



# Pre - Application Consultation Report

CAUDWELL SOLAR FARM

Green Energy International

April 2023



Date:	04 August 2023	
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## 1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This report documents the strategies and methods that have been deployed during the public consultation phase in relation to the proposed Caudwell Solar Farm. It includes an analysis of the feedback received from local constituents and councillors. Concluding, the report assesses the effectiveness of this stage in the overall planning process and outlines its cumulative contribution to the proposed development.

### 1.2. Project Initiation

- 1.2.1. In August 2021, Green Energy International initiated a series of community engagement activities to disseminate information and solicit feedback regarding a proposed solar development project at Caudwell Farm. Green Energy International's internal planning team oversaw all of these activities except for website design, which a local web development firm prepared.

### 1.3. Aims of the Consultation

- 1.3.1. The foremost objective of community engagement was to keep local constituents and the local planning authority fully apprised of the proposed development, thereby providing a platform to express any potential concerns. This engagement strategy was adopted by Green Energy International (GEI) to tailor the development plan following these concerns. The engagement protocol adheres to the recommendation of the South Holland District Council, which advocates for developers to actively involve the community and include details of such preliminary consultations in their planning applications. Upholding its strong track record of effective community involvement and stakeholder engagement, GEI remains committed to maintaining this approach throughout the project and in future endeavours.

### 1.4. Legal Framework

- 1.4.1. The legal stipulations for public consultations on developmental projects in specific regions within the UK can vary. Although a general statutory obligation for developers to conduct public consultations doesn't exist, some regions mandate a specific period for community engagement preceding the submission of large-scale planning applications. Nonetheless,





Englands Planning Policy Framework offers vital guidance on pre-application consultations. Both on a national and local level, the Planning Policy Framework encourages community involvement during the pre-application phase for major developments. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 significantly influence this process. The Act requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to establish a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that promotes local community participation in proposed developments. The NPPF and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) further underscore the importance of early engagement and efficient pre-application discussions for enhancing the planning application system's effectiveness and fostering improved outcomes for the community.

- 1.4.2. Furthermore, COVID-19 led to temporary alterations in the publicity requirements for some planning applications, aimed at sustaining public involvement while avoiding development delays. Also, statements of community involvement such as those from South Holland District Council elucidate the expected methodologies and significance of early engagement with local communities and Ward Members, feedback collection post-consultations, and transparent, inclusive processes to improve application quality. Thus, the planning policy framework seeks to foster better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community via comprehensive and timely consultation processes.

## 1.5. The Significance of Early Engagement

- 1.5.1. South Holland District Councils Community Engagement Strategy (2008) highlights the importance early engagement holds and the substantial potential it has to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. High-quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

## 1.6. The Role of Local Planning Authorities

- 1.6.1. As stated in Paragraph 40 of the NPPF: *"(Local planning authorities) should, where they think it would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required by law to engage with the local community and, where applicable, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications."* Paragraph 39 underscores the significance of early engagement, stating: *"Early engagement holds substantial potential to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. High-quality pre-application discussion promotes better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."* Paragraph 132 of sets out that



applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourable than those that cannot.

## 1.7. The Applicant

- 1.7.1. This planning application has been prepared by Green Energy International for a the Caudwell solar farm and associated battery storage facility project. Green Energy International has over a decade of experience in the industry, contributing over 200MWp of renewable energy to the grid, saving an estimated 160,000 tons of carbon annually or powering around 100,000 homes. The company aims to develop a further 3GW over the next two years, contributing to the country's transition from fossil fuels to cleaner, more sustainable energy sources. For any further information regarding this statement, please contact:

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## 1.8. Purpose and Structure of this Report

- 1.8.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an in-depth account of the pre-application consultation carried out by the applicant, with a focus on local community consultation. The report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2: Consultation Strategy
  - Chapter 3: Details of Pre-Application Consultation
  - Chapter 4: Feedback and Responses
  - Chapter 5: Incorporation of Consultation Responses into the Application
  - Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

## 1.9. Commitment

- 1.9.1. GEI commits to maintaining open communication with stakeholders post-submission of the planning application, ensuring transparent communication throughout the construction and operational phases of the proposed project.



## 2. CHAPTER 2: CONSULTATION STRATEGY

### 2.1. Pre-Application Consultation Approach

- 2.1.1. GEI embarked on early stage pre-application stakeholder and public consultations concerning the proposed scheme. The consultation exercise employed a diverse and inclusive strategy, incorporating a variety of consultation methods. This approach aimed to ensure that key stakeholders, both statutory and non-statutory, communities, and the public were kept informed about the solar farm development and were provided opportunities to comment on it.

### 2.2. Consultation Objectives

- 2.2.1. The objective of the consultation strategy was to establish and maintain a dialogue with key parties and individuals who have an interest in the development, particularly the Local Parish Councils, local residents and South Holland District Council. The consultation aimed to raise awareness of the proposed development, provide clear and concise information, invite feedback, and demonstrate within the application how the applicant has considered this feedback.

