RWE GROUP

Welcome to the Potters Hill Solar Farm Public Consultation

Should it be approved, the solar farm would be able to generate enough affordable, renewable electricity to meet the annual energy needs of approximately 10,000 Leicestershire homes.

Potters Hill Solar Farm

The Need for Solar

Reaching for Net Zero

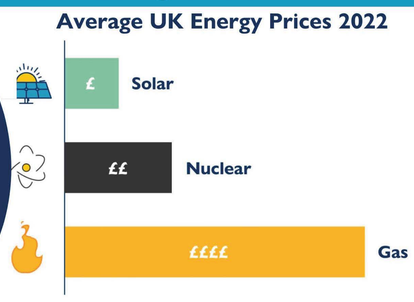
The UK has made a legally binding commitment to achieve a net zero fully decarbonised power system by 2035. This can only be achieved with the adoption and roll-out of reliable, affordable, clean energy sources such as solar.

Melton Borough Climate Emergency

Melton Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Council's Local Plan also outlines the need to "minimise the use of energy and promote forms of renewable energy generation in appropriate locations" within its strategic objectives. The Potters Hill site has been selected following an extensive site selection process which is guided by several parameters to ensure that only the most appropriate sites are chosen within a suitable distance to the existing grid connection.

Tackling Energy Security and the Cost of Living Crisis

Solar energy provides one of the cheapest forms of electricity in the UK. This year alone solar has been more than four times cheaper than gas and two times cheaper than nuclear in the UK. A fivefold increase in solar capacity is anticipated by 2035 in the Government's Energy Security Strategy 2022. If approved, Potters Hill Solar Farm can help drive down bills and tackle the energy crisis.



Potters Hill Solar Farm
Benefits

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Building a brighter future

By working in partnership with local communities, RWE unlock a project's full potential. We ensure that the benefits of solar energy developments are realised in a way that positively impact the surrounding community.

The displacement of more than 698,704 tonnes of CO2 from equivalent fossil fuel energy, which equates to taking more than 413,920 cars off Leicestershire's roads (10,348 per year for 40 years).

Genuine benefits for local residents, including a £200,000 community benefit fund over the lifetime of the project (£5,000 per year for 40 years)

More than 50% biodiversity net gain providing ecological benefits through new habitats, such as wildflower meadows, grassland areas, insect hotels, bird nesting boxes and beehives.

Business rates contribution in excess of £1.3m over lifetime of the project.

Land enhancements which include the planting of new hedgerows, mature and semi mature trees and an orchard, which will provide ecological benefits alongside landscape mitigation.

The ability for more than 95% of the site to be used for sheep grazing and remain in farming use, allowing topsoil to recover, by increasing soil organic matter and improving the soil structure.

Significant investment in new green infrastructures such as enhanced rights of way, outdoor picnic areas and an educational trail.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on site, ensuring the solar farm can be as flexible as possible in delivering energy to the grid.

St. Bartholomew Chruch
Existing substation
Access from Hill Top Farm Shop into community area within site (through existing gap in hedgerow)

Potters Hill Solar Farm
Proposals

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Site Location

The site would be located north west of Melton Mowbray and approximately 20km north east of Leicester.

This location has been carefully chosen by our integrated team of experts. The site will benefit from a nearby point of connection to the electricity grid, can be screened to minimise visual impact and has the potential to deliver significant positive gains for protected species.

The planned solar farm will generate more than 33GWh of electricity a year. This would provide the equivalent annual energy needs of over 10,000 Leicestershire homes.

CO_2 savings will exceed 698,704 tonnes over the lifetime of the project, which equates to taking more than 413,920 cars off Leicestershire's roads (10,348 per year for 40 years).

We are also planning to install batteries to store electricity, which can be fed back into the local energy network to help balance the grid at times of high demand.

