



Telford & Wrekin Council

Proposed Solar Farm – Land at Wheat Leasows, Telford

Community Consultation Statement

Date: February 2014



CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	PLANNING CONTEXT.....	2
3.0	FORMS OF CONSULTATION	3
4.0	PUBLIC EXHIBITION	5
5.0	THE FEEDBACK PROVIDED	7
6.0	RESPONSE TO MATTERS RAISED.....	10

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A: COPY OF THE LETTER AND INFORMATION SHEET
- APPENDIX B: SCREENSHOT OF THE COUNCIL WEBSITE
- APPENDIX C: COPY OF THE SHROPSHIRE STAR NEWSPAPER ARTICLES
- APPENDIX D: LIST OF THE INVITEES TO THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION
- APPENDIX E: COPY OF THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION LEAFLET
- APPENDIX F: COPY OF THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION BOARDS
- APPENDIX G: COPY OF THE FEEDBACK FORM



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 This Community Consultation Statement has been prepared by WYG Planning (WYG) on behalf of Telford & Wrekin Council (Estates and Investments Division) in support of a full application submitted to Telford & Wrekin Council in its role as local planning authority (LPA). In summary, the proposal involves the provision of a solar farm and associated infrastructure on land at Wheat Leasows, Telford.
- 1.02 The application site is irregular in shape and comprises a parcel of undeveloped agricultural land. The site's northern boundary adjoins the rear gardens of three residential properties along an unnamed secondary highway referred to as 'Wheat Leasows', namely (from west to east) No. 4 Wheat Leasows, Wheatley Barn and Wheatley Grange. It is also bounded by a row of mature trees along the disused Shropshire Union Canal to the west; and Queensway HLC School (a specialist educational facility with on-site residential care homes), an electrical substation and additional undeveloped open land along its southern perimeter. A gas valve station is located immediately to the east of the application site. The Queensway Business Park is also located on the opposite side of the A442 Queensway to the south of the school.
- 1.03 Full details regarding the proposed development are provided in the accompanying Planning, Design and Access Statement prepared by WYG.
- 1.04 The purpose of this Statement is to explain the forms of consultation that have occurred prior to the submission of the application, including details regarding the nature and outcome of a community consultation exercise which was undertaken in January 2014.



2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 2.01 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, March 2012) recognises the importance of pre-application discussions during the planning process, noting that early engagement can have the significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system for all parties. The NPPF notes that it can also enable better coordination between private and public resources, as well as improving the outcome of decisions for the local community. In order to achieve this, it advises that LPAs should adopt a pro-active approach which should encourage applicants to fully engage with interested parties before a planning application is submitted.
- 2.02 The current Coalition Government, through the Localism Act 2011, is seeking to introduce a new duty for developers to carry out pre-application discussions for certain types of development, whereas prior to this, it was simply regarded as good practice. Section 122 of the Act, which will introduce this requirement, has yet to formally come into force. However, nonetheless, there remains an acceptance that applicants will continue to demonstrate good practice.
- 2.03 The former Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* (January 2005), had set out the requirement for LPAs to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which should set out an LPA's policies on involving the community in the planning system. The Telford and Wrekin SCI was adopted in 2012 and describes how different stakeholders (including the general public and developers) can get involved in the planning process, both during the preparation of new policy documents and the determination of planning applications. The SCI also notes that the LPA will take account, wherever possible, the public's views and strive to see them incorporated during the decision making process. In relation to pre-application discussions, the SCI identifies that the LPA is keen to encourage early engagement with all parties during the process in order to discuss and resolve any issues prior to the submission of an application.
- 2.04 In light of this, a commitment was given by the applicant at the outset to undertake pre-application consultation in relation to its solar farm proposals, recognising that such an exercise could prove beneficial to both the community and the applicant.



3.0 FORMS OF CONSULTATION

3.01 The applicant for the development is committed to enabling genuine community consultation throughout the application process for the solar farm. A proactive and collaborative approach was therefore adopted at an early stage to effectively engage with the relevant parties. A public exhibition was therefore held to capture the broad range of views of the wider community and other interested groups in advance of the application submission, with further details regarding the event outlined in chapter four of this Statement. Those with a direct interest in the land, notably those residents living immediately adjacent to the site, the Queensway HLC School (and residential care homes) and the companies at Queensway Business Park were specifically targeted for engagement at the beginning of the process and openly informed at an earlier stage about the initial proposals for the site. A copy of an initial letter and information sheet which was sent to these parties is shown in Appendix A.

3.02 Since then, the applicant has arranged a number of one-to-one meetings and discussions with these parties and other interested groups/individuals to describe the emerging proposals and address any enquiries. This has included:

- Regular discussions with the residents of the residential properties immediately adjacent to the application site and the existing tenant farmer of the land. This has comprised frequent meetings, email updates and attended site visits;
- The head and principal of Queensway HLC School (including representatives from on-site residential care homes) were invited to meetings, received regular email updates and a presentation was given to the governors on the 5th December 2013 by the applicant. A supervised site visit was also conducted with Inter-serve; the management company who maintains the school; and
- Frequent discussions with the Homes and Communities Agency.

3.03 A standalone webpage on the Telford and Wrekin Council website for the solar farm was also produced (www.telford.gov.uk/solar) which was updated during the pre-application process to provide information and a place for the community to provide feedback. Details of the public exhibition were publicised on the site, alongside the exhibition display materials, draft layout plans and contact details. A screenshot of the website is shown in Appendix B.