### 2.3. Policy Guidance

- 2.3.1. In devising the consultation strategy, the applicant reviewed relevant local and national policy and guidance. The approach to consultation was informed by South Holland Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2008), which encourages early engagement with the local community and council before submitting a planning application. Moreover, the National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the significance of early engagement in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.

### 2.4. Stakeholder and Public Consultation Methods

- 2.4.1. For local community consultation, the applicant facilitated the provision of relevant information on the development and sought opinions and comments from local residents through the following methods:





- Discussions with local councillors, including an online Zoom Video presentation;
- Letter drops and press releases;
- A project-specific website;
- Pre-application feedback forms; and
- Individual correspondences and meetings with residents on specific matters.

## 2.5. Consultation Zone

- 2.5.1. A 2km consultation zone around the development site, shown in 'Volume 4, 4.19 Public Consultation Documents', was deemed appropriate given the potential construction and visual impact zone of the solar farm scheme. This was clarified in an email to South Holland District Council where Planning Officer Lucy Buttery confirmed she had reviewed the map and the consultation zone was sufficient (Appendix 4.19).

## 2.6. Experience and Commitment to Consultation

- 2.6.1. GEI has extensive experience in community communication and recognises the value of inclusive pre-application consultation and communication to local communities and key stakeholders. They acknowledge the requirement for community engagement as set out within the Localism Act 2011, affirming that local people's knowledge and understanding of the locality can contribute to the proposal's design.

## 2.7. Implementation of Consultation Objectives

- 2.7.1. By implementing the above objectives, the applicant aimed to effectively communicate and clarify information, alleviate any concerns, and respond to issues raised in finalising the design and the detail of the planning submission and the accompanying suite of supporting information.

## 2.8. General Public Attitudes to Renewable Energy Schemes

- 2.8.1. General public support for renewable energy in the UK is high. A 2021 survey by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) found that 79% of people in the UK support the use of renewable energy. This level of support has remained relatively stable in recent years. There are a number of reasons why people in the UK support renewable energy. Many people believe that renewable energy is a clean and sustainable



way to generate electricity. They also believe that renewable energy can help to reduce the UK's reliance on fossil fuels and combat climate change.

- 2.8.2. In recent years, public support for renewable energy has increased in light of the climate crisis. In February 2020, nearly 70% of local authorities in the UK had declared a climate emergency. The BEIS Public Opinions Tracker, published in May 2021, has drawn the following conclusions on current public attitudes towards renewable energy: As of March 2021, 80% of the public said they were either fairly concerned (47%) or very concerned (33%) about climate change. This is a slight reduction since the peak of 82% in September 2020 but still represents one of the highest proportions of overall concern since the survey started (approx. March 2012) and is driven by an increase in the proportion of persons very concerned about the emerging evidence of climate change and the climate emergency. Over six in ten people (64%) said that climate change is already having an impact in the UK. The most common impact of climate change that people said they had noticed in the UK in the last few years was rising temperatures / hotter summers (52%), rising sea levels or more flooding (50%) followed by extreme events such as storms (49%).
- 2.8.3. More people thought that the government should have the most responsibility for tackling the effects of climate change in the UK (34%) compared with the general public (26%) and businesses (19%). Energy security was a key concern, with 72% of people concerned that the UK is not investing fast enough in alternative sources of energy, and 72% concerned the UK is becoming too dependent on energy from other countries. Support for the use of renewable energy lessened slightly from 82% in 2020 to 79%, however levels of support for renewables have been consistently high since March 2012.
- 2.8.4. Support for a range of renewable energy developments remained high in March 2021, with support for solar (84%), off-shore wind (76%), wave and tidal (75%), and on-shore wind energy (70%), marginal reductions since 2020. Since these records commenced in March 2012, they have shown consistently that solar energy is one of the most popular forms of energy generating technology. These findings suggest that public support for renewable energy is strong and growing. As the climate crisis becomes more pressing, it is likely that public support for renewable energy will continue to increase.

### 3. Chapter 3: Details of Pre-Application Consultation

- 3.1.1. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, GEI devised a comprehensive strategy for remote pre-application consultation to ensure robust community engagement. The goal was to keep the local community and other stakeholders informed about the proposal, and to provide opportunities for them to voice their concerns, ask questions, and give feedback. The official period of public consultation ran for four weeks, throughout August 2021. During this period,



a multi-faceted approach was adopted to engage with the local community and ensure that their voices were heard.

3.1.2. As part of the engagement strategy, Green Energy International prioritised building relationships with key stakeholders. This process involved sharing preliminary details of the proposal, soliciting feedback, and using the received insights to refine the proposal before wider dissemination to the public. To ensure broad coverage, an information letter was delivered to around 100 addresses within approximately a 2km radius of the proposed site. Each pack contained:

- An introductory letter from GEI, outlining the proposed development and the ongoing public consultation process
- A site location map and layout plan
- Details for how people could contact GEI and share their views (in a Covid-Safe way).

