

The Droves Solar Farm

Consultation Report Appendix F: Statutory Consultation Under Section 47 of the Act - Supporting Material - Part 2

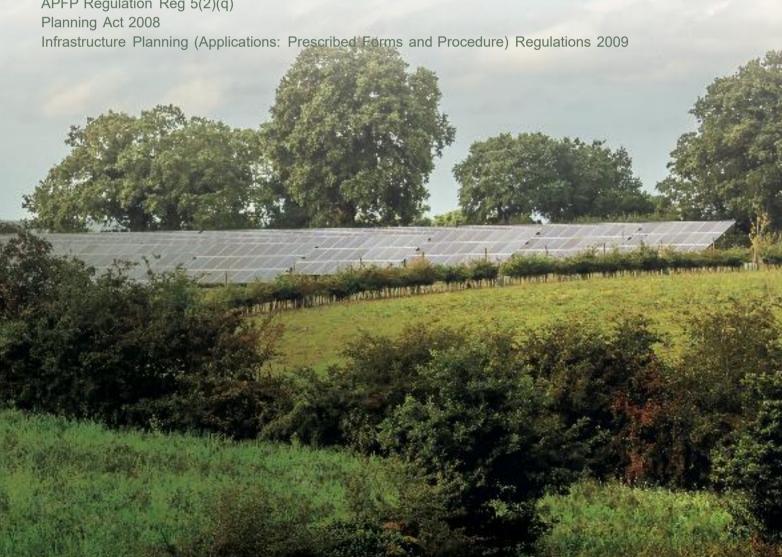
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Our design proposals for The Droves Solar Farm









Overview of the EIA process

The Droves Solar Farm is classified as an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, which means we are required to assess the likely environmental impacts of the Project.

You can view the full PEIR at this consultation event and speak with members of the EIA team if you have any questions about our environmental assessments or preliminary findings.

The goal of the EIA process is to ensure that we:

- identify any likely significant environmental effects the Project may have
- implement measures to reduce or remove any negative impacts
- work to enhance positive effects.

The findings from the EIA will be presented in the Environmental Statement (ES), which will be submitted as part of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

There are three main stages:

1. Scoping Report - On 7 November 2024 we submitted an EIA Scoping Report to PINS. This document set out the proposed scope of the EIA process, which is how we proposed to identify and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Project.

In response to the EIA Scoping Request, PINS issued a Scoping Opinion on 18 December 2024, providing their feedback and confirming the key areas to be considered as part of the EIA process.

2. Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) -

The PEIR builds upon the previous documents and considers feedback received during our early-stage engagement. It is a core technical document which sets out our initial EIA findings and identifies the measures we are proposing to reduce, enhance and manage the effects the Project may have on the environment.

We are consulting on the PEIR (and Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the PEIR) as part of this consultation so technical stakeholders, local communities, individuals and interested parties can develop an informed view of the Project and provide us with their feedback.

A summary of selected PEIR chapters is provided on **pages 36-45** of the **Consultation Information Booklet**. More detailed information from our environmental surveys and assessments is set out in the main report of the PEIR, which is summarised in the NTS.

3. Environmental Statement (ES) -

After statutory consultation we will produce the ES, which comprises the results of the EIA process. This will build on earlier stages of the EIA, reflect any design evolution and incorporate feedback received during statutory consultation.

The ES will describe any changes to the Project and the measures we are proposing to implement to reduce, enhance and manage the effects of the Project. The ES, along with an NTS of the ES, will form part of the DCO application we submit to PINS.



Welcome

Welcome to our statutory consultation event for The Droves Solar Farm ("the Project").

We are here today to share our design proposals for the Project. We invite you to look around, view our consultation materials and share your feedback.

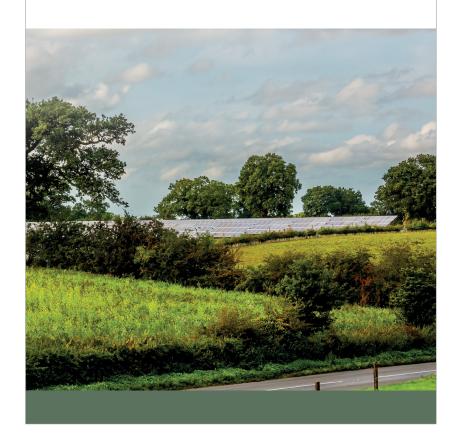
The Project team is on hand to answer any questions you may have.

