

Dengie Solar Park

Statement of Community Involvement

December 2022



Project: Dengie Solar Park, Maldon District, Essex

Client Name: BSR Energy

Type of report: Statement of Community Involvement

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Date: December 2022

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Date: December 2022



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1. Executive summary

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) provides a summary of the public consultation undertaken in relation to BSR Energy's proposal for a 19MW Solar Park on land south of Keelings Road, Dengie, CM0 7JF.

The project team initially met with Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council on 5 September 2022. Key stakeholders were contacted about the proposal and invited to the consultation event on 18 October 2022 and the public consultation took place between 17 October and 19 November 2022. The consultation invited stakeholders, residents and local businesses to share their feedback about the proposal.

The consultation was widely promoted with a newsletter delivered to homes and businesses located within a two mile radius of the proposed site, posters displayed in the local area, an advertisement in the local newspaper and a media release issued to local publications. A dedicated project website was created (<https://britishrenewables.com/projects/dengie-solar-park>).

People could submit their comments and feedback about the proposal via an online survey, a hard copy feedback form at the consultation event, a consultation email address and Freephone number. The online and hard copy surveys included most of the same questions.

At the consultation event, held at Dengie Village Hall from 3pm-7pm on 1 November 2022, 31 feedback forms were filled in and submitted. The online survey was completed by two people. A total of five substantive emails about the proposal were received via the project email address. One voicemail was received.

The survey asked people to share their sentiment towards the proposed project. It also asked them to choose from a list of topics, which were most important to them in regards to the proposal. The survey contained space for free comment on the proposal.

The general sentiment results from 32 respondents were:

Strongly support	9
Generally support	12
Neutral/No opinion	2
Generally oppose	2
Strongly oppose	6

One more respondent added another option: Mildly support.



Respondents were invited to choose from a list of eight possible topics that were important to them with regards to the Dengie Solar Park proposal. They were able to choose multiple topics. The top issues respondents chose as being important to them were:

- Impact on wildlife and environment (24 respondents selected this answer)
- Visual impact (21 respondents selected this answer)
- Construction impact (17 respondents selected this answer)
- Community benefits (17 respondents selected this answer)
- Land use and site selection (14 respondents selected this answer)

Other key issues raised about the proposal via the meeting with Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council, the online survey, feedback forms and emails:

- Request that community fund be ringfenced to benefit Dengie village and question of whether the community benefit is an annual or one-off payment
- Local/rural roads not suitable for construction traffic, in particular Rectory Lane
- Concern about the use of farmed arable land for the proposed project
- Areas of the site and surrounding roads used as bridleways for hacking horses and usage should be maintained or created elsewhere within the site
- Concern over the visual impact of the project and the quality of viewpoints presented as part of the consultation

The comments received have been carefully considered and amendments have been made to the proposal and draft layout where feasible and appropriate. This includes:

- An internal review of the allocation of community benefit funds
- Investigating and selecting an alternative construction traffic route, which avoids Rectory Lane
- The addition of a flood attenuation pond to the site, which also increases biodiversity net gain
- Ensuring the planning application includes full details of proposed mitigation measures, an LVIA (Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment) and a Glint & Glare Assessment

Following the consultation, the site red line boundary has increased in size from 32 to 33 hectares (82 acres) to incorporate mitigation measure for skylarks.



After considering feedback received at the Parish Council meeting as well as the consultation event, the site has also been redesigned to include a flood attenuation pond connecting to a ditch along the western site boundary. This can store water in times of higher run off and will intercept flows coming off the site therefore reducing the runoff onto neighbouring land to the west.



2. Introduction

Overview

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Pier on behalf of BSR Energy to accompany the planning application relating to a 19MW solar park development on land south of Keelings Road, Dengie, CM0 7JF.

Background

The proposed site is located southeast of the village of Dengie, Maldon District, Essex. It is highlighted in red on the map below (**Figure 1**).