(See Appendices 4.19 for details of the consultation pack distribution area and sample packs, respectively.)

### 3.2. Digital Consultation Platform

3.2.1. As part of the engagement process, a dedicated consultation website was established at [www.caudwellfarm.com](http://www.caudwellfarm.com), serving as an information hub that offered detailed insights about the project and facilitated online feedback. The website, launched by the applicant in August 2021, was publicised to local communities through letter distribution and a press release. It was segmented into various sections, including construction details, access information, indicative site layout, biodiversity considerations, public rights of way, and more, all of which welcomed comments and feedback from the public. This platform, alongside other consultation activities, provided a channel for residents to directly communicate with the applicant, no residents responded using the online feedback form at the time of writing this report (August 2023).

3.2.2. The Caudwell Farm website has undergone comprehensive revisions to accommodate the latest findings from the studies executed on the site. These updates serve to enhance the detailed understanding of the project's current state. Moreover, the planning application is now available for public review, presenting an inclusive vision of the proposed project. We encourage community members to liaise directly with our team at GEI, utilising their preferred communication channels. However, it is important to elucidate that any feedback directly conveyed to GEI does not form part of the official planning application record. To ensure insights are duly recognised and integrated into the planning process, we recommend



they adhere to the prescribed steps outlined on our website for submitting comments on the planning application.

### 3.3. Engagement with Parish Councils

- 3.3.1. GEI has conducted targeted outreach with adjacent Parish Councils as part of our ongoing commitment to community engagement. Initial correspondences, synchronised with the broader letter drop, introduced GEI and the proposed project. These were followed by additional information detailing the public consultation process, with requests for the councils to relay this information via their channels. Requests were made for both in-person and virtual meetings to facilitate detailed discussions on the project and address any queries or concerns.
- 3.3.2. A pivotal event was the Zoom meeting of the Pre-Application Consultation Group held on 7th April 2021. This meeting saw broad attendance from councillors and local authority figures. The core agenda was the proposed solar development at Caudwell Farm, a privately-funded initiative. The presentation covered the potential benefits of this development, including provision of clean electricity for around 14,000 homes, minimal visibility of the infrastructure, and low impact on traffic and the environment. It also emphasised the possibility of biodiversity enhancement, with measures for monitoring surface water runoff and a proposition for installing solar systems on school roofs.
- 3.3.3. Perspectives on the project varied among the group. Concerns were raised about using grade 1 land for the solar farm. However, many councillors, such as Cllr Christine Lawton and Cllr James Avery, demonstrated enthusiasm for the project and acknowledged its potential benefits to the community. Suggestions put forth included utilising local knowledge for road planning and exploring the possibility of using the solar farm to enhance wildflower areas. The potential knock-on effects that approval could have on other farmers was a key point of discussion, and is addressed subsequently in this statement. (See Appendix 4.18 and 4.19 shows the presentation slides and the meeting minutes from the council officer)
- 3.3.4. To ensure a comprehensive engagement, local interest groups were also contacted, provided with consultation leaflets, and offered telephone or video-meeting briefings. The overall consultation process aimed to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and effective communication. This process allowed for a wide range of perspectives to be considered, enabling GEI to





address concerns, clarify information, and refine the proposal based on the feedback received.

## 4. Chapter 4: Feedback and Responses

### 4.1. Consultation Responses Overview

- 4.1.1. The consultation aimed to provide local residents and stakeholders with an opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions about the potential new development proposals in their area. The section below provides an analysis of the data received during the consultation.

### 4.2. Participation Metrics

- 4.2.1. Throughout the consultation period and upto the time of writing, a total of 15 residents participated, queries via email or phone. The demographics and locations of the respondents were diverse, spanning from local residents to business owners and landowners. A summary of the responses, including (where known) age breakdown, the means of learning about the consultation, and responses to specific consultation questions, will be presented in subsequent sections.

### 4.3. Consultation Feedback

- 4.3.1. The consultation website received a total of 154 views and a total of 5 people responded via email. The responses raised topics such as loss of agricultural land and the consultation methodology. A summary of the responses and the applicant's regard to those comments will be provided in Table 1 below.

### 4.4. Feedback on Consultation Questions

- 4.4.1. The responses to the consultation questions will be analysed and presented in this section, providing an overview of the public opinion towards the proposed development.