You can find more information and details of the Project at: ${\bf www.drovessolarfarm.co.uk}$



Your feedback is important to us and will be used to help shape our final designs. Scan the QR code to be taken to our digital Feedback Form.

Our statutory consultation runs for seven weeks from 21 May to 23:59 on 9 July 2025.



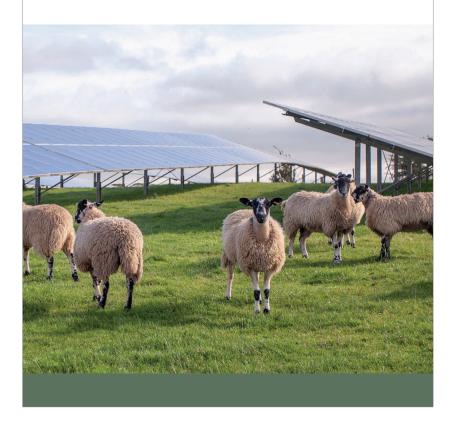


Community benefit

We are a community-led developer and are focused on ensuring our Project delivers lasting benefits to the local area including by creating job opportunities, generating business rates, enhancing the natural environment, and providing direct funding for important causes through a Community Benefit Fund.

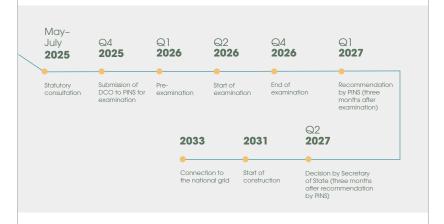
As part of this consultation we are gathering ideas from the local community, community groups and elected representatives on how we can contribute funding to projects and initiatives in the area, including a potential Community Benefit Fund.

If you have any ideas on how we can invest in your local community, complete our Feedback Form or contact us at: info@drovessolarfarm.co.uk.





What happens next



Following statutory consultation, we will review our design proposals in light of the feedback received. Your feedback, along with the results of ongoing assessments and design work, will help shape our final designs. We will submit our final designs as part of our DCO application.

The application we submit will include a Consultation Report summarising all the issues raised in the consultation feedback, along with an explanation of how we have taken these views into account





How to have your say

Your feedback is important to us and will be used to help us develop and refine our design proposals. You can share your feedback in the following ways:



Visit our website to access the latest information, including all statutory consultation documents, and complete our Feedback Form online at: www.drovessolarfarm.co.uk.



Attend our consultation events to meet the project team, learn about our plans and complete a Feedback Form. Return the completed form to: **FREEPOST THE DROVES SOLAR FARM**.



Visit our local information point or one of our community collection points to view hard copies of the consultation materials and pick up a Consultation Information Booklet and Feedback Form.



Contact us via phone, post or email, to request a form, share feedback or ask questions about the consultation. If you require materials in an alternative format (for example, large print or braille) please let us know.

Please note, the deadline for comments is 23:59 on 9 July 2025. Feedback shared after this date may not be considered.



Scan the QR code to be taken to our Feedback Form.





The Droves Solar Farm

Consultation
Information Booklet



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Introduction

The Droves Solar Farm Limited, a subsidiary of Island Green Power (IGP), is bringing forward proposed plans for a solar farm with battery energy storage, located on land north of Swaffham and south of Castle Acre, West Norfolk.

If consented, The Droves Solar Farm ("the Project") could generate approximately 500 MWac (Megawatt Alternating Current) of renewable energy, enough to power approximately 115,000 homes, annually. The battery energy storage system (BESS) component would store surplus energy and supply it to the national grid when needed. The Applicant for The Droves Solar Farm will be The Droves Solar Farm Limited, a subsidiary of IGP.

The consultation process

You are now invited to take part in our seven-week statutory consultation that starts on 21 May and runs until 23:59 on 9 July 2025. During this period, we encourage you to share your feedback on our design proposals, including our preliminary environmental assessments and measures being taken to reduce the Project's impact.

This feedback is important to us and will be used to shape the Project's final designs. This booklet provides more information about the Project, our statutory consultation, upcoming events, and how to take part. If you have any further queries, please contact us using the details provided on this page.