Potters Hill Solar Farm

Natural Capital

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Tackling the Ecological Crisis through Natural Capital

Not only are we facing a climate crisis, but we are facing an ecological emergency too, and the two are intrinsically linked. According to the ground-breaking 2019 'State of Nature Report', 60% of British wildlife species monitored have declined and 15% are facing extinction for a variety of reasons including use of pesticides and habitat loss.

A Green Future

The Government's 25-year Environment Plan 'A Green Future' highlights the importance of natural capital as a tool in decision-making. Natural capital refers to the aspects of nature that directly or indirectly produce value for people, such as the stocks of forests, rivers, land, minerals and oceans.

Increasing Biodiversity on Solar Farms

From stocks of natural capital flow ecosystem services or benefits that may be economic, social, environmental, cultural or spiritual, with qualitative or quantitative values - for example, access to open spaces and providing a healthy environment. Solar farms offer a unique opportunity to provide significant biodiversity net gains through habitat creation and planting of trees.

>50% Net Gain

Ecosystem services arising from well-managed solar farms

- Biodiversity and wildlife habitat provision
- Carbon storage and climate regulation
- Flood attenuation and water cycle support
- Water quality regulation
- Pollination
- Air quality regulation
- Soil erosion mitigation and soil quality regulation
- Education, leisure and community engagement
- Food provision and support for sustainable agriculture

Potters Hill Solar Farm

Top FAQs

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Are solar farms built with the landscape in mind?

Absolutely, we work closely with communities to ensure that our solar farms blend in and restore traditional meadows and hedgerows to the countryside. The maximum height of our solar panels is three metres, which is the equivalent of a well-maintained hedgerow.

We also provide significant landscape enhancements on every scheme, including new hedgerow and tree planting which will help screen views of the site. The proposals also include a community orchard, an outdoor classroom and wildflower meadows, which will provide ecological benefits and a sensitively designed recreational space for the local community.

Why are most solar farms built on agricultural land?

Solar is one of the cheapest forms of clean renewable energy, and is vital to tackle both the climate, and cost of living crises. The UK government has set a target of 70GW of installed solar capacity by 2035. This cannot be achieved through rooftop and brownfield solar installations alone. The UK currently has c.15GW of installed solar capacity. The UK Warehousing association has said that warehouses could potentially accommodate a further 15GW of capacity, however this would still leave a shortfall of 40GW, which is why solar farms are required on agricultural land. A full brownfield land search was undertaken during the site selection process. This search found that all available brownfield sites were already being used, for housing or industrial purposes, or not of sufficient size to develop a viable scheme.

