref. 4-9) places a duty on the Applicant to have regard to any relevant responses received to the consultation and to produce and distribute publicity that is required by Sections 42, 47 and 48.

## 4.3 Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement to Date

- 4.3.1 Details of all consultation undertaken in relation to the Scheme will be provided in the Consultation Report which will form part of the DCO Application.
- 4.3.2 Details of the correspondence held with technical stakeholders to date, for example to discuss and agree assessment methodologies, are contained in

- the relevant technical chapters of this PEIR (**PEIR Volume I Chapter 6 to 14**)).
- 4.3.3 In addition, a series of introductory meetings were held from March 2023 with key stakeholders relating to the Scheme, including:
- a. The Planning Inspectorate;
  - b. South Yorkshire Archaeology Service;
  - c. City of Doncaster Council;
  - d. Member of Parliament (MP) for Doncaster North;
  - e. Environment Agency; and
  - f. United Kingdom Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.
- 4.3.4 The first meeting with the City of Doncaster Council commenced in May 2023 and provided the Host Authority with an introduction to the Scheme.
- 4.3.5 Information received during early stakeholder engagement has been reviewed and considered alongside early technical work. Further information from engagement will continue to be reviewed and considered by the project team.
- 4.3.6 A website has been set up to provide up to date information on the Scheme (<https://www.boom-power.co.uk/fenwick/>).
- 4.3.7 Engagement with stakeholders is an ongoing process and will continue during the statutory consultation (see Section 4.6 below) and throughout the DCO Application process.

## 4.4 Scoping Consultation

- 4.4.1 The Applicant developed an EIA Scoping Report (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-1: EIA Scoping Report**) following initial consultation with a number of statutory consultees and based on the Applicant's experience working on a number of other solar farm projects. The EIA Scoping Report (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-1: EIA Scoping Report**) was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 1 June 2023.
- 4.4.2 The Planning Inspectorate reviewed and consulted on the EIA Scoping Report (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-1: EIA Scoping Report**) and adopted (on behalf of the Secretary of State) a Scoping Opinion (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-2: EIA Scoping Opinion**) on 11 July 2023 (the Scoping Opinion) which included the formal responses received by the Planning Inspectorate from statutory consultees.
- 4.4.3 Key issues raised in the Scoping Opinion (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-2: EIA Scoping Opinion**) are summarised in **PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-3: EIA Scoping Opinion Responses** which also outlines how and where the Scoping Opinion comments have been addressed within this PEIR or will be addressed within the ES. All issues are being considered during the ongoing EIA process. Following the adoption of the Scoping Opinion (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-2: EIA Scoping Opinion**) additional consultation has been undertaken with relevant statutory consultees in the preparation of this PEIR, and will continue as part of the preparation of the ES (including where

required by the Scoping Opinion (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-2: EIA Scoping Opinion**)).

- 4.4.4 The pre-application consultation undertaken by the Applicant will also be documented within the Consultation Report that will form part of the DCO Application. This will include a separate section on EIA related consultation, as recommended within Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 14: Compiling the Consultation Report (Ref. 4-2) on the preparation of consultation reports.

## 4.5 Non-statutory consultation

- 4.5.1 The Applicant held an initial round of non-statutory public consultation which ran for a period of four weeks between 27 June and 24 July 2023.
- 4.5.2 The consultation introduced the Scheme to external stakeholders, sought feedback from members of the public, landowners and key stakeholders on the Site, as well as the 'Grid Connection Corridor Search Area'. The term Grid Connection Corridor Search Area was defined in the EIA Scoping Report (**PEIR Volume III Appendix 1-1: EIA Scoping Report**) produced in June 2023 and referred to the land between the Solar PV Site and the Existing National Grid Thorpe Marsh Substation. Depending on the electricity export connection taken forward, cables in the Grid Connection Corridor Search Area would connect the Solar PV Site to the Existing National Grid Thorpe Marsh Substation. The Grid Connection Corridor Search Area was used to define the mailing zone (see Paragraph 4.5.7).
- 4.5.3 Consultation materials were developed to provide an overview of the Scheme to external stakeholders, and were made available as physical copies and digitally.
- 4.5.4 The consultation used a hybrid approach, consisting of both in-person and online public engagement. Both in-person and online events were held into the early evening to allow people to attend after the working day.
- 4.5.5 Consultation events were held in person at:
- a. Moss and Fenwick Village Hall, Fenwick Common Lane, DN6 0HG on 30 June 2023; and
  - b. Old George Inn, Broad Lane, Sykehouse, DN14 9AU on 5 July 2023.
- 4.5.6 Online events were held on 10 July and 13 July 2023. During the webinar events, the project team presented the plans for the Scheme on a PowerPoint presentation introducing the Scheme proposals, location, size, components and the benefits of the Scheme to the local community. Following this presentation attendees were encouraged to ask questions via the meeting chat function.
- 4.5.7 The Applicant promoted the non-statutory consultation through a consultation brochure. This brochure was posted to all residential and business addresses within a 2.5 kilometres (km) radius of a central point within the Solar PV Site, and those within the Grid Connection Corridor Search Area, as defined at the time of the non-statutory consultation. This area is referred to as the 'Consultation Zone' and is displayed in **PEIR Volume II Figure 4-1: Mailing Zone for Non-Statutory Consultation**.