- 3.04 Details regarding the solar farm and public exhibition also appeared in several newspapers, with copies of these articles (from the Shropshire Star) contained in Appendix C. A poll was also conducted on the Shropshire Star website in September 2013, with 67% of their readers agreeing that they thought that the Council should build a solar farm.

- 3.05 A number of pre-application meetings/discussions have also taken place with the LPA to discuss the emerging scheme and the submission requirements.



4.0 PUBLIC EXHIBITION

4.01 It was agreed during pre-application discussions with the LPA that a public exhibition would be held to inform local residents and the wider community about the scheme and enable them to review the development proposals before a planning application was submitted. It was also recognised that the event would be used to allow the interested parties the opportunity to provide feedback to the project team (comprising the applicant and consultants) and propose any changes. A public exhibition was therefore organised at the Queensway HLC School due to its location directly to the south of the application site and its accessible location on the A442 Queensway. The event was held on Wednesday 15th January 2014 between the hours of 4.30pm to 8.30pm to enable attendance by a wide section of the community.

4.02 In order to make the pre-application discussions as effective and productive as possible, the event was advertised by several means:

- A leaflet was sent out to local residents and consultees to invite them to attend the exhibition, including:
 - Residents of the properties along Wheat Leasows, the head, principal and representatives from the on-site residential care homes at Queensway HLC School (the majority of these individuals were also sent a separate letter of invitation in view of their proximity to the site);
 - All companies on the Queensway Business Park;
 - Other statutory consultees, including representatives from Shropshire Fire Service and National Grid;
 - Ward Members and Councillors from the Parish Councils of the site and neighbouring Wards/Parishes; and
 - Other interested parties, including representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, Friends of the Earth and the Homes and Communities Agency.
- Equivalent letters were also sent to several officers in the Council, including the environmental policy officer and sustainable development officer;



- A press release was issued a week prior to the event (and re-issued on the 13th January 2014) to a number of local and regional media outlets, including Radio Shropshire, BBC Midlands Today, the Telford Journal, the Shropshire Star and the Newport Advertiser; and
- The solar farm webpage on the Council website (www.telford.gov.uk/solar) was updated to include the press release about the public exhibition, with details of the event also uploaded onto the Council's Twitter feed. Copies of the display materials, draft plans and feedback forms were also uploaded onto the website after the exhibition for those who were unable to attend.

- 4.03 A full list of the invitees is included in Appendix D. A copy of the leaflet is contained at Appendix E.
- 4.04 The format of the public exhibition was carefully organised in order that the attendees were able to freely review the display materials and discuss any queries directly with the project team. The display was ordered so that the attendees could be provided with a general overview regarding solar farms and information on the Council's wider energy strategy. Further specific details about why the Wheat Leasows site was chosen and how it was identified as being the most appropriate location were also illustrated on the panels. The details of the draft proposal were also provided, including the proposed site layout, landscape and elevational plans, options for the diversion of a public footpath and details about the potential boundary fencing. The boards also included an overview of the supporting studies which had been carried out, including the key findings from the Flood Risk Assessment and Ecology Assessment. A copy of the exhibition boards, which were also uploaded onto the Council website, are contained at Appendix F.
- 4.05 Members of the project team were keen to engage openly with the attendees and they therefore supervised the exhibition at all times. This ensured that they were able to interpret the information and could directly discuss certain aspects of the scheme that could be modified if necessary and/or feasible. The boards also provided the contact and website details if the attendees had any additional queries after the event. A copy of the feedback form which was provided for the attendees to complete and record their observations was also uploaded onto the Council website and is contained at Appendix G.
- 4.06 The event proved very successful in terms of the number of attendees, with 46 individuals signing the register, including a number of councillors, local residents and a reporter from the Shropshire Star.



5.0 THE FEEDBACK PROVIDED

5.01 The project team welcomed the opportunity to seek the views of the community and enable, where possible, the modification of the proposals to reflect their comments. Overall, the project team considered that there was a good turnout and a wide spectrum of attendees to the public exhibition. The feedback indicated that there was a strong level of support for the scheme. Whilst a small number of specific concerns were raised, specifically from those directly affected by the proposed development, it was considered that these were constructive comments and it was therefore likely that a suitable compromise could be reached to address these issues.

5.02 A total of 20 formal feedback forms were completed at the exhibition event, with a further six received via the website after the event. As illustrated in Appendix G, the feedback form asked a series of questions relating to aspects of the proposed development, with the intention that respondents confirmed their agreement or disagreement. There was also space for comments to be written after each question.

Question 1

5.03 The respondents were asked whether they supported renewable energy technologies and the move away from traditional forms of energy generation in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. **100%** supported these types of technologies, with one of the attendees noting that 'traditional' energy generation consumes a finite product.

Question 2

5.04 The next question asked whether the respondents supported the Council's intention to use renewable energy in order to provide an income stream to protect front-line services, with **92%** agreeing that this was the case.

Question 3

5.05 The proposed site layout of the scheme was supported by **83%** of the respondents, with the corresponding positive comments including one that stated that they did not see any grounds for complaint and with much to praise. Others, however, noted that the proposed site access was a concern and another raised a specific request that the proposed fencing to the rear of their property was realigned. One respondent noted that there was an opportunity to ensure that the diverted public footpath was incorporated along the Shropshire Union Canal towpath.