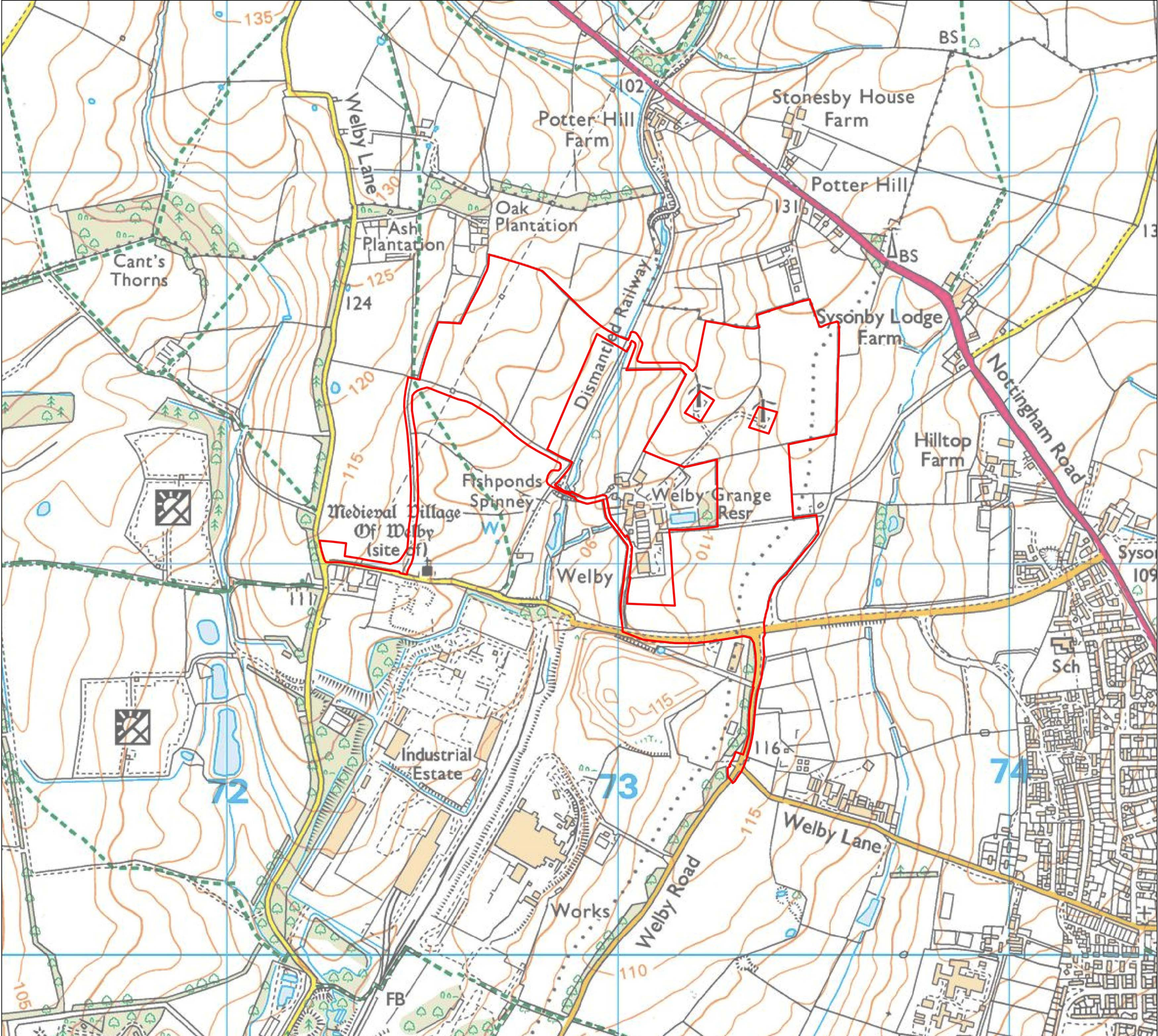
As a result, agricultural land is used, without impacting on food security. The UK Food Security Report states that climate change is one of the largest threats to domestic food production and solar farms provide an opportunity to significantly reduce carbon emissions. To reach the UK's national targets, only 0.5% of agricultural land will need to be used for solar. The site can also continue to be used for pastoral (sheep) farming.

Will there be much disturbance during construction?

We aim to access sites and manage all traffic in such a way that it will have a minimum impact on surrounding communities. The delivery route to the proposed site will be via Welby Lane. The delivery route and access will be assessed by the Highways authority, to ensure it is a safe and viable option. Construction is anticipated to take 6-9 months, with an average of 6 deliveries per day.

The existing view looking north east from St Bartholemew's Churchyard

The same view at year one


135
BS
102
Stonesby House
Farm
Potter Hill
Farm
Welby Lane
130
Potter Hill
131
Oak
Plantation
Ash
Plantation
BS
Cant's
Thorns
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124
Sysonby Lodge
Farm
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Hilltop
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111
115
116
Industrial
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72
73
74
Welby Lane
Welby Road
Works
110
105
FB

Potters Hill Solar Farm

Community Benefits

Green Infrastructure

Investment of c. £250,000 in landscape enhancements, which will be linked by existing public footpaths.

New permissive footpath looped walk which will be planted with wildflower margins.

New picnic areas, benches and community orchard.

New interpretation boards detailing the history of the area, benefits of solar energy and wildflower meadows / pollination.

Outdoor classroom, seating area and beehives providing an educational resource.