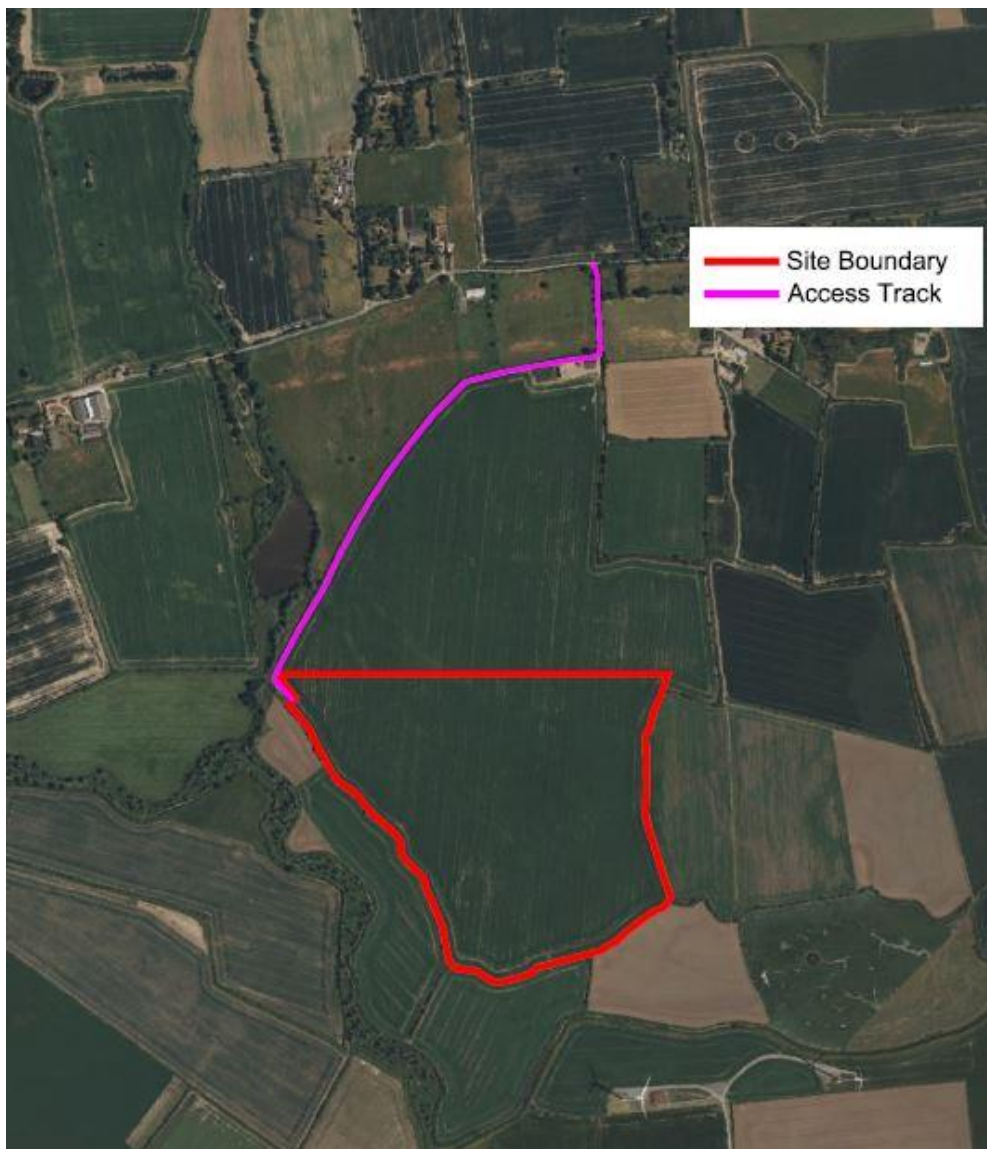


Figure 1 – The proposed site



Political boundaries

The red line boundary for the Dengie Solar Park is within:

- Essex County Council (Southminster Division)
- Maldon District Council
- Dengie Civil Parish

The proposal

The details of the proposed development which was consulted upon included:

- A 19MW Solar Park on a 32 hectare (78 acre) site, located to the southeast of Dengie village in a large section of an existing field of Grade 3b agricultural land, which would save 4,208 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year¹ and produce enough renewable energy to power approximately 4,751 homes in the UK².
- Possible ecological enhancements including wildflower and wild bird seed grasslands, and a range of breeding boxes for bats and birds.
- At least 60% biodiversity net gain once the project is built.
- New hedgerow planting is proposed to gap up and strengthen existing hedgerows to ensure minimal visual and environmental impact.
- A connection to the National Grid via an underground cable to a point of connection in an adjacent field, removing the need for a long cable route.
- The fact that this is a temporary development (40 years), allowing the solar PV and associated infrastructure to be removed and existing use reinstated following decommissioning.
- No Public Rights of Way to be closed during or after construction of the Solar Park.
- Access to the site proposed from an existing track from Keelings Road to the north of the site. The access itself and the track leading into the site will require improvement to accommodate construction traffic.
- Some drainage features to be required to promote infiltration across the site, the details of which are included within the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy.
- The results of a Noise Impact Assessment, which found no concerns about noise associated with the proposed project.
- A community fund of minimum £19,000 to be established with the Essex Community Foundation.

¹ Based on 'Emissions associated with the generation of electricity at a power station (Electricity generation factors do not include transmission and distribution).

² Based on an annual average domestic consumption per household (Great Britain) of 3,799 kWh. Source BEIS Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2020



3. Community engagement and consultation – the approach

The core objectives underpinning the consultation were to:

- Present the draft proposal to key stakeholders, residents and businesses in the local area;
- Understand any issues and concerns about the proposal and respond to any issues raised;
- Inform the final proposal and subsequent planning application where possible.