Question 4

- 5.06 A significant majority of the respondents (**96%**) stated that they were happy with the landscape proposals, with several comments recognising that the scheme will help to improve and enhance the existing boundary hedgerows. One of the respondents queried how the buffer zone between the hedges and proposed fencing would be maintained and whether the Council would be responsible for managing the hedges and ensuring that it does not become overgrown.

Question 5

- 5.07 A total of **92%** of the respondents identified that they were happy with the proposal to divert the existing right of way which runs across the site. The exhibition boards illustrated two potential footpath routes to replace the current right of way, with a number of the accompanying comments identifying that it would be important to ensure that the route which was chosen would be as close to the existing right of way as possible. It was also noted that the new route should not have a negative impact on the likelihood of the future restoration of the Shropshire Union Canal from coming forward. A number of specific issues were raised by the residents of one of the properties adjacent to the site, including privacy and safety concerns if the new route was relocated close to their property.

Question 6

- 5.08 The next question asked the respondents whether they supported the proposed location of the vehicular access which would be used during the construction period and for maintenance thereafter, with **88%** agreeing that they did. However, a number of the respondents at the public exhibition raised concerns about the potential construction compound and its location next to the school.

Overview

- 5.09 The respondents were then asked if they had any other general comments about the proposed solar farm, with many of the remarks reflecting the overall positive responses from the rest of the feedback forms, for example:

- 'Brilliant Idea!'
- 'It seems like a good use of the land especially the ecological improvements and managing of the land'



- 'I'm very glad to see the Council wanting to do this. Much better than a commercial outfit that simply wants to make a return for shareholders and no doubt making better use of owned land (and preventing house building on it)'
- 'Excellent'
- 'A very innovative proposal'

5.10 Several of the other comments which were provided expressed a number of issues on certain aspects of the scheme, including:

- A request for further details about the screening of the site during the construction phase and whether the trees to the south of the site (within the school boundary) would be retained;
- The level of vehicular traffic and noise during the construction and post-construction phases; and
- The type of site security and fencing around the site, with particular issues relating to the proximity of the construction area to the school.



6.0 RESPONSE TO MATTERS RAISED

6.01 The proposed scheme has been subject to a lengthy and wide-ranging process of examination and the design has therefore evolved to respond to these matters. The attendees at the public exhibition raised a number of legitimate concerns and, as outlined below, the project team carefully considered all of the comments and made further amendments, where appropriate, to incorporate these requests into the final design of the scheme. It should also be noted that the initial stages of the consultation process had already taken account of the views of those residents to the north of the site, with the layout designed to ensure that the panels and transformer stations were located a sufficient distance from their properties.

6.02 In terms of physical scheme changes, a number of modifications have been made in direct response to concerns expressed:

- The public right of way has been relocated along the western boundary of the site. It has been identified as the most appropriate route by the Council Rights of Way officer but it also leaves the option open to connect to the Shropshire Union Canal towpath at a later date;
- Amendments have been made to the type and location of the landscaping treatments to the rear of the three residential properties along the northern boundary of the site. These changes have been agreed after extensive discussions with the applicant and reflect the specific requests of the owner of each property. The fencing to the rear of No. 4 Wheat Leasows, for example, has been re-sited as a result of the diverted right of way route to the rear of their property and to allay their privacy and security concerns;
- The type of fencing to be installed on the site has also been amended to reflect the comments from the nearby residents and the school, with a mix of deer, palisade and mesh fences proposed along the site boundary; and
- The top array of solar panels along the northern boundary of the site has been removed as a direct result of the discussions with the owners of the property closest to this area.

6.03 In addition to these physical changes, the applicant has also accepted other measures relating to the functioning of the scheme. The temporary construction compound, for example, was identified as a potential issue by the school governors at the public exhibition. Although the compound has not been relocated to an alternative location (due to the adverse impact that this would have on the overall



implementation of the scheme), the applicant has provided further details in subsequent discussions with the governors about how the compound will be carefully managed and controlled. The construction staff, for example, will be provided with specific advice about the extra precautions that will need to be taken around the site at all times. The Construction Traffic Management Statement which accompanies the planning application also contains provisional details about the mitigation methods which will be adopted to reduce any potential issues with the compound or issues with vehicular traffic and noise. The Council also intends to keep the school and local residents fully informed throughout the construction period to ensure that any concerns are allayed.

6.04 Finally, several of the matters raised during the consultation exercise were always intended to be taken into account in the interests of delivering an acceptable and quality scheme. However, their specific reference has meant that the documentation accompanying the planning application sufficiently demonstrates that:

- A more sensitive allowance has been made in view of the nature of the school to ensure that the scheme will not have an adverse impact on noise levels in the area, with additional baseline noise testing undertaken to demonstrate this (see Noise Assessment);
- The proposed landscaping has been carefully designed to improve the amenity of local residents and reduce the visual impact of the scheme (see Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and the Planning, Design and Access Statement); and
- The responsible operation of the site will extend to the general maintenance of the site, including the proposed landscaping.

6.05 The applicant has been committed to enabling an effective and collaborative engagement process with the relevant parties throughout the pre-application stage. It was also noted that a strong level of participation could help to shape a more accepted scheme and thereby ensure an improved outcome for the community. It has been evident throughout the consultation process that there is a broad level of support for the proposed scheme and the project team considers that a suitable compromise has now been reached which has, where possible addressed the specific concerns which were raised. Of course, it is recognised that the modifications which have been outlined above may not resolve all of the concerns raised. However, it is evident that the pre-application process has offered the community the opportunity to express their opinions and play a genuinely important role in inputting into the finalised design.