**Table 1: Summary Of The Responses**

Date	Name and Location	Issues Raised	Comments and Suggestions	Summary/Actions
4 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (phone call seen newspaper article)	The main issues brought up in this phone call pertain to a lack of public involvement and confusion around specific aspects of the project. The individual felt excluded due to the absence of a physical, walk-in public exhibition, highlighting a potential deficit in community engagement. Furthermore, there was a perceived misunderstanding around the implementation or concept of a 'one-way system,' indicating possible communication gaps or unclear project descriptions.	The person's remarks suggested that project leaders could improve by providing clearer explanations and better communication around project elements such as the 'one-way system.'	<p>Improving communication: Clearer explanations about specific project elements like the 'one-way system' can be shared. This could be done via community briefings, detailed project plans, or a FAQs section on the project website.</p> <p>Establishing better feedback channels: Ensuring that misunderstandings or concerns from the community are addressed promptly and adequately can help avoid future miscommunications.</p>
4 <sup>TH</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Phone Call – Received letter)	This comment does not raise any specific issues. Instead, the individual expresses their support for the proposals, endorsing a move towards more renewable energy. They also appear to be familiar with the landowners.	The individual suggests that community benefit money could be used for environmental enhancement projects, such as planting more trees, including fruit trees. They reference a successful example of a community orchard established on a solar farm in Devon.	<p>Consider the proposal to use community benefit money for tree and fruit tree planting. Review the feasibility and potential benefits of establishing a community orchard within the project area, as in the mentioned southern project.</p> <p>Encouraging Green Initiatives: Use this feedback to continue promoting and implementing environmentally friendly practices within the project, reinforcing its commitment to renewable energy and community enrichment.</p>
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown	The main issues articulated in this email trail include a desire for increased involvement in project-related public meetings and a misunderstanding regarding the nature or	The individual's remarks imply a need for better opportunities for public engagement and clearer communication regarding event	Inviting Public Participation: Actively reach out to community members, including business owners, inviting them to participate in public meetings.

	(Email – Letter Drop)	proceedings of such an event. Furthermore, the mention of owning a business may suggest interest in business-related impacts or opportunities associated with the project.	details. Their business ownership may also suggest an interest in understanding or influencing the project's business implications or opportunities.	Depending on the nature of the project, consider having sessions or communications that specifically address business-related impacts or opportunities. This could involve dedicated business forums, business impact studies, or collaboration opportunities.
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Phone call – News Article)	The caller, a local resident, strongly opposes the proposed solar farm. Their concerns focus on the potential impact on property value, the aesthetics of the area, and the reliability and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy.	The caller suggests that the proposed solar farm could negatively affect their property value and spoil the aesthetics of the area. They also express doubts about the reliability and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy sources.	Community Engagement: Engage in open dialogues with the community, particularly with residents who have concerns similar to the caller's. This could help clarify the project's impact on property values and the landscape.  Visual Impact Minimisation: Reiterate plans to install panels in a way that minimises their visual impact on the surrounding area.
5 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Phone call – Newspaper Article)	The caller identified themselves as a representative of a local haulage business interested in being involved in the project. They also express their support for the proposal and highlight a potential issue with the local area's reliance on agriculture, especially considering the potential impacts of climate change.	The individual requests their inclusion in the project's tender list, indicating their interest in providing services for the project. They also suggest that the local area needs diversification away from agriculture due to possible climate change effects.	Acknowledging Interest: Appreciate and record their interest in providing haulage services for the project, taking note of their request to be included in the tender list.  Evaluating Services: Consider the services of the local haulage business during the procurement process. This could involve evaluating their capabilities, cost-effectiveness, and potential contribution to local economic diversification.  Climate Change Considerations: Use this feedback to highlight the importance of

				diversification in local economies as a part of the broader discussion on the project's benefits and impact, emphasising its role in promoting renewable energy and mitigating climate change.
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Email – Letter Drop)	The issues outlined in this email involve a perceived discrepancy or unavailability of the project's website, a need for reassurance about the survey work associated with the project, and opposition to the use of farmland for the project.	The comment suggests that there may be a need for the project team to correct or clarify information on the project's website, provide more transparency and reassurance about the survey work conducted, and address concerns about the use of farmland.	<p>Website Update/Repair: Check the project's website for errors or accessibility issues and resolve them promptly. This ensures accurate and readily available information for the public.</p> <p>Transparency on Survey Work: Provide clear information about the survey work involved in the project. This could include the purpose, methods, results, and how they feed into the project decisions.</p> <p>Addressing Land Use Concerns: Engage in open dialogue about the choice to use farmland for the project. This may include explaining the reasons behind the choice, discussing potential alternatives, or outlining measures to mitigate any adverse effects on the land.</p>
16 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Email – Unknown)	This comment identifies three main concerns. First, the individual encountered difficulties accessing the project's website. Second, they disagreed with the use of prime land for the project. Third, they were worried about the potential impact on footpaths.	From this comment, it seems that there's a need for technical support to resolve website access issues, more dialogue or explanation regarding the decision to use prime land, and a discussion or reassurance about the protection of footpaths during and after project execution.	<p>Land Use Communication: Provide a clear explanation for why prime land is being used for the project, detailing the benefits and how any potential negative impacts will be mitigated.</p> <p>Footpath Impact Mitigation: Assure the community about steps taken to</p>