Local Economy

Community benefit fund of up to £200,000 that could be used on rooftop solar for community buildings / schools and/or other sustainable initiatives locally, e.g. village improvement schemes or other new amenities.

Sponsorship of local schools that could include free curriculum lessons from qualified beekeepers, site visits to the beehives and wildflower garden establishment on school grounds.

The provision of jobs and sourcing of materials locally associated with the construction of the solar farm and the operational phase of development. Construction staff are also likely to use local accommodation and shops / restaurants.

Business rates contribution in excess of £1.3m over lifetime of the project.

Potters Hill Solar Farm

About RWE

What We Do

We are at the heart of the UK's renewables revolution, helping to realise our collective goal of net zero emissions through the deployment of solar energy.

We believe this is best achieved through positive stakeholder relationships and listening to the voices of the community.

Our Projects

Our 98% planning application success rate over the last decade speaks for itself. We remain committed to using the lessons we have learned in this time to continue delivering large-scale solar farms with co-located battery storage and biodiversity net gains on every project.

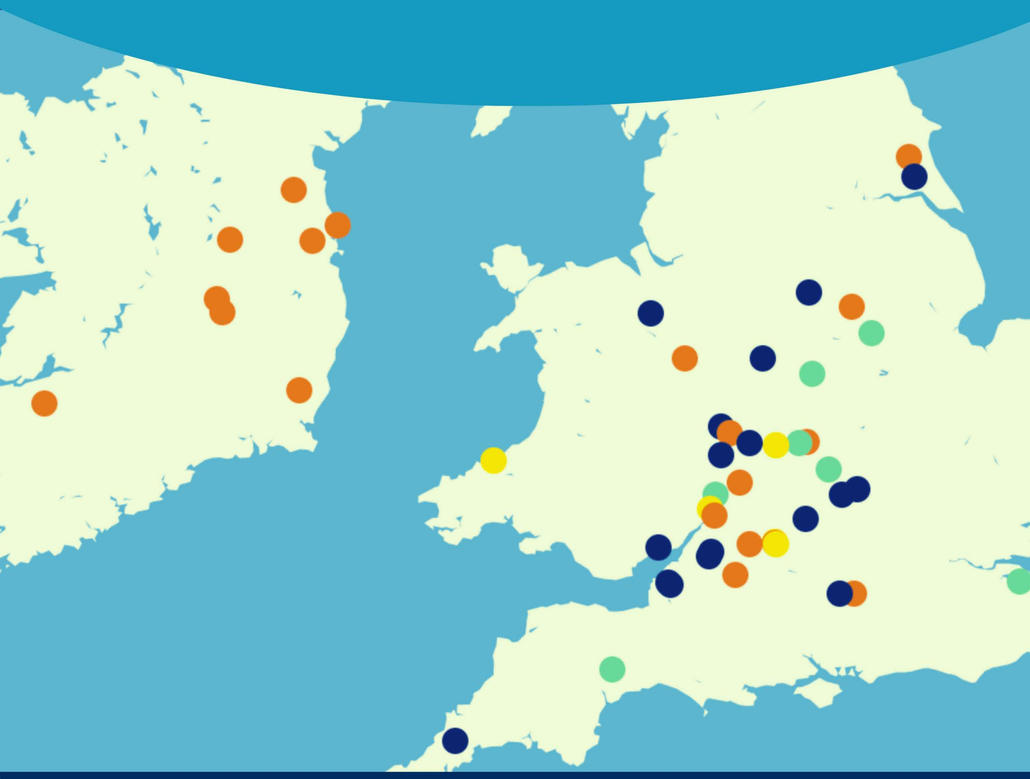
All our future solar schemes will achieve a minimum of 50% biodiversity net gain, five times the minimum requirement of 10%.

Our Vision

Our vision is to power the UK with reliable, affordable, clean solar energy, and to add value through innovation and investment.

We're bringing the benefits of solar energy to communities and the planet – at the scale and pace that is needed to help the country meet its net zero ambitions.