**APPENDIX A: COPY OF THE LETTER AND INFORMATION SHEET:
DATED SEPTEMBER 2013**

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to you to personally let you know that the Council is considering developing a solar farm on land at Wheat Leasows (as shown on the attached location plan).

As your property is near the proposed site, we wanted to contact you at an early stage to give you an opportunity to find out more about the proposal and to be involved from the start.

We thought it may be useful for you to have some information about solar farms. The enclosed information sheet hopefully explains why the Council is considering this development, what will happen next and how local residents could be involved. I enclose some pictures of a solar farm of a similar size to the one that the Council is considering. This is run by Cornwall Council and gives you an idea of how such a scheme might look.

Once you have had an opportunity to read through the information and think about the proposal you may have some questions and we would be happy to help. You can either ring Fliss Mercer, who is the main person working on the project, on (01952) 380136, or email her on felicity.mercer@telford.gov.uk. Fliss would be happy to come and meet with you in person if that is what you prefer.

The information sheet also explains that, if the scheme is supported by the Council's Cabinet, there will be a formal consultation period during the planning application process where you will also be able to give your views.

Again, we would welcome any feedback or ideas that you have at this stage.

Kind regards,

Councillor Bill McClements and Councillor Shaun Davies (Joint Cabinet Leads for Commercial Projects)

Solar Farm Information Sheet

➤ **What are solar farms and what do they look like?**

A solar farm is made up of a large number of solar panels mounted on the ground. The panels are fitted in rows on racking and are connected together. Each panel typically measures 1.6m x 1m.

The panels absorb light and convert it into electricity. The racks of panels are connected together using wiring. Other equipment is housed in a building which is usually located in the centre of the site. The electricity generated is transmitted to the grid via an electricity sub-station. Fencing and/or natural barriers (hedges etc) are installed around the site.

Figure 1 shows some pictures of a solar farm of a similar size to the one that the Council is considering. This is run by Cornwall Council and gives you an idea of how such a scheme might look.

➤ **Why is the Council considering developing a solar farm?**

A solar farm, approximately the size of the one proposed at Wheat Leasows, would have a number of benefits, including:

- **Environmental** – it would save more than 2,300 tonnes of CO₂ and would generate enough electricity to power more than 1,000 homes. The Council would contribute towards national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and generate more electricity from renewable sources.
- **Financial** – a solar farm would generate income, and this income would be put back into the Council to help protect services. Income would be generated from day 1 and would be guaranteed by the Government for a 20 year period.
- **Economic** – there could also be benefits for the local economy, for example use of local suppliers during the installation phase.

➤ **What impact would a solar farm have on neighbouring properties?**

Compared with other forms of development, the impact of a solar farm is relatively low. For example, solar panels do not:

- make any noise;
- give off any heat or glare;
- pose any danger to touch.

The panels can be screened from view. Once installed, solar farms are left undisturbed apart from occasional routine maintenance.

The Council is committed to keeping any impact to a minimum. To help us identify further the impacts of a solar farm on the local area, the Council will need to carry out a wide range of assessments on the site. These would include visual, landscape and ecology assessments.

➤ **What will happen next?**

The next step is a report to the Council's Cabinet on 19 September. The Cabinet report will be published on 11 September. It will seek approval to submit a planning application and subject to planning permission being granted to start a procurement process. The Cabinet meeting will take place at AFC Telford Learning Centre, Haybridge Road, Wellington and is a public meeting. The meeting starts at 5pm.

The main part of the report will be discussed in public session. The only part of the report that will be heard in private will be the financial information, as this is commercially sensitive and making this publicly available at this stage could mean that the Council would not get best value for money if the project went ahead.

If the Cabinet agree, we would then submit a planning application. Before this happens though we would need to carry out the various pre-planning assessments mentioned above and, working with local residents, respond to any issues identified. Once submitted, the planning application would be determined within 13 weeks.

If planning permission was granted, we would then go out to tender to appoint a contractor to design, install and operate the solar farm. Our aim would be to install the solar farm in Spring/Summer 2014.

➤ **How will local residents be informed and involved?**

We are committed to keeping local residents and the wider community informed and involved. Ways that we would do this include:

- Talking to and listening to local residents and local Councillors to discuss the proposals in detail and to help understand and deal with any possible concerns or worries;
- Working alongside environmental interest groups;
- Using the Council's website for frequently asked questions and copies of all reports and documents;
- Issuing regular press releases and details on social media, and;
- As part of the planning process, having a public exhibition and drop-in sessions.

We will keep a record of comments, views, ideas and feedback received prior to any potential planning process. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet and goes to a planning process, this would then include a formal consultation where people can give their views.

➤ **Who can I speak to about the proposals?**

You can speak to Fliss Mercer, who is the main person working on the project. She can be contacted on (01952) 380136, or email her on felicity.mercer@telford.gov.uk.

Figure 1 – Photos of Kernow Solar Farm, Cornwall





APPENDIX B: SCREENSHOT OF THE COUNCIL WEBSITE

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Solar farm

Solar farm

Telford & Wrekin Council is looking into developing a solar farm in the borough.