				<p>minimise impact on footpaths during project execution. This could involve sharing construction plans that demonstrate protective measures, or outlining post-construction restoration strategies for affected footpaths.</p>
11 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	<p>Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Email – Letter Drop)</p>	<p>The respondent raises several issues including a lack of access to complete project information, an incorrect website URL in a press announcement, preference for a physical over a virtual exhibition, uncertainty about potential grazing arrangements on the project site, a call for transparency and detailed environmental reports, and scepticism about the choice of land for the project.</p>	<p>The respondent suggests making full project details available for review, correcting the website URL, considering a public, physical exhibition, providing examples of similar grazing arrangements, ensuring transparency and thorough environmental surveys, and exploring alternative land options for the project</p>	<p>Providing Complete Project Information: Make full details of the project proposal readily available, possibly on the project website or other accessible platform.</p> <p>Clarifying Grazing Arrangements: Provide examples of similar grazing arrangements from past projects and elaborate on how such arrangements would be managed on this project site.</p> <p>Ensuring Transparency: Maintain transparency throughout the consultation process, including providing detailed ecology reports and tree surveys.</p> <p>Reviewing Land Use: Acknowledge scepticism about the proposed land use and consider a dialogue about why this land was chosen and whether alternative, less valuable land options were explored.</p>
13 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	<p>Name Redacted and Location Unknown (phone call –</p>	<p>The individual has raised multiple issues, including seeking more information about the project, concerns about the land grade and flood risk, past experiences with failed planning developments, and worries about</p>	<p>This person seems to suggest that more transparent and detailed information be made available about the project, especially concerning land grade and flood risk. They also bring attention to potential challenges in</p>	<p>Information Accessibility: Ensure comprehensive project information is readily available and easily accessible, possibly through various channels like the project website, email updates, or public meetings.</p>

	Newspaper Article)	footpath usage and access issues with the landowner.	planning approval, based on past experiences. Furthermore, they stress the importance of addressing footpath and land access concerns.	<p>Address Land Grade and Flood Risk Concerns: Provide clear explanations or reports on how land grade and flood risks have been assessed and will be managed throughout the project.</p> <p>Learning from Past Developments: Investigate the past failed developments mentioned to identify and mitigate potential obstacles to planning approval for this project.</p> <p>Discuss Footpath and Land Access Issues: Actively engage with the community and landowner to resolve footpath and land access issues, ensuring that all parties' needs and concerns are considered.</p>
7 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Email – Newspaper Article)	The individual expressed interest in viewing the presentation from the pre-application meeting. There's also a hint of confusion, as they may have referred to the 'virtual exhibition' presentation, which, according to the context, seems to be a different event.	This comment implies a need for improved access to resources like presentations from past meetings. It also suggests that clarification may be needed about different events and associated materials, such as distinguishing between the pre-application meeting and the 'virtual exhibition.'	<p>Providing Past Presentations: Make presentations from past meetings, like the pre-application meeting, available to the public, possibly through the project website or direct email.</p> <p>Clarifying Event Materials: Provide clear distinctions between different events and their corresponding materials to prevent misunderstandings. This could involve labeling presentations with the event's name and date or providing descriptions of the event when sharing related resources.</p>



				Responding to Email Requests: Ensure that email requests like these are acknowledged and responded to in a timely manner, offering the requested materials or clarifications as needed.
9 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Email – Letter Drop)	The individuals have raised concerns about a lack of response to their email, visibility of the project, the presence of CCTV towers, footpath access, the choice of site location, and potential benefits for the community with a reference to the EDF development at Sutton Bridge.	This comment suggests a need for better email management to prevent missed communications. It also implies a demand for greater transparency around project elements such as CCTV towers, footpath access, site selection process, and potential community benefits.	<p>Providing Project Details: Improve transparency by offering comprehensive information about project elements such as CCTV towers, footpath access, and the site selection process.</p> <p>Community Benefit Discussion: Open a dialogue about potential community benefits associated with the project, possibly referencing comparisons with similar developments like the EDF project.</p> <p>Responding to Emails: Ensure a prompt and thorough response to the initial email, addressing all concerns raised. This could include explanations about the project visibility, CCTV towers, footpath, site location, and the potential community benefits.</p>
13 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Phonecall – Word of Mouth)	This caller doesn't raise an issue but instead identifies the individuals as local businessmen who operate a plant hire and earth moving company. They mention having previously worked on the farm where the project is likely situated.	The comment suggests that the businessmen are interested in participating in the project, offering their services for any construction work needed, particularly in the laying of hard standing.	<p>Acknowledging the Email: Respond to the email to acknowledge their offer and note their interest for potential future needs.</p> <p>Evaluating Services: Review the suitability of their services for the project's needs. This could include considering their past work on the farm</p>