The planning process

As the proposed generation capacity for The Droves Solar Farm is anticipated to be approximately 500 MWac, it exceeds the 50 MW threshold to be classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The consenting regime for NSIPs comes under the Planning Act 2008 ("the Act") and requires The Droves Solar Farm Limited to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

DCO applications must be submitted to the Secretary of State (SoS) through the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). We are therefore required to apply to the SoS for a DCO, in accordance with the Act. The application will be examined by an independent Examining Authority appointed by PINS, who would then make a recommendation on the application to the SoS. The SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero makes the final decision on a DCO application.

How to contact us

Email us at: info@drovessolarfarm.co.uk

Community Relations Freephone: **0800 0129 154** (Our phone lines are monitored 9:00–17:30 Monday to Friday, with an answerphone facility available outside of these hours.)

Who is Island Green Power?

Established in 2013, Island Green Power (IGP) is a leading developer of utility-scale solar projects and battery energy systems. IGP delivers renewable energy solutions that create lasting value for the communities it serves, protecting the environment while fostering economic growth and energy independence.

Since launch, it has successfully delivered more than 34 solar projects worldwide that have generated more than 3 GW of energy capacity.

This includes 20 solar projects in the UK. These range in size from below 5 MW to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects such as Cottam Solar Project, currently the UK's largest consented solar project. Cottam will generate 600 MW of clean, renewable and secure electricity and includes 600 MW of battery storage that will store then release energy as needed.

Why do we need The Droves Solar Farm?

The way we consume energy is changing. To combat climate change, secure energy supplies and reduce domestic electricity bills, we need to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to renewable home-grown and affordable energy sources. This includes reducing reliance on fuel imports that risk energy security and can lead to price rises for consumers.

Unlike other renewables that require significant investment and have lengthy build times, solar power costs less to develop and is the quickest method to get energy into the national grid. It is a clean, predictable source of homegrown power that removes reliance on global energy producers while protecting consumers from rising energy costs. The UK Government recognises the potential of solar power as part of its ambitious goal to achieve net zero with plans for 70 GW of solar power by 2035.

Alongside this, climate change is negatively affecting agricultural productivity, which is prompting higher levels of uncertainty for landowners and farmers alike. Securing diversified income is vital to the rural economy.

Local level - Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council recognises the urgent need to address climate change and has committed to taking action through its Environmental Policy (2019) and Climate Strategy (2023). Its Climate Strategy, unanimously endorsed in March 2024, outlines the Council's commitment to leading by example and safeguarding the county for future generations.

Local level - Breckland Council

Breckland Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019. Since then, the Council has committed to reducing the level of greenhouse gases within the district. It is striving to achieve net zero as an organisation by 2035 and has also developed a Sustainability Strategy (2021–2035).

The Droves Solar Farm has the potential to generate approximately 500 MWac, providing a substantial source of renewable electricity for the region and country, and allowing Breckland and Norfolk to make a vital contribution to local and national net zero targets.

Site evaluation

The Site evaluation process began through a conversation with National Grid to understand where there was capacity for a grid connection. In line with the grid connection offer and national planning and policy guidelines, as well as a range of technical, environmental, social and economic assessments, the Site was evaluated for solar photovoltaic (PV) development.

The location was considered suitable because the Site:

- Is close to the new overhead line between Walpole and Necton
- Is characterised by flat, limited gradient and south-facing land, which is suitable for solar energy development
- Is situated away from residential clusters
- Can be directly accessed from the A1065
- Is located outside of mapped flood zones and watercourses
- Is not located within any National Landscapes, Natural Parks or Green Belts and is outside important ecological sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation
- Presents opportunities to improve connectivity and facilitate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The feedback received from our early engagement workshops in September and October 2024, alongside ongoing environmental and technical surveys, has supported further refinements of our design proposals.

More information on the site selection and evaluation process can be found

in Volume I, Chapter 4: Reasonable Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR).

The location of our proposals

The Droves Solar Farm would be located on land north of Swaffham and south of Castle Acre. West Norfolk.

The Indicative Masterplan shown on pages 20–25 provides more detail on the Project, including the areas currently under consideration for solar PV panels, associated development, and mitigation and enhancement measures.