RWE develops, owns, and operates all of their solar projects, meaning we will be with you throughout the lifetime of the project.



Awaiting Construction · Operational · Grid Secured · Planning Submitted

Potters Hill Solar Farm

Next Steps

Timeline

- **March - April 2024** — Public consultation
- **May 2024** — Finalise feedback
- **Summer 2024** — Submit planning application
- **Winter 2024** — Planning permission
- **2026** — Commence construction
- **2026** — Energisation

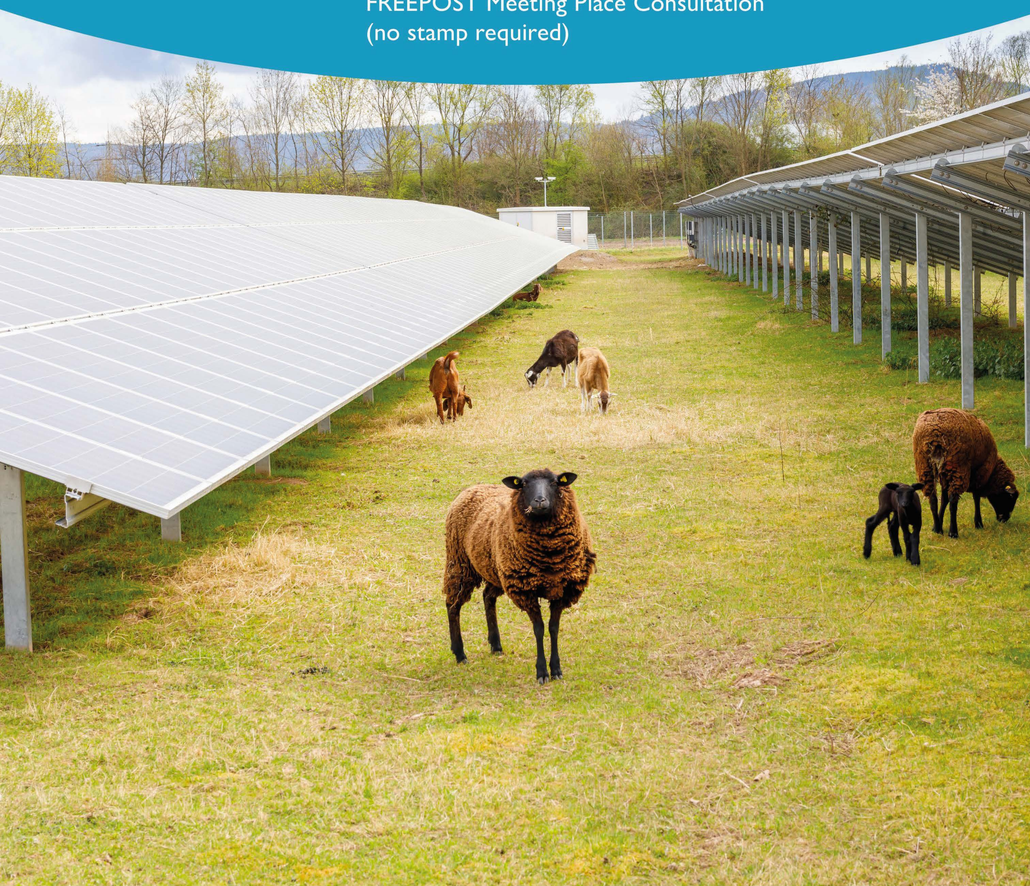
Your feedback

Please take some time today to provide your feedback on the proposals. You can do this by completing the feedback form provided.

Please note our pre-submission consultation period closes on 26 April 2024. Please ensure that any feedback is sent sufficiently in advance to arrive before this date.

Call us on: 0800 148 8911

Find out more on our consultation
Website: uk.rwe.com/potters-hill-solar

The RWE team want to hear from you
Email: info@pottershillsolarfarm.co.uk

Write to us at:
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(no stamp required)