				<p>and their expertise in earth moving and plant hire.</p> <p>Considering Local Businesses: If appropriate and beneficial, consider employing local businesses like theirs to contribute to the project and support the local economy.</p>
14 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Email – Letter drop)	The respondent expressed concerns about the confusion caused by their previous comments, the unavailability of proposal details on the website, doubts about the feasibility of grazing management on the project site, the use of agricultural land for solar projects, and potential glare issues from solar panels impacting aviation interests.	The respondent suggests organising face-to-face meetings to discuss the project proposal, ensuring that full project details are available on the website, rethinking the use of agricultural land for solar projects, and adhering to CAA recommendations to mitigate potential impacts on aviation interests. They also propose a new term "Solar Factories" for solar projects.	<p>Arranging Face-to-Face Meetings: Organise public meetings to discuss the project proposal, which could help manage public expectations.</p> <p>Correcting Website Errors: Rectify the error message on the website and ensure that full project details are available as per the specified launch date.</p> <p>Clarifying Grazing Management: Address the respondent's concerns about the feasibility of grazing management on the project site. This could involve providing evidence or examples of successful grazing management from past projects.</p> <p>Reviewing Land Use: Consider the respondent's viewpoint about the use of non-agricultural land for solar projects, which could lead to a broader discussion about the project's land use strategy.</p>

				<p>Addressing Glare Issues: Investigate potential glare issues from solar panels and their impact on aviation interests, making sure to follow CAA recommendations to mitigate these potential impacts.</p> <p>Regenerate response</p>
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Phonecall – Unknown)	The respondent, a neighboring farmer, raises concerns about website functionality, the grade of the land involved in the project, and the potential impact on a local footpath. They worry that the views from the footpath could be compromised, discouraging its use.	The respondent suggests resolving the website issue and ensuring that the footpath remains accessible and appealing for use throughout the project's lifespan. They also require a detailed explanation and reassurance about the land grade issue.	<p>Reassurances about the Footpath: The respondent was assured that the footpath would remain accessible throughout the project's lifespan and that its usage would be protected.</p> <p>Explanation of Land Grade: The issue of land grade was explained during the phone call and further detailed in a follow-up email to the respondent.</p>
20 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Name Redacted and Location Unknown (Phonecall - Newspaper Article)	The respondent, a local resident and a member of a local school PTA, supports the proposal due to its potential to steer away from oil and contribute to saving the planet. They, however, wondered about the potential involvement of the local school in the project.	The respondent suggests exploring ways to involve the local school in the project, emphasising the importance of environmental stewardship and education for younger generations.	<p>School Involvement: Explore potential ways to involve the local school in the project. This could include educational sessions about renewable energy, site visits, or student projects related to environmental sustainability.</p> <p>Environmental Education: Use the project as an opportunity to educate students and the wider community about the importance of moving away</p>

				from oil and toward more sustainable energy sources.
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## 5. Chapter 5: Incorporation of Consultation Responses into the Application

### 5.1. Modification of Initial Proposal

5.1.1. The applicant, following the public consultation and subsequent feedback, made several adaptations to the initial scheme prior to submitting the planning application. These changes were primarily influenced by the feedback from the local community and consultations with the local planning authority. Modifications include:

5.1.2. Addition of a new permissive footpath:

5.1.3. As an enhancement to our site, we have incorporated the addition of a new permissive footpath in response to valuable community feedback. This footpath, established around the site's southern perimeter, will serve as an invaluable amenity for local residents and visitors alike. Features to be included are strategically placed seating arrangements comprising standard and picnic benches for leisure and rest, comprehensible and professionally designed signage for ease of navigation, accessible entrance gates for seamless ingress and egress, and distance markers in both miles and kilometres. These markers will be of particular use to local residents interested in using the new footpath loop for sports training and fitness-related activities, aligning with our goal of fostering a healthy and active community.

5.1.4. Community benefit for local schools:

5.1.5. In commitment to fostering community benefits, we have devised a comprehensive initiative targeted towards local schools. Based on preliminary discussions, a local school will be offered rooftop solar systems free of charge, which serves a dual purpose of enhancing their infrastructure while promoting sustainable energy. Furthermore, funding will be provided for educational trips to the solar farm. These visits are designed to enrich students' understanding of renewable energy, biodiversity, and rural landscapes. In the spirit of interactive learning, the newly established pond on the site can be utilised for 'pond dipping' activities. We have also incorporated an outdoor classroom near the pond, equipped with log seating, thereby creating an environment conducive to hands-on learning in a natural setting. A further proposal includes the installation of beehives on the site. The harvesting of honey produced by these hives presents an opportunity for an engaging learning experience, which can be seamlessly incorporated into the educational site visits. This initiative reinforces





our objective of intertwining community benefits with environmental consciousness and educational enrichment.

#### 5.1.6. Addition of a community orchard:

5.1.7. In response to a compelling suggestion from a resident who works in close proximity to the site, we have considered the integration of local fruit production into our project. This resident expressed an interest in having access to fresh, locally-grown fruit for various purposes such as crafting homemade cider and engaging in culinary endeavours. Acknowledging the potential benefits this could offer the wider community, we propose to establish a community orchard on site. This orchard will feature a diverse array of native fruit trees, the produce of which will be accessible to local residents for picking when ripe. This proposition aligns with our continued commitment to fostering community engagement and enhancing the local environment through thoughtful and sustainable planning.