Early-stage engagement

In autumn 2024, we conducted our early-stage engagement for The Droves Solar Farm.

The aim was to introduce our proposals for the Project and gather initial feedback from local representatives, community organisations and technical specialists. We invited feedback on our initial design proposals, early environmental assessments, and site selection work carried out to date.

We continued to engage with the community via Project communication channels, and held a series of briefing meetings and workshops with invited stakeholders to better understand key issues and potential constraints in the local area.

Early-engagement workshops

We held two **in-person workshops** with local councils and community groups:

- Tuesday 17 September 2024, from 14:00 until 17:00 at the Dragonfly Hotel, King's Lynn
- Tuesday 1 October 2024, from 17:00 until 20:00 at the George Hotel, Swaffham

In addition to the in-person workshops, we held a series of virtual technical workshops:

- Water and Flood workshop: Tuesday 24 September 2024, from 10:00 until 12:00 using Microsoft Teams
- Planning, Community Benefit and Socio-Economic workshop: Tuesday 24 September 2024, from 14:00 until 16:00, using Microsoft Teams
- Traffic and Transportation workshop: Thursday 26 September 2024, from 10:00 until 11:30, using Microsoft Teams
- Ecology and Biodiversity workshop: Thursday 23 January 2025, from 10:00 until 11:00, using Microsoft Teams.

Each session included an introductory presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session, and an interactive "masterplanning" session, where attendees could provide local insight and work with the project team to share feedback.

This format provided an opportunity for attendees to actively participate in the early-stage design process.

Ongoing engagement

We also held briefing meetings with a number of key stakeholders - including Members of Parliament, community groups and local authority officers - as part of our wider engagement. These sessions provided an opportunity to share information about the Project and respond to questions.

A summary of the feedback received during our early-stage engagement - including from the workshops and ongoing conversations with stakeholders - can be found overleaf.





Design

Concerns were raised about the scale of the Project and the use of agricultural land for solar PV panels, BESS, and associated infrastructure.



Ecology and biodiversity

Participants recognised the need for a Biodiversity Net Gain and expressed a desire to enhance local habitats both on site and in the surrounding area. Concerns were raised regarding the impact of fencing, panels and the potential displacement of wildlife.

Suggestions included planting hedgerows, trees and brambles to create wildlife corridors, as well as measures to enhance existing ecology and restore the land's ecological state prior to intensive farming.

Participants also highlighted the importance of working with local organisations, such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, to support habitat restoration efforts.



Cultural heritage and visual impact

Participants emphasised the importance of preserving local landmarks, such as Castle Acre Priory, and safeguarding the rural character of the area. Suggestions included natural screening and the use of low-profile infrastructure to minimise visual impact.



Transport and access

Concerns were raised about construction traffic on rural roads and seasonal variations in traffic flow. Participants suggested designated routes, pedestrian safety measures, and buffer zones around byways to mitigate potential impact.



Cumulative impact

Participants raised concerns about the cumulative impact of multiple developments in the area, and suggested that we engage with other developers to better understand and assess these combined effects.



Community benefits and engagement

Participants suggested a partnership with the Norfolk Community Foundation to ensure that benefits are felt locally.

Additional suggestions included initiatives such as community gardens, allotments, electric vehicle chargers, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics sessions to further support local communities.



You said, we did We have used feedback gathered from local representatives, community organisations and technical specialists during our early-stage engagement to shape our design proposals ahead of statutory consultation. Below is a summary of how the feedback we received has influenced the masterplanning process for The Droves Solar Farm.

Feedback received

"There are concerns locally about the use of agricultural land for the Project and its potential impact on food security."

What we have done in response

We have conducted surveys on agricultural land within the Site to determine its Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grading.

ALC is a framework for classifying land according to its quality and long-term agricultural use. The framework uses a "grading" system to assess its quality – Grade 1 being the highest-quality land, and Grade 5 being the lowest.

Our assessments to date have indicated that field 32 is comprised entirely of Grade 1 and Grade 2 ALC land, meaning the field comprises the highest "Best and Most Versatile" (BMV) land within the Site. In response, we have removed this land from consideration for solar PV panels and associated development.

The biggest risk to the UK's domestic food production comes from climate change, and other environmental pressures including soil degradation, water quality and changes in biodiversity.