To achieve these objectives, the approach to community consultation was delivered in five key steps:

1. Engagement with key stakeholders
2. Promotion of the proposal and consultation
3. Capture of feedback and responses
4. Analysis of feedback
5. Preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement

The consultation was widely promoted with letters sent to stakeholders, a newsletter delivered to homes and businesses located within two miles of the proposed site and posters sent to local parish councils and displayed in the area. People could submit their comments about the proposal via a survey on the project website, a hard copy feedback form at the consultation event, a dedicated project email address and Freephone number.



4. Community engagement and consultation – delivery

Engagement with key stakeholders

An email was sent to Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council on 20 July 2022 to request to present an introduction to the proposed Dengie Solar Park at their Council meeting on 5 September 2022. The Parish Council responded on 2 August 2022 to accept the request, and BSR Energy attended the 5 September meeting to give a short presentation to Parish Council members and attending members of the public.

A list of the project team members who attended the meeting is shown in the table below (**Table 1**).

Table 1

Name	Organisation / role
Carla Hardaker	Senior Development Manager, BSR Energy
Zak Beer	Junior Project Manager, BSR Energy
Dale Greetham	Associate Director, ADAS
Helen Scarr	Pier

A copy of the presentation given to the Parish Council is attached at **Appendix A**. Details of the meeting minutes are attached at **Appendix B**.

An email was sent to key political stakeholders on 18 October 2022. Attached to the email; was a letter inviting them to the Dengie Solar Park consultation event and a copy of the community newsletter.

A list of the stakeholders emailed invitations to the event can be found at **Appendix C**. An example of the letter sent to stakeholders is attached at **Appendix D**.

The key issues raised at the meeting are outlined in section 5.

Newsletter to residents and local businesses

A four-page colour A5 newsletter containing information about the proposal and consultation was posted to approximately 2,314 homes and businesses (within a two-mile radius from the project site) on 17 October 2022. The newsletter was distributed by BBS, who provide a professional mailing fulfilment service. A copy of the newsletter is attached at **Appendix E**.

The distribution area for the letter can be seen below in **Figure 2**, highlighted in red.



