

**PLANS SUBMITTED FOR NEW SOLAR DEVELOPMENT IN BELCHAMP ST PAUL**

**22 June 2023**

BSR Energy (BSR) has submitted a planning application to Braintree Council for the delivery of a 49.99MW solar development on Land at Baker's Road, Belchamp St Paul (Application reference 23/01413/FUL). The proposal offers a significant opportunity for green energy production in Braintree and could power the equivalent of 12,501 homes every year.

There is a recognised need for green energy production in the area, with Braintree Council declaring a climate emergency in 2019, along with its goal to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Government's Energy Security Strategy also highlights the need for a fivefold increase in solar energy generation, to help the UK reach a 95% clean grid by 2030 and become less dependent on foreign imports. The delivery of solar development at Land at Baker's Road would help to meet these policy goals and move the UK towards greater energy security, at a time when more and more people are experiencing fuel poverty due to soaring prices and a cost-of-living crisis.

The submission of the planning application follows an extensive five-week consultation period with the local community, which included an in-person consultation event and engagement with a variety of local stakeholders.

Of those consulted, only 9.4% expressed strong views against the proposals with the majority of respondents either expressing neutral views or support for the delivery of solar in this location. Concerns raised mainly centred around the perceived visual impact of the proposed development, the impact on, and suitability of, the local roads network for construction traffic, and the belief that the land should remain in agricultural use.

In light of the feedback received, the project team has carefully considered any amends to the proposals, ahead of submission, that would seek to further mitigate any perceived negative impacts of a solar development in this location. This has included:

- Removal of the second construction compound to the north east of the site. This follows on from concerns that were raised regarding the diversion of construction traffic along Hickford Hill.
- The addition of planting to further mitigate any visual impacts of the development. This additional planting includes: three rows of trees to provide additional screening, one along the boundary with Cutbush Farmhouse and the associated barn; one along Baker's Road on the southern boundary; and one along the site access track going north from the main site entrance.

Overall, the feedback received was balanced, with a number of people noting support for the project or providing suggestions for additional mitigation.

Sarah Hymas, Senior Project Manager at BSR, said:

*"BSR is excited to have submitted a planning application to Braintree Council following a positive consultation with the local community."*

*“BSR is providing Biodiversity Net Gain of 179.96% for habitat and 53.59% for hedgerow, which far exceeds the minimum 10% target outlined by the Government in the Environment Act 2021. As part of this, existing habitats on site will be retained and managed over the lifespan of the development, something that we know is important to the local community.*

*“Should planning permission be granted, the land can be reverted back to agricultural use at the end of its 40-year operational lifespan with no detrimental impact to the quality of the land. Something we hope will be a comfort to those respondents that were keen for the land to be returned to agricultural use.*

*“We look forward to continuing to engage positively with local stakeholders and the Council as the determination of the application progresses.”*

The project team can continue to be contacted by residents and other interested parties by email at [info@BSRknowlgreen.co.uk](mailto:info@BSRknowlgreen.co.uk) and by calling freephone 0800 058 4283.

## **ENDS**

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### Notes to editor

*About British Solar Renewables:*

*British Solar Renewables creates smart energy systems for a net zero carbon future. British Solar Renewables develops, builds, and manages utility-scale solar and storage projects for developers and investors in the UK and internationally. Having developed and built solar farms that produce in excess of 700MWp BSR is a major contributor to the UK Renewable Energy Sector. With over a decade’s experience, BSR has successfully developed more than 645MW solar PV over 57 plants.*

*BSR is a leading renewable energy developer and provider of expert services into the renewable energy industry. It takes green field sites through development, construction and operation leading to an outstanding renewable energy asset with minimum impact on the environment.*

*BSR combines the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions with sympathetically derived schemes to minimise the impact on local communities and the environment while creating rich ecosystems and protected havens for wildlife.*

## Feedback

*During the five-week consultation period with the local community, which included an in-person consultation event and engagement with a variety of local stakeholders, it was found that:*