The Council has agreed the business case for the development of a Council-owned solar farm, subject to planning approval, on land at Wheat Leasows.

The Council is now beginning a consultation process prior to a planning application being submitted.

The project would form part of the Council's strategy to move towards becoming a more environmentally and financially sustainable council.

It would contribute to reducing the Council's carbon footprint. It would also help to create a more sustainable financial position for the Council, by bringing in new income to help to offset some of the cuts in central government funding.

This page provides information and a place to leave feedback in the lead up to the submission of a planning application.

A public exhibition is taking place on 15 January 2014 to gain views and provide information about the development before an application is submitted. Display materials from the exhibition and copies of the latest plans will be available to view online from 16 January 2014.

If you have any questions or want to give your feedback or views, you can email solar.farm@telford.gov.uk. If you would like to speak to someone, please call us on 01952 380136.

How do you rate this page?

**Related items**[Downloads](#)**Policy & Strategy team**

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Ironmasters Way

Telford
TF3 4NT

Tel: 01952 380136

Email: solar.farm@telford.gov.uk



Update to online forms

We will be updating some of our online forms on Thursday 16 January from 5.30pm. As a result several online forms will be temporarily unavailable. We apologise for any inconvenience.

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Home > Latest press releases > Council and democracy > Solar farm public exhibition

Solar farm public exhibition

Published on 08 January 2014

Telford & Wrekin Council is to hold a public exhibition as a part of the formal consultation for plans to build a publicly funded solar farm in the borough.

Plans and additional information will go on display at Queensway Hadley Learning Community next Wednesday (15 January) ahead of the submission of a planning application.

The Council's Cabinet agreed proposals to put forward plans for a commercial scale solar farm to be built on land at Wheat Leasows as a part of its strategy to find new ways of bringing income in that can help to protect the frontline services that the Council provides.

The Council has made a commitment to move towards a more sustainable financial position to help offset government cuts.

The solar farm would form a part of the Council's wider energy strategy to aid a reduction in its carbon footprint which includes improving energy efficiency and energy generation in Council buildings.

Media statements

[What we really said](#)

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Reports and documents



- Solar farm site plan
- Cabinet report - 19 September 2013
- Solar farm information sheet

News



- Council considers solar farm
- Cabinet considers solar farm
- Solar farm public exhibition

Solar farm exhibition



- Exhibition display materials [↗](#)
- Design layout plan
- Public footpath diversion plan
- Landscape proposals plan



APPENDIX C: COPY OF THE SHROPSHIRE STAR NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

BRIEFING

Council's solar plans display

Plans to build a solar farm to boost Telford & Wrekin Council's income are to go on display this month.

The authority is looking at building the power generator at Wheat Leasows, near Hortonwood, subject to planning approval.

The council's decision-making cabinet has agreed to look at plans for a commercial scale solar farm as a part of its strategy to find new ways of generating money in the face of cuts.

The plans will go on show at the Queensway Hadley Learning Community on January 15 from 4.30 to 8.30pm. Anyone who cannot attend will be able to see the information and plans from January 16 to 19 on the council website <http://www.telford.gov.uk/solar>

Sophie Madden STAR 16-1-14

Public given first view of solar farm scheme

SOLAR farm plans for Telford were shown to residents for the first time, with the promise they would power more than 1,000 homes and generate £200,000 for Telford & Wrekin Council.

A public exhibition was held last night at the Queensway HLC, where people could get a first look at the proposals and find out more about the scheme.

The solar farm, set to be built in a field in Wheat Leasows, could have more than 1,600 solar panels.

Plans revealed that the farm would keep existing trees and foliage as well as planting further hedgerows to act as a barrier.

A public right of way which currently runs through the field near Horton would also be redirected to avoid the planned farm.

Councillor Bill McClements, cabinet member for finance and enterprise, said the plans were an investment in the future.

He said: "The layout of the panels has been changed and a slight band of grass area has been added near the houses which is helping us and also addressing some concerns."

He added: "There will always be people upset or having concerns, we're now in the difficult period of consultation. It is a very exciting project, I've just been down in Ironbridge meeting with the Telford Tourism board, if this plan is approved people can come and see our solar farm."

The solar panels last 20 to

Report by Sophie Madden
sophie.madden@shropshirestar.co.uk

25 years, and Mr McClements said that once this period is over, the council will be able to decide whether to reinvest in this project or develop the land in other ways."

Shropshire Council planners recently gave the go-ahead for a 35,800-panel farm covering nearly 61 acres on the outskirts of Condover, near Shrewsbury.

Ed Jessamine, from Novus Energy, the planning contractors who have been putting together the proposal said it was a good investment for the council.

Some residents who attended last night's meeting said they thought the plans were an excellent way for the council to invest in renewable energy.

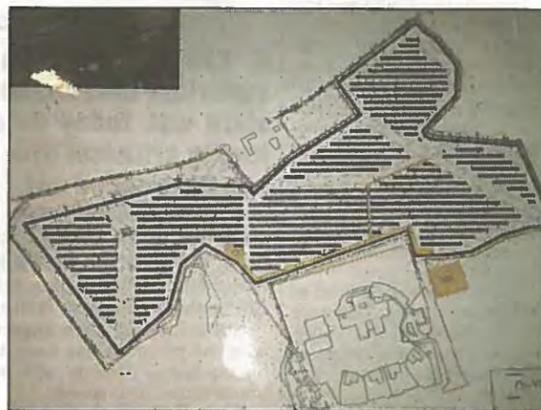
Brian Herring, from Malinslee, said: "I think it looks quite viable, so I can't see any real hazards or damage to the environment."