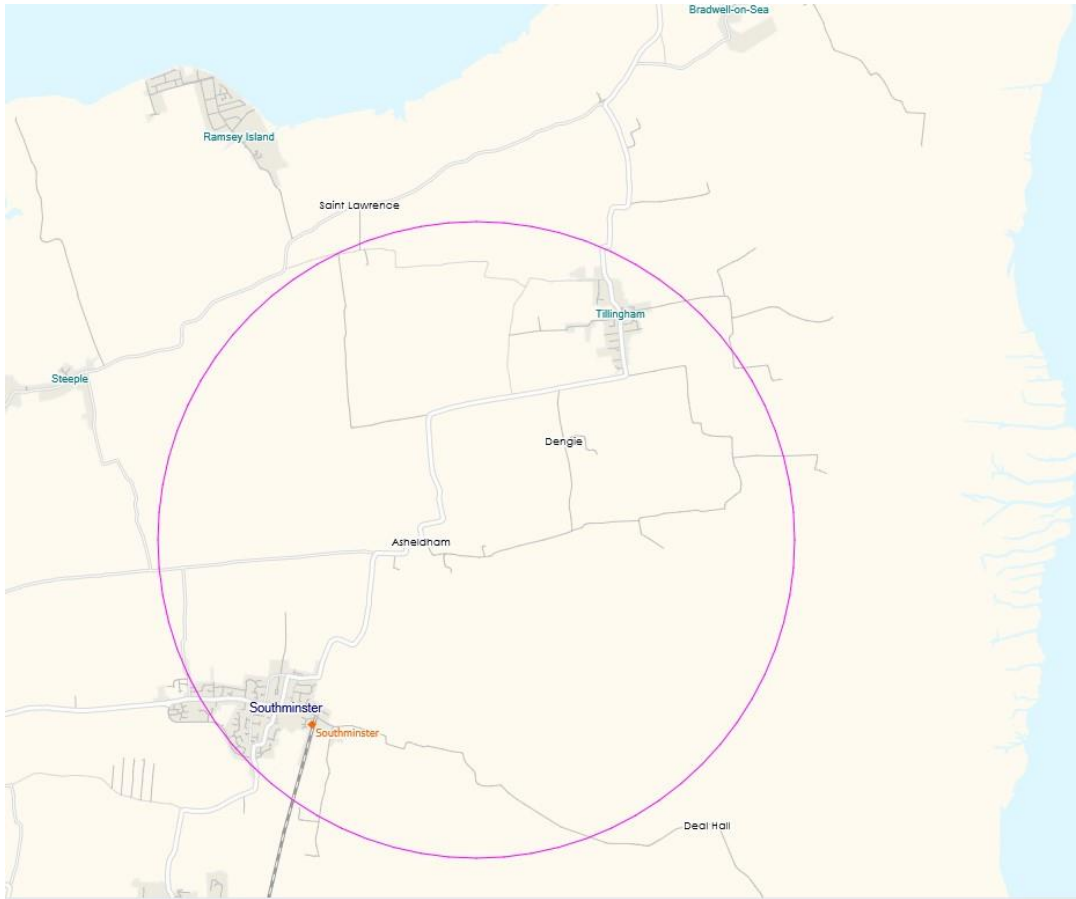


Figure 2: Distribution area for the newsletter

Posters

A4 posters promoting the Dengie Solar Park consultation and in-person event were sent via email to the following Parish Councils on 25 October 2022:

- Asheldham and Dengie
- Bradwell on Sea
- Tillingham
- Southminster
- Steeple
- Mayland
- Althorne
- St Lawrence

A response was received from Althorne Parish Council requesting a hard copy of the poster, which was sent via first class post on 26 October 2022.

Local shops and post offices were also contacted and asked if they would be able to display an A4 poster advertising the Dengie Solar Park consultation. McColl's on Southminster High



Street requested a hard copy of the poster to display, which was sent via first class post on 26 October 2022.

A copy of the poster is attached at **Appendix F**.

Advert

A quarter page advert was placed in the local weekly paper, the Basingstoke and Deane Gazette, on 20 October 2022 to inform local residents about the Dengie Solar Park consultation. This was also displayed on the digital version of the paper for one week.

A copy of the advert is attached at **Appendix G**.

Media release

A media release was issued to local press on 19 October 2022 containing information about the Dengie Solar Park consultation and inviting the local community to attend the consultation event on 1 November 2022.

A copy of the media release is attached at **Appendix H**. A list of titles that the media release was sent to can be found at **Appendix I**. The press release was published in the Maldon and Burnham Standard on 10 November 2022. It was published on their website on 5 November 2022³. Copies of the media coverage received can be found at **Appendix J**.

Website

A dedicated website page was created to share information about the proposal:

<https://britishrenewables.com/projects/dengie-solar-park>

The website went live on 18 October 2022 and the website address was included on all materials distributed as outlined above.

The website included:

- Information about the site location
- A summary of the proposal being brought forward and a copy of the draft site layout plan
- The project timeline
- Details about the benefits of the proposal
- A link to the online survey
- Details about the public consultation
- Contact details

³ <https://www.maldonandburnhamstandard.co.uk/news/23101523.dengie-solar-park-planning-consultation-held-residents/>



Documents were added to the website as the consultation progressed, including the exhibition boards from the public consultation, visualisations, the Highway Statement, and FAQs about the project.

Consultation event

A drop-in public consultation event was held on 1 November 2022 from 3pm – 7pm at Asheldham and Dengie Village Hall, Manor Road, Dengie, Southminster, CM0 7UH. The event was publicised via the methods outlined above.

54 people attended the consultation event. Details of the attendees' postcodes are outline in Section 5.

Capture of feedback and responses

There were several ways for people to provide their feedback:

- A dedicated consultation email address – dengie@bsrenergy.com
- A Freephone number which people could ring and leave a message with their comments or questions about the proposal – 0330 1797 646

An online survey was also created using SurveyMonkey. The survey comprised of six questions. A link to the survey was included on the dedicated consultation website and this was signposted via all distributed materials. A copy of the survey is attached at **Appendix K**.

A feedback form featuring the key questions from the online survey was produced for attendees at the in-person consultation event to complete. A copy of the hard copy feedback form can be found at **Appendix L**.

The deadline for feedback was Tuesday 15 November 2022.



5. Results / findings of the public consultation

Key facts

The key facts from the public consultation are:

- A total of 31 feedback forms and two online surveys were completed
- A total of five substantive emails from residents about the proposal were received
- One voicemail was received

Key issues raised at meeting with Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council

Members of the project team attended the Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council meeting at 6.30pm on 5 September 2022 to give a short presentation regarding the proposed Dengie Solar Park. The meeting included four Parish Councillors and 10 members of the public. The key issues discussed and questions raised at the meeting were as follows:

- Queries about the community benefit, where it is allocated, and when it would be provided.
- Questions regarding the proposed construction route, how it would be upgraded, the type of vehicles used and the timing of traffic movements.
- Concerns about the use of Rectory Lane for construction and HGVs.
- Questions regarding flood risk on the site.
- A query about the lifespan of the fencing used around the site.
- Environmental questions regarding the maintenance of the land on the site and underneath the panels, pest control.
- An issue was raised about the site selection, land use and land classification.
- A question was asked regarding the capacity of the local grid.
- A question about the visual impact from the wind turbine viewing point in the village.
- Queries about the lifespan of the solar panels and the decommissioning of the project.