#### 5.2. Addressing Key Concerns

5.2.1. Several key concerns were raised during the consultation, such as loss of farmland, impact on highways, and impact of glint and glare on local residents and aircraft. This section will detail how these concerns were addressed, and what specific modifications were made to the proposals as a result. The key issues raised in these public comments are as follows:

#### 5.3. Community Engagement

5.3.1. *Facilitate public exhibitions or open houses to foster community participation and enhance understanding of the project.*

5.3.2. This action is being addressed by arranging a subsequent updates to the website with details of the final proposals and planning application. You can find more details regarding this in Section 6.2 below.

5.3.3.

5.3.4. *Enhance communication by providing more lucid explanations regarding specific project components.*

5.3.5. In the subsequent consultation, we aim to deliver a more comprehensive understanding of the final proposal, while also encouraging participants to express their views on the proposed plan.

5.3.6.

5.3.7. *Establish more efficient feedback channels to address community misunderstandings or concerns promptly.*





- 5.3.8. The forthcoming consultation exercise is designed to establish improved channels of communication that are in alignment with the post-Covid scenario.
- 5.3.9. *Reassure the community about the measures taken to minimise impact on footpaths during the project execution.*
- 5.3.10. The measures taken to protect and enhance footpaths are discussed in the Design and Access Statement. For a brief overview of these actions, refer to the non-technical summary.
- 5.3.11. *Contemplate conducting an additional consultation as Covid-19 restrictions continue to ease.*
- 5.3.12. As discussed later in this report, we propose a further consultation that will be carried out in tandem with the submission of the planning application.

#### 5.4. Project Transparency and Information Accessibility

- 5.4.1. *Introduce a comprehensive FAQ section and elaborate project plans on the project's website.*
- 5.4.2. We have implemented an FAQ section within the planning application (Chapter 4, Appendix 4.24) to help address common queries.
- 5.4.3. *Ensure the comprehensive availability of the project proposal details through the project website or other readily accessible platforms.*
- 5.4.4. The full planning application will be accessible for public viewing at [www.caudwellfarm.com](http://www.caudwellfarm.com)
- 5.4.5. *Dispense explicit information regarding the surveys undertaken as part of the project.*
- 5.4.6. The Non-Technical Summary serves as an easily digestible overview of the application, the surveys conducted, and the findings derived.
- 5.4.7. *Deliver a cogent rationale for the selection of prime land for the project.*
- 5.4.8. This subject has been addressed extensively within various reports included in the application. For more detailed information, please refer to the Application Overview document which points to the various places this is addressed within the application.



5.4.9. *Make available presentations from previous meetings to the public.*

5.4.10. In our commitment to transparency, we've ensured that presentation documents, emails, and letters relevant to the application are available for public review within the various appendices.

5.4.11. *Provide comprehensive information about various project elements, such as CCTV towers, footpath access, and the site selection process.*

5.4.12. Detailed descriptions of these elements can be found in the Design and Access Statement as well as in the Non-Technical Summary.

#### 1.1.1. Suggestions and Proposals

5.4.13. *Acknowledge the support received from individuals who are in favour of the project, as evidenced in Section 2.8 of the report, where public opinions supporting solar energy are highlighted.*

5.4.14. It is important to note that often individuals who support a project may not actively reach out to share their views, leading to a disproportionate number of negative reviews. We appreciate the suggestions for community benefit funds and will engage in ongoing discussions with relevant stakeholders. The distribution of these funds will be transparent and made available on the Caudwell Farm website for public viewing.

5.4.15. *Give due consideration to the proposal of utilising community benefit funds for tree and fruit tree planting.* This proposal has been taken into account, and the final project plans include the establishment of a community orchard.

5.4.16. *Evaluate And Consider The Services Provided By The Local Haulage Business During The Procurement Process.* A list of local contractors has been compiled, and priority will be given to local contractors wherever possible, thus supporting the local economy.

5.4.17. *Explore potential avenues for involving the local school in the project, such as through educational sessions or site visits.*

5.4.18. We are actively exploring these possibilities and will transparently share any findings regarding the benefits of such involvement.



- 5.4.19. *Acknowledge skepticism regarding the proposed land use and engage in a constructive dialogue about the rationale behind choosing this particular land.*
- 5.4.20. A site selection report is included within the Environmental Statement (ES), and additional information can be found in the Supporting Planning Statement.
- 5.4.21. Sustainability and Environmental Considerations
- 5.4.22. *Advocate and implement environmentally sustainable practices within the scope of the project.*
- 5.4.23. We have integrated a range of environmental enhancements within the project design, and we will ensure that any construction team adheres to all environmental constraints and regulations throughout the project.
- 5.4.24. *Launch a public information campaign to address common misconceptions about the reliability and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy.*
- 5.4.25. Misconceptions surrounding the reliability and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy are addressed in the FAQs sections of the application and on the project website..
- 5.4.26. *Reassert plans to install solar panels in a manner that minimises their visual impact on the surrounding environment.*
- 5.4.27. For details on the installation of solar panels, please refer to the Design and Access Statement.
- 5.4.28. *Examine potential glare issues associated with solar panels and their implications for aviation interests, adhering to the recommendations made by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to mitigate potential impacts.*
- 5.4.29. Please refer to the Glint and Glare Assessment for a comprehensive analysis of potential glare issues and mitigation strategies.