- 4.5.8 Press releases were issued to local and trade media publications. Local media press releases were emailed on 1 June 2023. Trade media releases were emailed on 21 June 2023. Details are provided in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1: Local Media and Trade Press Publications Contacted**

**Local Media Publication (e-mailed 1 June 2023)**      **Trade Press Publication (e-mailed 21 June 2023)**

Doncaster Free Press	ReNews
Doncaster Echo	Solar Magazine
Thorne Times	Solar Daily
The Star – Doncaster	Recharge News
The Yorkshire Post	Solar Power Portal
Yorkshire Live - Doncaster	Renewables Now
	Energy Storage Report
	Infra Be

- 4.5.9 A non-statutory consultation response form was created to capture feedback, including specific aspects of the proposal and detailed comments. This response form was distributed with the non-statutory consultation brochure to all residential and business addresses within the Consultation Zone. Alongside the distribution of materials to the Consultation Zone, people could complete the online response form and find more information on the Scheme website and at the four consultation events.
- 4.5.10 In total, the non-statutory consultation received 25 responses. These were received through various response channels, including hard copies received at the consultation events, a Freepost address, the online response form, and emails to the Scheme inbox.
- 4.5.11 The Non-statutory consultation report sets out the details the approach and delivery of the consultation. The report also details feedback received, an analysis of the results, and responses from the project team.
- 4.5.12 Question 2 of the non-statutory consultation form asked respondents to provide any comments or feedback on the proposed solar farm shown in the brochure. Respondents were able to tick more than one category for this question. 23 respondents using the response form answered the question. One respondent who completed a form did not answer the question.
- 4.5.13 Four respondents stated they were in favour of the proposal, four respondents stated they were undecided, and 15 respondents stated they opposed the proposal. The feedback received through these channels of relevance to the EIA are presented in Table 4-2. This table provides an



overview of the feedback received to the non-statutory consultation, as well as the responses from the project team.

**Table 4-2: Non-statutory Consultation Feedback and Responses from the Project Team**

Comment summary	Response
Concern about proximity between Site Boundary and residential properties.	Discussions with property owners closest to the Scheme are ongoing. Appropriate buffers from properties will be incorporated and new native tree and vegetation planting would be used to screen potential views of the Scheme. Detail of the proposed mitigation measures related to potential impacts to residential properties will be included within the relevant PEIR chapter ( <b>PEIR Volume I Chapter 6 to 14</b> ) (prepared to support statutory consultation) and will be included in the ES (to be prepared as part of the DCO Application).
Concern over increased traffic in the rural area causing multiple issues, congestion, noise, pollution, unsuitable roads.	Details of the potential traffic effects and proposed mitigation associated with the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the Site are considered within relevant PEIR chapters ( <b>PEIR Volume I Chapter 6 to 14</b> ) and will be considered further in the ES (to be prepared as part of the DCO Application), informed by detailed technical studies and further ongoing engagement.
The Scheme will change the local landscape and rural character of Fenwick.	Changes to the local landscape character and visual amenity of Fenwick, and all settlements and properties, will be assessed through a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) – initial findings are reported in this PEIR ( <b>PEIR Volume I Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity</b> ) and will be considered further in the ES (to be prepared as part of the DCO Application). Intervisibility between visual receptors and the Scheme would be reduced as far as possible through careful siting of solar infrastructure and landscape mitigation. Appropriate buffers from properties will be incorporated, and new planting used to screen potential views of the Scheme. Open and uninterrupted views would be retained

Comment summary	Response
	across Fenwick’s rural landscape to the north, south and west of the village.
Loss of agricultural land and impacts on food production/security.	Detail of the potential impacts to agricultural land along with proposed mitigation measures are considered within relevant PEIR chapters ( <b>PEIR Volume I Chapter 6 to 14</b> ) and will be considered further in the ES (to be prepared as part of the DCO Application). Surveys are ongoing to classify the agricultural land quality present within the Solar PV Site.
Impact on the local wildlife, including deer, foxes, rabbits, badgers and birds.	Assessing the potential impact of the Scheme on habitats and wildlife is an ongoing process and will be informed by field surveys and evaluated in line with planning policy and industry standard practice guidance. Design of the Scheme will be planned to avoid impacts wherever practicable, and where this is not practicable, mitigation and compensation would be provided in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy for important ecological features. This could include the use of stand-offs from key habitats and retaining ecological connectivity across the Site. A solar development of this size also provides opportunities to achieve enhancements for wildlife, including notable species that are found locally.