Key findings from the in-person feedback form and online consultation survey

The key findings from the in-person feedback form and online consultation survey can be found below. Feedback was received by 33 people.

Please note that not every respondent answered every question and some people made more than one comment.



Question 1: How did you find out about today's event?

This question was asked on the feedback forms given out at the consultation event. The question listed six possible responses, including 'Other', for people to choose from. The results are displayed in the chart below (**Chart 1**) and the answers stated in 'Other' are shown in **Table 2**.

Chart 1

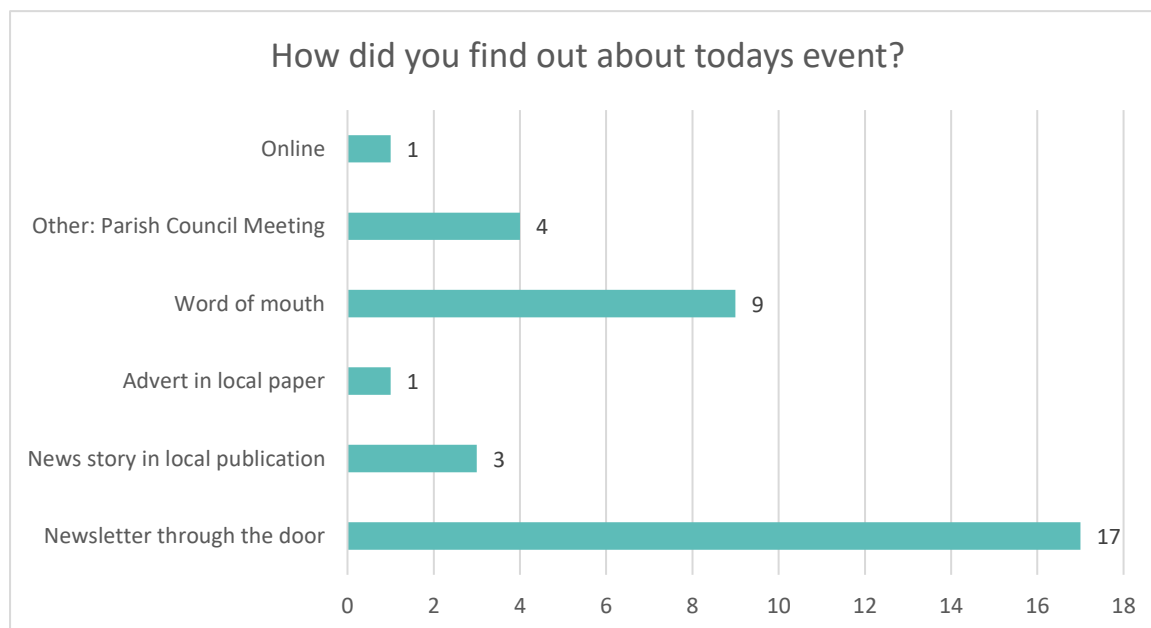


Table 2

Comment	Number of responses
Althorne Parish Council	1
Bradwell on Sea Parish Council	1
Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council meeting	1

Two respondents wrote that they did not receive a newsletter through the door. One other attendee at the consultation event also mentioned this verbally to the project team. This was investigated, as their addresses were within the 2-mile radius of the site therefore should have been included. The mailing house used for the newsletter postage found that Royal Mail had suppressed the addresses for postcodes containing only one property for data protection purposes. Three addresses in total were found to have been repressed. However, these residents had found out about the consultation event via other means, attended the event and took part in the consultation, so no further action was required.



Question 2. Did you find the consultation event helpful in understanding our proposals?

This question was included in the hard copy feedback forms and required a yes or no answer. 28 respondents answered this question. The results are displayed in the chart below (**Chart 2**). A similar question was asked in the online survey: 'Did you find the website helpful in understanding our proposals?'. Out of the two respondents, one ticked 'yes' and one ticked 'no', adding in the comment box: 'lacking real information'.

The hard copy feedback form also provided a free text area for respondents to list any other comments they may have in response to this question; these have been displayed in the table below (**Table 3**).