## 5.4 The Impact of COVID-19 on Consultation

- 5.4.30. The global COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated alterations to traditional modes of consultation, which has been particularly impactful in our inability to conduct face-to-face meetings and public exhibitions. However, to ensure continuity in our consultation process and maintain engagement, our consultation website was leveraged extensively to bridge this gap. It served as an essential platform allowing consultees to access detailed information about the proposed development, provide feedback, and pose questions.
- 5.4.31. To augment the consultation process further, we adopted a variety of online mediums complemented by more traditional methods such as phone lines and written correspondences. Despite these efforts, we acknowledge that this approach may not have been seen as wholly inclusive by all stakeholders, given the varied levels of digital literacy and accessibility among our community members.
- 5.4.32. In light of the completion of all reports and survey work, GEI is committed to conducting further ongoing consultations. We aim to ensure comprehensive public awareness of the proposals, providing ample opportunities for members of the public to ask questions and voice their opinions. Ultimately, our goal is to facilitate the public in articulating their views directly to the local planning authority. This commitment to continuous consultation represents our dedication to transparency and inclusivity, despite the challenging circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 6. Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Ongoing Consultation

### 6.1. Continued Public Consultation

- 6.1.1. Our dedicated website, [www.caudwellfarm.com](http://www.caudwellfarm.com), will be consistently updated to communicate the current status of the project. It will provide individuals with a platform to share comments directly with GEI or via the planning portal to the Local Authority. To ensure maximum accessibility, the website will host a complete digital copy of the planning application and be optimised for viewing on various devices, including mobile phones and web browsers.
- 6.1.2. Informational letters outlining the proposal and its current status, links to the website, and directions for public commentary and information sharing, will be distributed to all properties within a 2km radius of the site.



- 6.1.3. Additionally, local parish councillors and planning committee members will receive an information pack summarising the development and providing key facts.
- 6.1.4. We will maintain open lines of communication with schools and community groups to discuss rooftop systems and proposed educational facilities. This includes local scout and guide groups and other stakeholders who could benefit from the proposals. Furthermore, the proposed allocation our Community Benefit Fund, amounting to £100,000 which includes funds for a rooftop solar installation will be publicised on the aforementioned website. While this fund does not directly influence planning considerations, we believe in upholding transparency in all our community engagements. We invite community groups that feel they could benefit from the fund to contact GEI directly.
- 6.1.5. In our commitment to raising awareness about the development proposals and the transition to the planning stage, we will provide regular updates on the website and have included a box where individuals can sign up and receive regular updates about the proposal the final outcome/decision.
- 6.1.6. We believe this approach to continued public consultation is highly inclusive and builds upon previous consultation exercises, which have been instrumental in informing the final proposals.

## 6.2. Summary and Conclusions

- 6.2.1. The Pre-Application Consultation Report for the Caudwell Solar Farm project provides a comprehensive overview of the strategies and methods employed during the public consultation phase. The report meticulously documents the feedback received from local constituents and councillors, analysing its effectiveness in the overall planning process and its cumulative contribution to the proposed development. Throughout the report, it is evident that Green Energy International has prioritised inclusivity and transparency in its approach to public consultation.
- 6.2.2. GEI has made efforts to raise awareness about the development proposals and the transition to the planning stage through regular updates on its site-specific website. The inclusion of a sign-up box for individuals to receive updates further demonstrates their commitment to keeping the public informed. The report also emphasises the importance of making project proposal details readily accessible to the public. Green Energy International has ensured the comprehensive availability of these details through its project website and other accessible platforms.



- 6.2.3. They have also provided explicit information about the surveys conducted as part of the project, making it easier for the public to understand the research and findings. Furthermore, the report addresses the need for a cogent rationale for the selection of prime land for the project. It highlights that this subject has been extensively addressed within various reports included in the application. For more detailed information, readers are directed to the Application Overview documents, which point to the specific sections where this is addressed.
- 6.2.4. In conclusion, the Pre-Application Consultation Report for the Caudwell Solar Farm project demonstrates Green Energy International's commitment to engaging with the local community and stakeholders. Their inclusive approach to public consultation, regular updates, and transparent dissemination of information contribute to a well-informed decision-making process. By addressing concerns and providing comprehensive details, Green Energy International has laid a strong foundation for the proposed development of the Caudwell Solar Farm.

