



SIX OAKS RENEWABLE ENERGY PARK

Statement of Community Involvement

OCTOBER 2022

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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared for the proposed Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park, consisting of solar photovoltaic (PV) with a capacity of approximately 49.9 megawatts (MW), Battery Energy Storage system (BESS) designed to discharge 50MW of electricity over a two hour period and associated development, at land approximately 2.5km south east of the centre of Bottisham, Cambridgeshire (the Proposed Development). A full description of the Proposed Development can be found within the accompanying Planning Statement.
- 1.1.2 The site extends to an area of 76.4 ha, on arable farmland.
- 1.1.3 This document describes the methods of community consultation which have taken place, reporting on the level of community interest and the feedback received from the public and other key stakeholders.

2 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This SCI accompanies the application for planning permission for the Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park to East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).
- 2.1.2 The Applicant is Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park Ltd, a project company owned by Ridge Clean Energy Ltd (RCE), the developer of the Proposed Development. Where 'the Applicant' is referred to in this statement, this includes both Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park Ltd and Ridge Clean Energy Ltd.
- 2.1.3 The Proposed Development would consist of the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, the metal frames they are mounted on, inverters, new build access tracks, underground cabling, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), customer substation, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, access gates, a temporary construction compound and associated works. The Proposed Development would have a temporary operational period of 40 years.
- 2.1.4 The Proposed Development would result in the production of domestically generated clean renewable energy, as well as the ability to store excess electricity from either the Proposed Development or from the local electrical distribution network. The development would also include environmental enhancement works in the form of new hedgerow, scrub and tree planting as well as new areas of wildflower meadow planting to achieve a substantial net gain in habitat and biodiversity (see the accompanying Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for further information).
- 2.1.5 This document reports the relevant policy background, outlines the stakeholder mapping undertaken to identify relevant stakeholders to consult with, describes the methods of community consultation which have taken place, reporting on the level of community interest and the feedback received from the public and other key stakeholders during public exhibitions and other engagement.

3 Planning Policy and Guidance

- 3.1.1 Consulting early in the development process provides a comprehensive and transparent process through which members of the public and other key stakeholders are able to learn

about the Proposed Development. This also provides an opportunity for the Applicant to receive feedback which can be a vital tool in the design and development process.

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework

3.2.1 Such early consultation accords with guidance provided within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021). Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community”.

3.2.2 Paragraph 40 then states:

“[Local Planning Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.”

3.2.3 Paragraph 41 of the NPPF then goes on to state:

“The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure.... the greater the benefits”.

3.3 East Cambridgeshire District Council – Statement of Community Involvement

3.3.1 Where a SCI is required, the statement should set out how the applicant has complied with the requirements for pre-application consultation set out in the local planning authority’s adopted statement of community involvement.

3.3.2 East Cambridgeshire District Council’s Statement of Community Involvement was adopted by the Council in July 2018. The Statement notes that Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011 introduced a duty for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments. This duty came into force on 17th December 2013. However, it is the Council’s understanding that only certain wind turbine developments are, as yet, classed by government as falling under this duty.

3.3.3 Even if not compulsory for all other types of development, pre application consultation will enable communities to raise issues with and make suggestions to the Applicant.

3.3.4 The Applicant has adopted an approach to seeking early views and inputs from the local community surrounding the Proposed Development.

3.4 Bre’s National Solar Centre – Community engagement good practice guidance for solar farms (2015)

3.4.1 Bre’s National Solar Centre – Community engagement good practice guidance for solar farms (2015) outlines good practice and principles for community engagement in relation to solar farms. It sets out the key benefits of community engagement as:

“maintaining a positive reputation for the industry;

Reducing opposition;

An opportunity to challenge negative perceptions;

Addressing concerns (unwarranted concerns can often be allayed by the process of talking them through);

Identifying issues developers may have missed;

Tapping into local knowledge;

Building a supporter base;

Establishing and maintaining relationships with the community who will be the solar farms' neighbours...; and