- Support is high for tackling the climate crisis, with 90.63% of respondents agreeing, or somewhat agreeing that we need to take steps to do so.*
- 77.4% of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that building new solar developments will contribute to reducing carbon emissions and reach the Government's target of Net Zero by 2050.*
- 50% of respondents agree or somewhat agree that building new solar developments will assist with the current cost of living crisis.*
- Concerns were raised by a number of respondents about the land being removed from agricultural use.*
- The suitability of the roads along the proposed construction traffic route were also a concern to respondents, with some particularly concerned about the damage that could be caused to the local road network by construction traffic.*
- Biodiversity Net Gain is important to respondents, with 60% saying that the minimum 60% Net Gain which would be delivered as part of the proposals is very important or important.*
- 81% of respondents said that it was very important or important that the site is returned to agricultural use following the decommissioning of the solar development.*
- Respondents strongly support the improvement and creation of habitats as part of the proposals with 97% of respondents saying this was either very important or important to them.*

*In total, the consultation was advertised to 2,250 addresses surrounding the site through a direct leaflet mailing, 150 letters were also issued to close neighbouring residents and businesses. The consultation was also promoted across social media using targeted Facebook and Instagram adverts. 32 responses were received across the consultation period.*

*Of these, only 9.4% expressed strong views against the proposals with the majority of respondents either expressing neutral views or support for the delivery of solar in this location. Concerns raised mainly centred around the perceived visual impact of the proposed development, the impact on, and suitability of, the local road network for construction traffic, and the belief that the land should remain in agricultural use.*

*Further information on the consultation and feedback received can be viewed in the Statement of Community Involvement, submitted as part of the planning application.*

## Planning application documents

*The full suite of documents available to view as part of the planning application includes:*

- 1) Planning Application Forms and Plans;
- 2) Planning, Design and Access Statement;
- 3) Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)
- 4) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA);
- 5) Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA);
- 6) Breeding Bird Survey;
- 7) Great Crested Newt Survey;
- 8) Wintering Bird Survey;
- 9) Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment;
- 10) Biodiversity Management Plan;
- 11) Arboricultural Planning Statement;
- 12) Highway Statement (HS);
- 13) Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP);
- 14) Flood Risk Assessment (FRA);
- 15) Archaeology Desk-Based Assessment (DBA);
- 16) Heritage Statement;
- 17) Agricultural Land Classification;
- 18) Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study;
- 19) Outline Soil Resource Management Plan;
- 20) Sequential Site Selection Report;
- 21) Noise Impact Assessment; and

**22) Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**

In addition to this suite of documents, the following plans are submitted alongside the Planning Application:

- 1) Site Location Plan (Ref. 1640-0200-05) (Issue 04)
- 2) Planning Layout (Ref. 1640-0201-01) (Issue 08)
- 3) Planning Layout Overview (Ref. 1640-0201-26) (Issue 09)
- 4) Landscape Masterplan (Ref. 1051583-ADAS-XX-XX-DR-L-8006) (Revision 02)
- 5) Access Road Sections (1640-0208-10) (Issue 01)
- 6) Aux Transformer Detail (1640-0207-02) (Issue 01)
- 7) CCTV Detail (1640-0204-00) (Issue 02)
- 8) CCTV With Speaker Detail (1640-0204-01) (Issue 01)
- 9) Fence Detail (1640-0205-01) (Issue 01)
- 10) HV Compound Elevations View (1640-0208-81) (Issue 02)
- 11) HV Compound Plan View (1640-0208-80) (Issue 01)
- 12) Mounting System Detail (1640-0206-00) (Issue 01)
- 13) Private Switchgear (1640-0208-50) (Issue 01)
- 14) Spares Container Detail (1640-0207-40) (Issue 01)
- 15) Transformer Station Detail (1640-0207-00) (Issue 01)
- 16) Welfare Container Detail (1640-0207-41) (Issue 01)