Chart 2



Table 3

Comment	Number of responses
A bit vague/very generalised proposal. Doesn't reassure me.	2
However, not sure the photos give a reliable depiction, as taken from very bad viewpoints.	1
Would be more useful to see more clearly defined proposal after public feedback and how that information can be used in the application.	1
No different from newsletter	1
My questions were answered	1
Didn't look	1

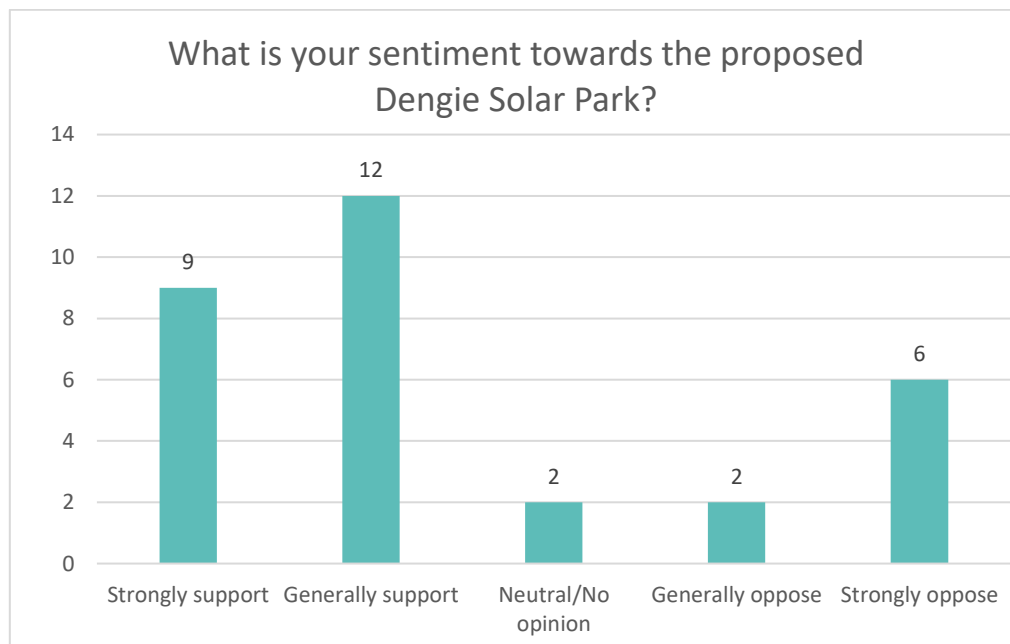


Question 3: What is your sentiment towards the proposed Dengie Solar Park?

This question, included in both the hard copy feedback form and online survey, provided a sliding scale of options for respondents to choose from. These were: Strongly support; Generally support; Neutral/No opinion; Generally oppose; Strongly oppose. One more respondent added another option: Mildly support.

32 respondents answered this question. Overall, over 70% of respondents were in support of the project. The results are displayed in the chart below (**Chart 3**).

Chart 3

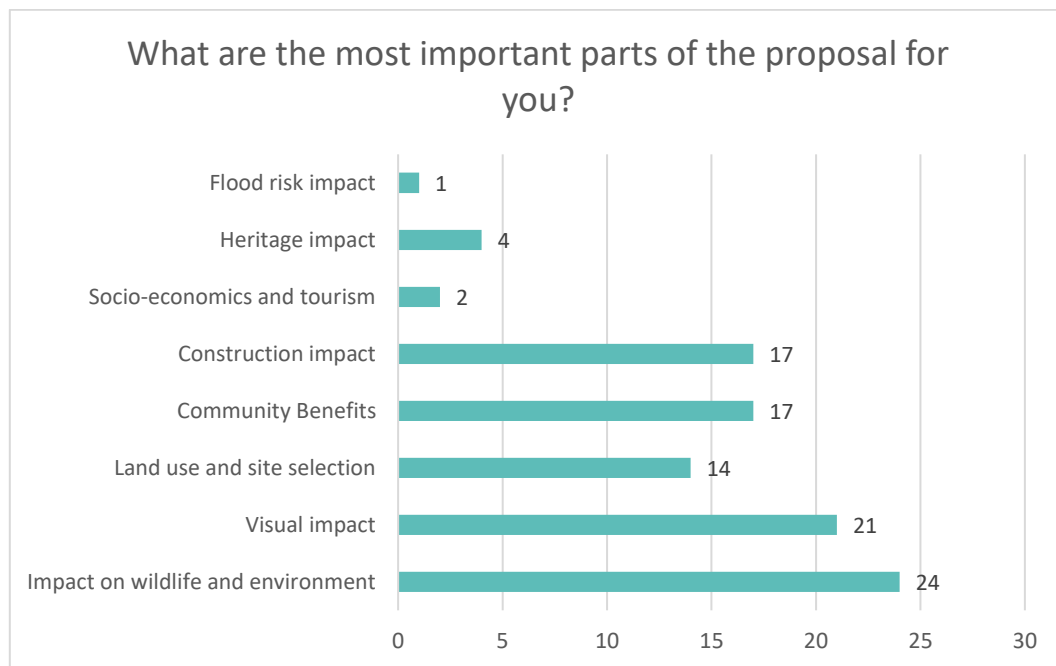


Question 4: What are the most important parts of the proposal for you?

This question listed eight possible answers for respondents to choose from. They could choose as many options as they wanted.