By temporarily removing land from arable food production, we can enhance biodiversity and provide ecological benefits.

The use of this land for solar would also help diversify existing agricultural business initiatives, which could include sheep grazing.

"Local organisations like the Norfolk Wildlife Trust should be involved to help establish appropriate management regimes that benefit biodiversity." We have engaged with stakeholders, including Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), to discuss our mitigation strategies and gather local insights.

We have also met with the Westacre Estate team to explore their rewilding project and discuss ways we can work together for the benefit of local wildlife.

Feedback received What we have done in response "Wildlife highways should We are exploring potential wildlife corr

"Wildlife highways should be incorporated into fencing for badgers, foxes and other species." We are exploring potential wildlife corridors within the Project's design to facilitate the movement of species such as badgers, foxes and deer.

Our approach would include installing features such as badger gates, to ensure connectivity throughout the operational phase of the Project.

We are also aware of green infrastructure corridors, both on and off site, which enable safe wildlife movement. We will work to retain and enhance these where possible and ensure wildlife routes do not create dead ends or obstruct natural pathways.

More details on our strategy for assisting nature recovery can be found on page 19.

"It's important to protect key views from heritage assets to preserve the character of the area." We have committed to respecting the setting of heritage assets along the Nar Valley in recognition of their importance to the character of the area.

As part of this commitment, we would ensure key views to and from heritage assets are preserved.

More details of how we plan to reinforce the character and identity of the local area can be found on page 18.

"Developers in the area should take a coordinated approach to minimise cumulative impacts." We are engaging with other developers and conducting a cumulative impact assessment as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

More details on the EIA process and ongoing surveys can be found on pages 34-45.

We have also maintained an ongoing dialogue with renewable energy developer, RWE, regarding their High Grove Solar Farm proposal to ensure that cumulative impacts in the local area are fully understood and communicated effectively.

"Public Rights of Way should be enhanced – we love our walks in this part of the world." We have committed to retaining all Public Rights of Way (PRoW) during the operational phase of the Project, ensuring that popular routes would remain open.

We would also seek to improve connectivity and accessibility through the Site, including restoring the characteristics of the historic droves that pass through the area and creating new permissive routes.

More details on our strategy for improving movement through the Site can be found on page 19.

IGP ensures all its projects are improved by feedback received throughout the design phase. We encourage anyone with an interest in our proposals for The Droves Solar Farm to participate in the consultation and share their thoughts. More details of how to provide feedback can be found on page 49.

IGP Design Principles

IGP aims to deliver renewable energy solutions that create lasting value for communities, while protecting the environment, fostering economic growth and supporting energy independence.



Decarbonisation & energy security

Designed to maximise clean energy generation, IGP's projects will contribute to energy security and support the UK's 2050 net zero targets, providing secure, reliable, affordable and home-grown energy to the nation.



Biodiversity net gain & nature recovery

Each project is designed to make a positive contribution to the local environment, by incorporating new habitats and enhancements to deliver a measurable net gain for biodiversity throughout its operation.



Environmentally led design

IGP's projects are sensitively designed to minimise potential impacts on versatile and high-quality land, by always considering the surrounding landscape and protecting local heritage sites.



Design flexibility

Developed with input from the local community, IGP's projects are functional, fit for purpose and adaptable to new technologies and innovations, with built-in resilience to climate change.





As part of this aim, IGP has established a set of overarching Design Principles to guide decision-making across all of its projects. These principles aim to ensure functional, resilient designs that respect the surrounding landscape and communities.

They align with the core ambitions outlined in the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) Design Principles for National Infrastructure: Climate, People, Places and Value. More information about these principles can be found here: https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/NIC-Design-Principles.pdf



Social value & community benefits

IGP's projects provide additional benefits and opportunities in consultation with the local community. They are designed to minimise disruption to PRoW at all stages, with enhancements to local walking routes and paths where possible.



Efficient infrastructure & ethical supply chain

Optimised for maximum operational efficiency, IGP's projects ensure consistent energy output and minimal losses through the use of advanced, ethically sourced technologies and an efficient site layout.



Sustainability, durability & reversibility

IGP ensures that all installations, designed to deliver reliable, sustainable energy, remain temporary and can be fully reversed if necessary, with minimal environmental impact.