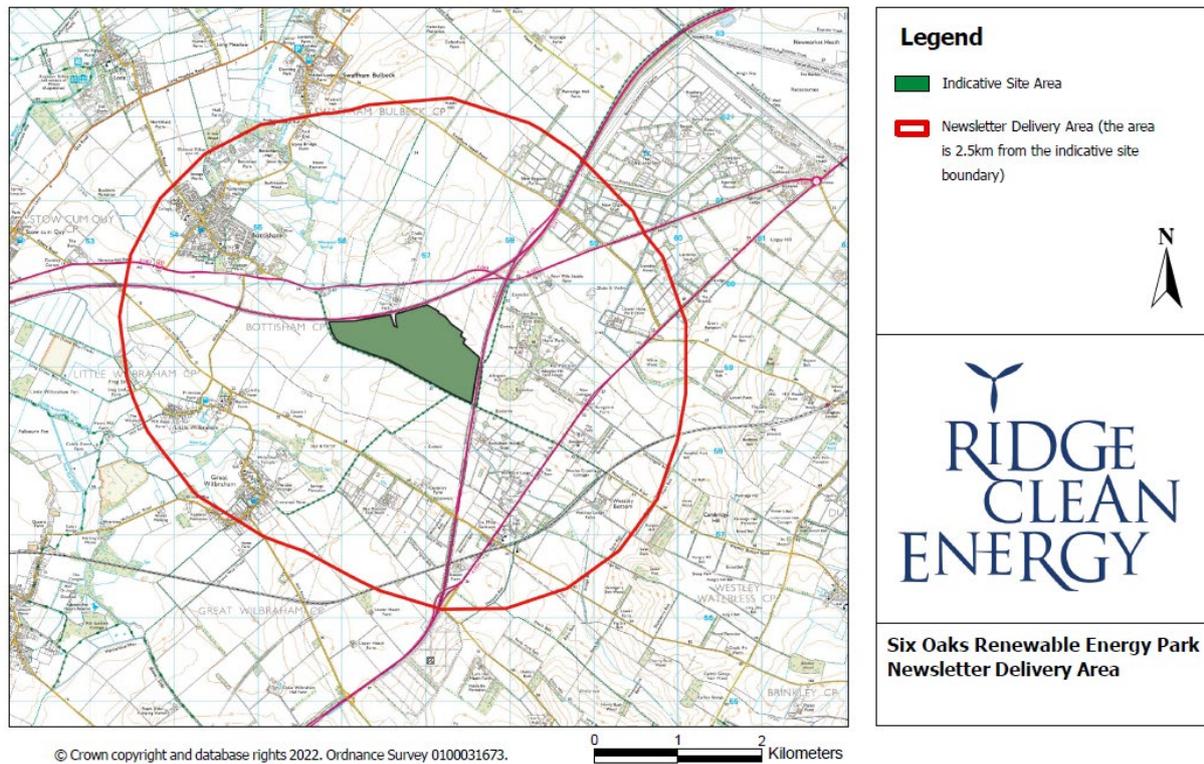
Where people are involved and well-informed it may hasten the decision making process"

- 3.4.2 In addition to the above, the Applicant recognises that local people can make a valuable contribution to proposed developments by offering important local knowledge and raising issues that may not have been considered by the Applicant or its project team.
- 3.4.3 Consistent with the advice in the ECDC's statement on consultation, this document forms a statement outlining the community involvement that has been carried out, the comments received and any changes made as a result.
- 3.4.4 The approach to community consultation as presented in this SCI reflects ECDC's advice for community consultation. Throughout the pre-application consultation, the Applicant has:
- Invited comments at a time when they can inform the process;
 - Provided sufficient information to describe the subject matter of the consultation;
 - Given notice of consultations in advance;
 - Clearly described how to submit comments;
 - Considered the representations received prior to submitting the planning application; and
 - Acknowledged representations that have been received electronically and physically.

4 Community and Stakeholder Mapping

- 4.1.1 This section details the key local stakeholders on which the Applicant focused during the pre-application public consultation process. Prior to the start of the consultation, the Applicant undertook desktop research to develop a comprehensive understanding of the key stakeholders to engage with during pre-application public consultation. This research involved identifying local stakeholders located around the site of the Proposed Development.
- 4.1.2 The stakeholder groups identified included:
- The local population, consisting of 2,500m from the boundary of the solar arrays and substation / battery storage area (the Indicative Area Boundary (IAB)); and,
 - Local political representatives.
- 4.1.3 **Figure 1** below shows the 2,500m radius from the IAB.

Figure 1 – 2.5km radius around site



4.1.4 Local political representatives included the following:

- Bottisham Parish Council (BPC);
- Great Wilbraham Parish Council (GWPC);
- Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom Parish Council (LW&SMBPC);
- Bottisham Ward Councillors;
- Chairman of East Cambridgeshire District Council;
- Fen Ditton & Fulbourn Ward Councillors; and,
- MP for South East Cambridgeshire.