The results are displayed in the chart below (**Chart 4**). The results show that respondents were most concerned about the impact on wildlife and environment, followed by visual impact and construction impact. Respondents also felt the community benefit was important.

Chart 4



Question 5: Do you have any other comments about the proposed Dengie Solar Park?

This question provided respondents with the opportunity to share any other comments about the proposal.

Table 4 shows a breakdown of the responses provided in this question.

Table 4

Comments	Responses
Request that community fund be ringfenced to benefit Dengie village	8
Local/rural roads not suitable for construction traffic	7
Concern about the use of farmed arable land for the proposed project	4
Areas of the site and surrounding roads used as bridleways for hacking horses and usage should be maintained or created elsewhere within the site.	4
Views of the countryside will be spoilt.	4
Concern the viewpoints shown are not adequate/reflective of the real impact.	3
Don't see a local need for the project/benefit for the local community	3
Question whether the community benefit is an annual or one-off payment.	3
Birds may think the solar panels are water and crash into them – there is a reservoir nearby.	2
Concern that construction traffic will disrupt local people's lives/cause disrepair to roads.	2
Need to take into account the varying amount of traffic at different times of year e.g. harvest when planning construction.	2
It is disappointing that the biodiversity net gain is not fully decided upon for us to consult on.	2
Community benefit needs to be more than a one-off payment at the start as the village will have 40 years of impact.	2
What will be done during the construction time to make Hall road usable for the many horse riders that use this lane on a daily basis?	2
Feel positive about the project, hope it goes ahead.	2
This is just another money-making project.	1
Solar projects should not be built on green spaces.	1
Concern about the project's impact on Asheldham Brook.	1
Concern about the project's impact on the robustness of local energy supply.	1
Concern about the use of Rectory Lane for construction traffic.	1
Concerns about flood risk impact.	1
Why wasn't the local community given more time for consultation?	1
We have Canada geese, swans and many lovely birds including marsh harriers on the reservoir which is directly next to the proposed site for panels.	1
Community benefit should be used to upgrade/maintain Asheldham and Dengie village hall.	1
Information presented at the event should have been more detailed.	1
Questions about how the site will be maintained e.g. underneath panels.	1
Concern over use of the access road.	1
Concern for the impact on local wildlife.	1



We are happy about the project in general provided that the considerations re wildlife, environment (particular hedgegrow improvement) are realised.	1
This area and the access road is subject to fly tipping. How will this be prevented after you have improved access to site?	1
Currently during harvest Dengie crops has huge amount of HGVs. They implemented a one-way system depending upon harvest location. This may be useful for you to implement going back down Manor Road then left down Tillingham Road joining up with route on Southminster Road.	1
Further consideration is needed regarding the contribution to the community. If it is the only one you are providing in Essex, you should be paying a large sum over a number of years.	1
Do not bring construction traffic through Althorne.	1
You should give serious consideration to this site having a local "grounds keeper" who can monitor the grounds security, vegetation control and security.	1
The ideas for the northern boundary hedge screening - plant a proper woodland belt, not a hedge.	1



Question 6: Contact information

This question collected respondents' addresses in order to determine the geographical spread of consultation responses. **Table 5** shows a breakdown of the postcodes provided in this question.

Table 5

Postcode	Number of responses
CM0 7AQ	1
CM0 7TW	1
CM0 7D2	1
CM0 7UD	1
CM0 7JF	3
CM0 7TL	1
CM0 7TR	2
CM0 7QH	1
CM0 7JL	1
CM0 7UL	1
CM0 7AQ	1
CM0 7AL	1
CM0 7UR	1
CM0 7UH	2
CM0 7JZ	1
CM0 7JG	2
CM3 6BZ	1
CM3 6RX	1
CM0 7UG	2
CM0 7TN	1
CM0 7NY	1
CM0 7DQ	1



Key points raised via email and Freephone

An email address was set up for people to submit queries and comments to. This was monitored on a regular basis. A total of five substantive email queries and comments were received before the consultation closing date.

A Freephone number was also set up as part of the consultation for people to leave a message with regarding the project. One voicemail was received during the consultation. The voicemail received was from a local resident enquiring about whether some land they owned would be suitable for solar development. They have since been contacted by BSR's site development team to discuss this further.

A log of the freephone call and emails received and responses to these can be found in **Appendix M.**

The key points and questions that emerged via the emails and Freephone number are listed below:

- Query about site selection for solar and whether some land owned locally might be suitable.
- Concern about sea level rises affecting the project and query over whether it is worth spending the money building it.
- Concern about the proposed construction route, in particular the use of Rectory Lane as it has a width restriction. Alternate routes were suggested by the consultee.

Two emails were received from consultees saying they are in favour of the project and solar power.