Commitment to mitigation

By adhering to the mitigation hierarchy, IGP's projects reduce potential environmental impacts and control adverse effects throughout construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning.

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Project Level Design Principles

Our vision is for The Droves Solar Farm to support the UK's transition to decarbonised, low-cost renewable energy while leaving a positive legacy for the people of Breckland and its natural environment.

IGP's overarching Design Principles provide a framework for more detailed design thinking. To ensure that the design of The Droves Solar Farm responds to the local context and meets community needs, we have developed a series of Project Level Design Principles.

These principles have been shaped by:



Our in-depth understanding of the Site and its surrounding landscape, biodiversity and heritage.



Feedback gathered during early engagement with local stakeholders, communities and technical specialists. The development of our Project Level Design Principles is an ongoing process, and feedback gathered during statutory consultation will help us refine them further.

To date, this approach has enabled us to create principles that directly respond to the unique characteristics of the Site, while aligning with national best practices and IGP's own Design Principles.

These principles will continue to guide the design and development of the Project throughout its lifecycle.

Efficient infrastructure & ethical supply chain

A summary of the Project Level Design Principles can be found below and overleaf.

Environmentally led design

- The design will respond sensitively to the character of the Site and its setting and be guided by the Breckland Local Landscape Character Assessment.*
- Existing vegetation will be retained and enhanced wherever practicable, to support integration into the landscape.
- The design will support the objectives set out in Norfolk's Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- · Soil health will be improved over the lifetime of the Project.
- The setting of heritage assets along the Nar Valley will be respected, with measures introduced to support public engagement with the area's historic environment.
- The design will also seek to protect residential amenity and consider the experience of people using nearby roads and PRoW.
- Fields comprising entirely Grade 1 or a combination of Grade 1 & 2 ALC land will not be considered for solar PV panels or associated development.

Social value & community benefits

- The Project would support the ambitions of local programmes, including Future Breckland.
- The Project would provide opportunities to boost the local and regional economy, including through local employment, skills development and supply chain involvement.
- We will continue to engage with local stakeholders in an open and transparent way, using feedback to help shape the Project and identify opportunities for wider community benefit.
- Efforts would be made to act as a considerate neighbour at every stage of the Project.
- We will provide clear lines of communication with the local community.
- We will look to create opportunities for people to learn about the Project and the Site.
- We will continue to collaborate with High Grove Solar Farm.
- Construction traffic would be routed to avoid local villages and Swaffham town centre wherever possible.





Design flexibility

- The design will allow for resilience and adaptation to future climate change.
- The design will include flexibility to accommodate future technological improvements to help maximise energy generation over the life of the Project.
- The Project will be designed to be resilient to flooding and would not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Decarbonisation & energy security

 The Project will aim to reduce carbon emissions throughout all phases of its lifecycle.

Biodiversity net gain & nature recovery

- The design will aim to integrate the Project into the local environment and allow the movement of wildlife through the Site.
- The Project will aim to deliver a measurable Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 10%.
- Initiatives set out in the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be reviewed and incorporated where practicable.
- The Project would reduce the impact of water run-off into the Nar Valley.
- We will continue to engage with Westacre Estate to identify ways in which the Project could complement its rewilding objectives.

Sustainability, durability & reversibility

- The Project would prioritise sustainable resource management during all phases – using materials efficiently, reducing waste, and selecting responsibly sourced or lowcarbon options wherever possible.
- Woodland blocks within the Site would continue to be managed sustainably.
- The design will also allow for dual use of land where practicable, such as maintaining agricultural activity alongside energy generation.

We are interested to understand your thoughts on our Project Level Design Principles. More details about how to provide feedback can be found on page 49.