However, John Sherlock, who's home in Wheat Leasows will be surrounded by the farm said: "We've been in discussion with members of the council and given feedback on the impact we believe it will have. Whether it is the correct decision remains to be seen."

The plans are still in the early stages and will be put forward for planning permission in February.



The panels would power more than 1,000 homes



The plans for the solar farm on display in Telford



Residents are being asked to submit their views



APPENDIX D: LIST OF INVITEES TO THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Telford & Wrekin Council

List of people sent invitations to Solar Farm Exhibition on 15 January 2014

Local residents

*Steve Newby	Wheatley Grange, Wheat Leasows, Telford, Shropshire, TF6 6DS
*Mr J and Mrs H Sherlock	Wheatley Barn, Wheat Leasows, Telford, Shropshire, TF6 6DS
*Mr M Powell and Ms S Francis	4 Wheat Leasows, Telford, TF6 6DS
*The Occupier	Bramley Cottage, 3 Wheat Leasows Telford, Shropshire, TF6 6DS
*The Occupier	2 Wheat Leasows Telford, Shropshire, TF6 6DS
*The Occupier	1 Wheat Leasows Telford, Shropshire, TF6 6DS
*Chris Kennedy	ABC Care, re House 4, Queensway HLC site
*Marilyn Holmes	Bettercare Keys, re Houses 2 & 3, Queensway HLC site
*Sally Seymour	Corporate Parenting, re House 1, Queensway HLC site
The Occupier	Roselea Wheat Leasows Telford Shropshire TF6 6DS
Mrs G Curley	Windyridge, 36 Wheat Leasows Telford Shropshire TF6 6DS
The Occupier	Laburnum Cottage, 34 Wheat Leasows Telford Shropshire TF6 6DS
The Occupier	The Rockery Wheat Leasows Telford Shropshire TF6 6DS
Tenant Farmer	Mr G R Cooke , Bratton Hall Farm, Nr Admaston, Telford, TF5 0BX

Local business community

All businesses on the Queensway Business Park were hand delivered an invite. Those businesses on the front of the Park would be statutory consultees.

Other statutory consultees

Building and Planning Regulation Manager	*Shropshire Fire Service
Luke Belcher	*National Grid

Ward Councillors and Parish & Town Councils

Wheat Leasows site is located in:

- Ward – Hadley & Leegomery (Malcolm Smith, Leon Murray, Keith Austin);
- Parish – Hadley & Leegomery.

Wheat Leasows site is near to:

- Wards – Church Aston & Lilleshall (on boundary of – Andrew Eade) and near to Apley Castle (Karen Blundell) and Wrockwardine Wood and Trench (Shirley Reynolds & Charles Smith)
- Parishes – Eyton upon the Weald Moors, Preston the Weald Moors (not formal Parish Councils but have Parish meetings) and Wrockwardine and Trench.

*Cllr Keith Austin	Ward member, Hadley & Leegomery ward
*Cllr Malcolm Smith	Ward member, Hadley & Leegomery ward - Telford & Wrekin Council
*Cllr Leon Murray	Ward member, Hadley & Leegomery ward - Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr John Smart	Chairman - Hadley & Leegomery Parish Council
Mr Jerald Smith	Chairman - Preston on the Wealds Parish Meeting
*Mr Colin Potts	Clerk - Hadley & Leegomery Parish Council
Cllr Andrew Eade	Ward member – Church Aston & Lilleshall
Mrs Yvonne Taylor	Clerk - Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Parish Council
Cllr Les Brayne	Chairman - Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Parish Council
Mrs Hilary Knight	Secretary - Eyton on the Wealdmoors Parish Meeting

Cllr Karen Blundell	Ward member - Apley Castle
Cllr S Reynolds	Ward Member - Wrockwardine Wood and Trench
Cllr C Smith	Ward Member - Wrockwardine Wood and Trench

*denotes statutory consultee

Media publicity about the exhibition

- Press release - issued on the 7th January and re-issued on the 13th January to:
 - Free Radio
 - BBC Radio Shropshire
 - BBC Midlands Today
 - BBC Online
 - ITV Central
 - Telford Journal
 - Shropshire Star
 - Newport Advertiser
 - Signal 107 FM
 - Wrekin News
 - Shropshire Live.com
 - Heart FM
 - The Hub magazine
 - The MJ
 - Press Association
 - 24 Dash
 - Local Government News
 - What's What Magazine
 - The Business Desk

Other interested parties

Wellington LA21	
Newport LA21	
Mr G Irwin	Environment Agency
Natural England	Natural England
Mr Robert Saunders	Friends of the Earth
Mr Colin Roberts	Transition Town Centre
Mr & Mrs O'Neill	Local farmer
Gill Eatough	Principal, Queensway HLC
Nigel Griffiths	Headteacher, Queensway HLC
Kirsty Griffiths	Contracts Management Officer, Telford & Wrekin Council re Queensway HLC site
Tracy Hebberts	Interserve (security firm for Queensway HLC school)
Chris Baker	HCA (Homes & Communities Agency)

Internal officers

Rachel Taylor	Environment & Planning Policy Team Leader
Harjot Rayet	Environmental Policy Officer
Joanne Tombs	Sustainable Development Officer
Alan Fox	Service Delivery Specialist, Property Investment
Paul Martin	Commercial Solicitor
Julia Copus	Finance Manager (Capital & Infrastructure Services)
Dainy Runton	Finance Team Leader
Richard Horton	Electrical Engineer, Property & Design
Kate Stephens	Development Planner



APPENDIX E: COPY OF THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION LEAFLET

Exhibition of draft proposals



Wednesday 15 January 2014 4.30pm – 8.30pm

Queensway Hadley Learning Community

(formerly Jigsaw School) , A442, Hadley

In September 2013, Telford & Wrekin Council approved the business case for the development of a solar farm on Council land at Wheat Leasows.