## 4.6 Statutory Consultation

- 4.6.1 Statutory consultation for the Scheme is being undertaken from **17 April** and ending on **14 May 2024** in excess of the statutory minimum 28 days and compliant with the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1) and EIA Regulations (Ref. 4-5), including consultation on the PEIR (this report).
- 4.6.2 As described in Paragraph 4.2.1, a SoCC has been prepared in accordance with Section 47(1) of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1). The SoCC outlines how the Applicant will consult with the local community about the Scheme, including, in accordance with Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations (Ref. 4-5), and how it intends to publicise and consult on the PEIR (this report). The SoCC was shared informally with the City of Doncaster Council as the Host Authority for initial views on **15-22 January to 2024**. City of Doncaster Council was then provided a formal consultation period to review the SoCC, under Section 47(2), between (**Monday 19 February - Wednesday 20 March 2024**). Feedback from the City of Doncaster Council has been

incorporated into the SoCC. The SoCC is available on the Scheme's webpage (<https://www.boom-power.co.uk/fenwick>).

4.6.3 The approach to public consultation as set out in the SoCC includes:

- a. Sending the consultation brochure to all addresses within a defined Statutory Consultation Zone (see **PEIR Volume II Figure 4-2: Mailing Zone for Statutory Consultation**);
- b. Provision of information about the Scheme and a feedback form on the Scheme website;
- c. Hosting a number of in-person events within the Fenwick area, close to the Site (see **PEIR Volume II Figure 4-3: Locations of Statutory Consultation Events**);
- d. Holding one online question and answer session;
- e. Making digital copies of consultation documents available on the Scheme website (<https://www.boom-power.co.uk/fenwick>) with physical copies being available on request;
- f. Hard copies of a selection of the consultation documents (Plans of the proposed solar farm and cable route, Consultation brochure, Feedback form Statement of Community Consultation, Non-Technical Summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report and Non-statutory consultation report) will also be available at Document Inspection Venues in Fenwick and the wider area (see **PEIR Volume II Figure 4-4: Map of Document Inspection Venues**). Copies of all materials (including the PEIR) will be available on USB sticks at the Document Inspection Venues available for removal and inspection at library Document Inspection Venues;
- g. Placing Section 47 and Section 48 Notices in local and (for the Section 48 notice) national newspapers; and
- h. Publicising the consultation through the media, online and through liaison with stakeholders.

4.6.4 In addition to consultation with the local community, consultation is also being undertaken with prescribed consultation bodies (in accordance with Sections 42 1(a)&(b), Section 48 and Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations) as well as affected landowners (in accordance with S42 1(d)).

4.6.5 This PEIR is being consulted upon as part of the statutory consultation. As part of the statutory consultation, members of the public will be invited to comment on the Scheme, including its likely significant environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures as presented within this PEIR. Feedback received will be taken into account when finalising the Scheme proposals and when preparing the ES which will accompany the DCO Application.

4.6.6 All responses received during the statutory consultation will be carefully considered and the Applicant will have due regard to them in the development of the Scheme design in accordance with Section 49 of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1). Details of any responses received during statutory consultation and the regard had to those responses will be included in the Consultation Report, which will be available as part of the DCO Application.

4.6.7 The Consultation Report will demonstrate how the Applicant has complied with the consultation requirements of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref. 4-1) and EIA Regulations (Ref. 4-5) and will be considered by the Secretary of State when determining whether to accept the DCO Application, and then in examining the DCO Application.

## 4.7 References

- Ref. 4-1 His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2008) The Planning Act 2008. Available at: [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/pdfs/ukpga\\_20080029\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/pdfs/ukpga_20080029_en.pdf) [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-2 National Infrastructure Planning (2021). Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 14. Available at: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/advice-notes/advice-note-fourteen-compiling-the-consultation-report/> [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-3 The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (2017). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/572/contents/made> [Accessed 10 February 2024]
- Ref. 4-4 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (2011). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/1824/regulation/13/made> [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-5 The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations (2009). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/2264/contents/made> [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-6 His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2008) The Planning Act 2008. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/42> [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-7 His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2008) The Planning Act 2008. Available at: [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/47/enacted#:~:text=\(1\)The%20applicant%20must%20prepare,to%20be%20in%20the%20state%20ment](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/47/enacted#:~:text=(1)The%20applicant%20must%20prepare,to%20be%20in%20the%20state%20ment) [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-8 His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2008) The Planning Act 2008. Available at: [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/48/enacted#:~:text=48Duty%20to%20publicise&text=\(1\)The%20applicant%20must%20publicise,of%20responses%20to%20the%20publicity](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/48/enacted#:~:text=48Duty%20to%20publicise&text=(1)The%20applicant%20must%20publicise,of%20responses%20to%20the%20publicity) [Accessed 10 February 2024].
- Ref. 4-9 His Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2008) The Planning Act 2008. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/49> [Accessed 10 February 2024].

An aerial photograph of a vast solar farm, showing rows of solar panels stretching towards the horizon. The lighting is dramatic, with long shadows and highlights on the panels, creating a strong geometric pattern. The sky is a deep, dark blue.

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