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Masterplanning Strategies

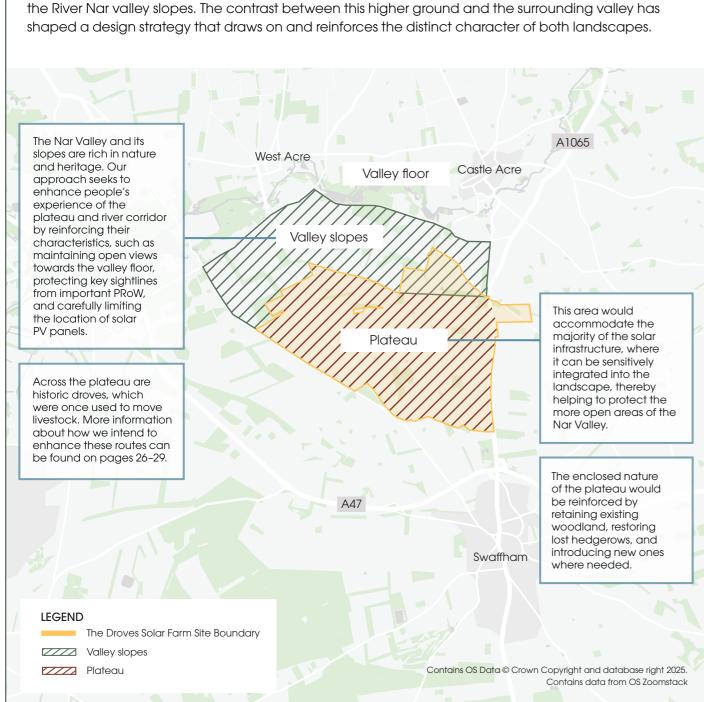
Following our early-stage engagement, we have been refining the design of the Project, responding to feedback received and our Project Level Design Principles.

We have developed a set of key Masterplanning Strategies that underpin the Indicative Masterplan, that can be viewed on pages 20-25. These strategies outline how we intend to implement our Project Level Design Principles through a Site-specific approach.

Together, they aim to reinforce the character and identity of the local area, improve access to support active lifestyles, and contribute to nature recovery in the region.

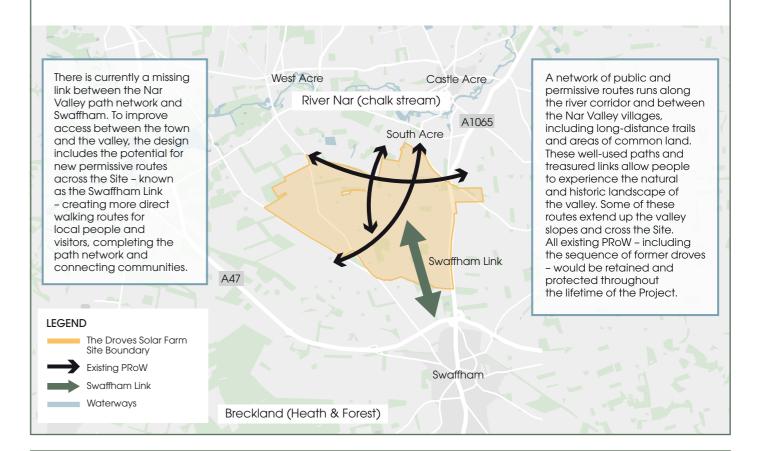
Place: Reinforcing the character and identity of the local area

The central part of the Site sits on a localised plateau - a raised area of land that lies at the edge of the River Nar valley slopes. The contrast between this higher ground and the surrounding valley has

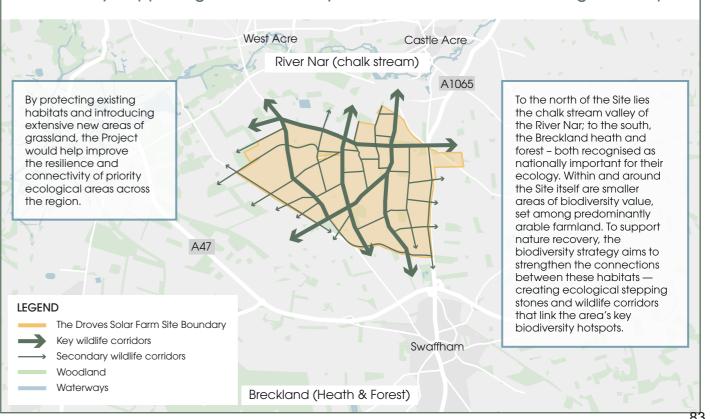


Movement: Improving access for walking and active travel

The Project aims to protect existing paths and introduce new links across the Site - improving access between Swaffham, the Nar Valley, and surrounding villages.







Indicative Masterplan 1



Indicative Masterplan 2