We have now drawn up initial plans for a solar farm and would like to invite you to an exhibition to see the proposals, ask questions and give us your views. There is no need to book, just drop in.

**Proposals for a
Solar Farm at
Wheat Leasows**



If you can't attend the exhibition, all of the exhibition information will be available on our web page.

For more information visit www.telford.gov.uk/solar email solar.farm@telford.gov.uk or ring Felicity Mercer **01952 380136**



APPENDIX F: COPY OF THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION BOARDS

Welcome to the solar farm exhibition

Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...



Thank you for taking the time to find out about the Council's plans for a solar farm at Wheat Leasows.

We welcome the views of the community and we invite you to give your comments, which will be considered prior to the submission of a planning application. If you would like any further information on any aspects, please speak to a member of the team.

Why develop a solar farm?

Due to reduced government funding, the Council is keen to develop new ways of generating income, to help protect front line services.

Benefits of a solar farm

- Could provide work for local suppliers during the construction phase
- Locally produced renewable energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The proposed farm is expected to generate enough electricity for >1,000 homes
- Helps deliver national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed solar farm is expected to save >2,300 tonnes CO₂
- Development is reversible
- Land and soil quality are allowed to regenerate
- No pollution or harmful emissions
- Very little noise
- Low maintenance

- 1 Solar roof panels
- 2 Biomass process

Part of the Council's wider energy strategy

Council buildings

- Replacing gas boilers with biomass boilers
- Use of ground source heat
- Roof-mounted solar panels
- Solex power (solar heating system)

For local residents and businesses

- Telford Energy Savers programme (Green Deal), helps local residents and businesses make energy saving improvements
- Investigating other ways the Council can help businesses with their energy costs eg Business Switch and Save scheme



Why choose Wheat Leasows?

Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...



All Council owned land was screened for its suitability to develop a solar farm on. Wheat Leasows site was chosen for three main reasons:

- Size of land available
- Proximity to sub-station
- Not prime agricultural land



What are the next steps?

Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...



The next steps of the process

- 1 **Submit planning application**
Start of February 2014
- 2 **Planning process and formal consultation**
13 weeks from submission of planning application
- 3 **Planning decision**
- 4 **Procure a contractor (If planning approved)**
Early Summer 2014
- 5 **Installation takes 12 weeks**
Target is to start August 2014
- 6 **Solar farm up and running**
Autumn 2014

How can I give my views?



Complete feedback form here at the exhibition, place in box before you leave

or



On the Council's website
www.telford.gov.uk/solar

or



Speak to **Felicity Mercer**
Co-operative & Commercial Projects
Manager **01952 380136**

or



Email us solar.farm@telford.gov.uk



What supporting studies have been carried out?

Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...

Before any planning application can be submitted, a series of supporting studies have to be carried out on the site to find out what effects the development may have. The following studies have been carried out and will accompany the planning application when it is submitted.

Habitat Report

- This identifies any ecological constraints on the site
- Gives advice on how the design of the development can avoid breaching nature conservation law

Geo-environmental Desktop Study

- Gives advice on the geo-environmental status of the site
- Identifies and explains any potential risks arising from any land contamination

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- Assesses the significance of the impact of visual changes
- Assesses changes to the character and quality of the landscape

Design and Access Statement

- Looks at the design principles and concepts applied
- It explains how accessibility issues have been addressed

Noise Assessment

- Looks at the impact of the noise arising from the proposed solar farm on the local community



Flood Risk Assessment

- Assesses any risks to the site or the development associated with flooding, with a focus on how surface water run-off can be managed

Arboricultural Impact Assessment

- Assesses the quality of the trees on the site
- Identifies any trees likely to be affected by the proposed development

Transport Statement

- Considers what traffic impacts are associated with the construction stage of the development
- Considers the implications of the presence of a public right of way within the site

What will it look like?

exhibition... Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...



1



2



3

- 1 Solar panels front view
- 2 Close up of the side view of fitted panels
- 3 Sheep may be used to graze on grass around panels
- 4 Solar panels rear view
- 5 Solar panels established in a semi rural setting



5



4

How do solar panels work?