6. Responses to key issues raised during the public consultation

All comments received as part of the consultation have been recorded and analysed. The results have been fed back to the project team and the key issues have been identified and, where appropriate, addressed.

The following table (**Table 6**) summarises the key issues raised and the project team's response.

Table 6

Key Issue	Project Team's Response
Community benefit • Request that the community fund be ringfenced for use by Dengie Civil Parish rather than Essex-wide • Questions regarding whether the benefit is a one-off payment or annually	If the project is consented, BSR Energy would create a Community Benefit Fund which will offer a total of £19,000 in grants to support local projects and benefit the local community. We are in the process of setting up an agreement for the Community Fund with Essex Community Foundation. We are also keen that a local Asheldham and Dengie Parish Councillor becomes a representative on the fund, to ensure it is distributed to important local projects. The money will be ringfenced for use within Dengie Civil Parish only. Typically, this is a one-off payment. However, we are looking at how we approach community benefits internally at BSR at the moment which makes this useful feedback.
Construction route • Concerns that rural roads are not suitable for construction traffic • Rectory Lane was raised as potentially unsuitable due to width restrictions • Concern that construction traffic will interfere with local residents' movements or bring the roads into disrepair.	A Highway Statement and Construction Traffic Management Plan were produced in May 2022 (and will be submitted alongside the application). The construction phase is likely to last for approximately six months. At its peak there would be an average of around nine HGVs to the site each day. Once operational, the Solar Park will encounter low traffic levels with an anticipated one or two visits per month for maintenance and inspection purposes. Essex County Council Highways have been consulted on the suitability of the construction route, with a Transport Statement currently being prepared which includes further details on access arrangements and accident data. Two alternative construction traffic routes suggested by a consultee have been passed to our



	planning consultants, who have acted on feedback from local people and revised the route to avoid Rectory Lane. .
Site selection • Concern about the use of farmed agricultural land • Unsure about project need and why it is situated in Dengie	The UK has committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. The proposed solar park will deliver 19MW of electricity to the National Grid and save over 4,200 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. The park would produce enough renewable energy to power over 4,700 homes in the UK. The project will assist Maldon District Council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with local and national targets, as well as supporting the Council's strategy for its declared Climate Emergency. It will also aid the security and robustness of the local electricity supply in Maldon District. The land on the site is categorised as Grade 3B arable land, meaning it is considered of 'moderate' quality and produces moderate yields. We selected the site based on the local National Grid connection available, which removes the need for a low cable route, land quality, low human and environmental impact and the potential for creating biodiversity net gain. As a company, we do our best to avoid SSSIs and the highest quality land.
Visual impact • Views of the countryside will be spoilt. • The viewpoints presented at the consultation event were not realistic/representative enough of the real impact.	The solar park will be surrounded by a 2.2m fence that will be screened by hedgerows to create minimum visual impact. Existing hedgerows will be reinforced and gaps filled. New planting would supplement any existing vegetation already present. Our viewpoints are created by expert consultants, and show the project at year 1 and year 15 after construction. The viewpoints were collected from publicly accessible locations, such as roads and public rights of way. A Glint & Glare Assessment will be submitted alongside the planning application to confirm that the potential impacts of glare have been fully assessed, and mitigated if required.



Flood risk

- Concern about increase of surface water flooding onto neighbouring land to the west.

The site has been redesigned to include a flood attenuation pond connecting to a ditch along the western site boundary. This can store water in times of higher run off and will intercept flows coming off the site therefore reducing the runoff onto the neighbouring land.



7. Conclusion

BSR Energy has proactively sought to engage and consult with key political stakeholders, local residents and businesses regarding the proposed development of a 19MW Solar Park on land south of Keelings Road, Dengie, Maldon District, Essex. The project team has considered all feedback received. The feedback showed that over 70% of respondents were in support of the project going ahead.

Information about the proposal and community consultation has been widely promoted and people have been able to provide feedback via an online survey, feedback form at the consultation event, email or Freephone number.

The comments received have been carefully considered and amendments have been made to the proposal and draft layout where feasible and appropriate. This includes:

- An internal review of the allocation of community benefit funds
- Investigating and selecting an alternative construction traffic route, which avoids Rectory Lane
- The addition of a flood attenuation pond to the site, which also increases biodiversity net gain
- Ensuring the planning application includes full details of proposed mitigation measures, an LVIA (Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment) and a Glint & Glare Assessment

Following the consultation, the site red line boundary has increased in size from 32 to 33 hectares (82 acres) to incorporate mitigation measure for skylarks.

After considering feedback received at the Parish Council meeting as well as the consultation event, the site has also been redesigned to include a flood attenuation pond connecting to a ditch along the western site boundary. This can store water in times of higher run off and will intercept flows coming off the site therefore reducing the runoff onto neighbouring land to the west.