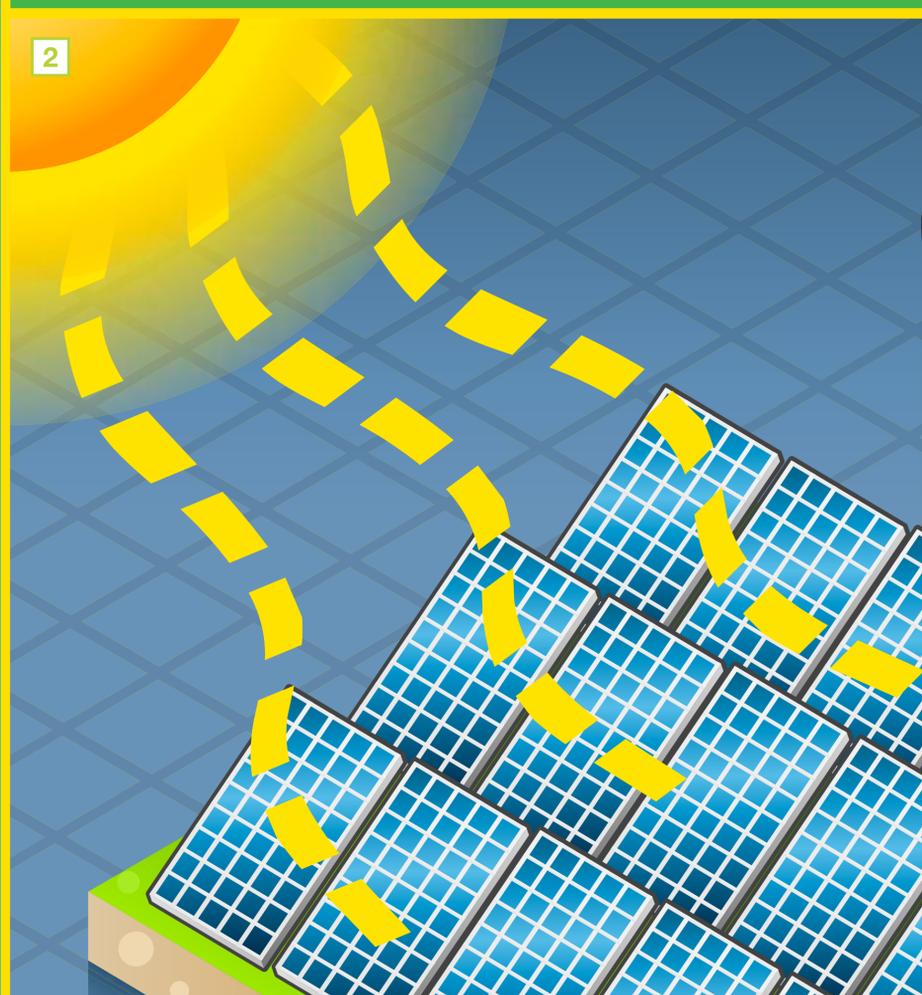
exhibition... Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...



1 Contractor fits panels

2 Panels absorbing the sun

- Solar photovoltaic (PV) power works when a semi-conductor absorbs light and electrons are released
- The electrons are extracted as electric current in a small, silicon solar cell
- The electricity from a single cell is very small so many cells are connected together into a solar panel
- Solar panels are fitted together into rows (arrays) and connected by wiring to inverters
- Inverters take the direct current from the panels and change it to alternating current – this electricity can then be transmitted to the grid via electricity sub-station



Government Policy:

- The Government supports renewable energy, such as solar power, because it provides a secure supply of energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- By 2020, the Government wants 15% of the UK's demand to be met by renewable energy
- To increase renewable energy generation, the Government provides a range of long-term (20 year) financial incentives

What else do we need to know?

exhibition... Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition... Solar farm exhibition...

Your questions answered

Will the solar panels still produce energy when the sun isn't shining?

Panels work on light level, so they will produce electricity even when it is cloudy. Demand by industry and business is high in the middle of the day, when we have the light.

Will panels cause glare?

Solar panels are designed to absorb the light so there is little reflection or glare.

Do solar panels pose a health risk?

No. The panels are sealed units. They do not emit any dangerous radiation.

How is the ground maintained?

There is ample room around the solar panels. There is an option of using sheep to keep the ground well maintained.

What activity will there be on the solar farm after it has been built?

There is very little activity. Generally the site is inspected annually and panels are cleaned twice a year.

What will happen at the end of the project?

The life of a solar farm is 20-25 years. At the end of that time. Either; 1) the panels are removed and the land is returned to its former use, or 2) panels are replaced and the land continues to be used as a solar farm.





APPENDIX G: COPY OF THE FEEDBACK FORM



CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM



Thank you for taking the time to find out about the Council's plans for a solar farm at Wheat Leasows.

We value the views of the community and we invite you to record your comments on the proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. All comments will be considered individually and will assist the project team in taking the scheme forward.

Please complete this form and place it in the comments box as you leave. We have also provided a space at the end of the response form for you to write in any other comments.

Q1 Overall, do you support renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels and the move away from traditional forms of energy generation in order to help to protect the environment?

Yes

No

Q2 Do you support the Council's intention to use renewable energy in order to provide an income to be used to protect front-line Council services?

Yes

No

Q3 The proposal has been designed to ensure that the solar panels and supporting equipment are positioned sensitively within the surrounding area. Are you satisfied with the layout of the site?

Yes

No

Q4 The proposal includes new and improved areas of planting in order to respect the surrounding landscape. Are you happy with these proposals?

- Yes
- No

Q5 The proposal is for the public right of way across the site to be diverted. Are you happy with this proposal?

- Yes
- No

Q6 Do you support the proposed location of the vehicular access to be used during the construction period and for maintenance thereafter?

- Yes
- No

Q7 Do you have any general comments regarding the proposed solar farm?

Q8 Please provide the first three digits of your postcode (e.g. TF3)

Q9 Please tick which of the following applies to you:

- Resident
- Business
- Other, please specify

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.