5 Overview of Consultation Undertaken

5.1.1 The pre-application consultation began on 19th January 2022. During the pre-application public consultation, a range of communication methods were used to provide information about the Proposed Development and ensure that the local community had the opportunity to provide their feedback.

Introductory letter to parish councils

5.1.2 On 19th January 2022, the Applicant wrote to Bottisham Parish Council, Great Wilbraham

Parish Council & Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom Parish Council. They were advised that the Applicant was in the early stages of investigating the potential for a renewable energy park and were given indicative scheme details (area, capacity and output), an overview of the Applicant and intentions for working with the community and were offered the opportunity to meet the Applicant and be introduced to the proposal. A copy of the letter sent to Bottisham Parish Council can be found at **Appendix A**.

Introductory letter to District Councillors

- 5.1.3 On 19th January 2022 the project introduction letter was also sent to the Bottisham Ward Councillors and then to the Chairman of East Cambridgeshire District Council on 21st January 2022.

Introductory letter to the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP

- 5.1.4 On 24th January 2022, the Applicant wrote to the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC, MP for South East Cambridgeshire, to introduce themselves and the Proposed Development. The letter included indicative scheme details (area, capacity and output) an overview of the developer, intentions for working with the community and an offer to meet with the Applicant.

Meeting with Bottisham Parish Council

- 5.1.5 On the 7th March, members of the Applicant's project team met with Bottisham Parish Council. Indicative maps and plans were discussed, which was followed by a brief question and answer session.

Invitation Mailing for Public Exhibition

- 5.1.6 On 16th March 2022, a newsletter inviting the local community to the Applicant's public exhibitions was issued to residential dwellings within 2,500m of the IAB, amounting to 1,508 properties. The newsletter contained details on the Applicant, Proposed Development, the dates and times for the two exhibitions and intentions for engagement and working with the local community. The invitations were posted to arrive from the 13th April 2022. A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix B**.

Project Website

- 5.1.7 On the 17th March 2022, a project website was launched at www.ridgecleanenergy.com/sixoaks, containing information on the project, the Applicant and contact details for the project team.

Public Exhibitions

- 5.1.8 The Applicant hosted two public exhibitions for the Proposed Development, on the 28th March 2022 at the Wilbraham's Memorial Hall (Great Wilbraham) from 1pm – 8pm and on the 29th March 2022 at Bottisham Community Sports and Social Club from 12pm – 8pm.
- 5.1.9 The objective of the Public Exhibitions were:
- Present details of the Proposed Development that were known at the time to the local community;
 - Learn from the local community and encourage feedback; and
 - Engage with the community to identify uses for the proposed community benefit fund and

to identify local community initiatives that the Applicant could assist with.

5.1.10 Approximately 80 members of the public attended the exhibitions (30 on the 28th and 50 on the 29th respectively).

5.1.11 Large display boards were set up at the exhibitions providing information relating to:

- An overview of the Applicant;
- Indicative scheme details, including key facts and indicative timeline;
- An OS map showing distances from the Indicative Application Boundary;
- Proposed Site Design;
- Infrastructure;
- Acoustic, Heritage and Construction;
- Site Design, Biodiversity and Land Use;
- Environmental Benefits;
- Visualisations;
- Community Engagement; and,
- Policy and Targets.

5.1.12 A series of photos were taken from the events showing the information available, which can be found in **Appendix C**. The posters themselves can be found in **Appendix D**.

5.1.13 Feedback from discussions at the exhibitions and from feedback forms completed, along with the Applicant's comments on this feedback, is provided in **Table 1** below.

Ongoing Engagement with Bottisham Parish Council

5.1.14 Since the initial meeting with Bottisham Parish Council, a number of questions have been asked about the Proposed Development. A summary of the questions and the Applicant's responses are provided in **Table 2** below.

Meeting with Wilbrahams' Environment Group

5.1.15 On 5th August 2022, members of the project team met with the Wilbrahams' Environment Group at St Nicholas Church, Great Wilbraham. The team gave an update on project progress, however, the focus of the meeting was to discuss the draft Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan. The points raised and the Applicant's responses are provided in **Table 3** below.

5.1.16 Meeting with members of Bottisham Parish Council

On the 26th October 2022, the Applicant met with some of the members of Bottisham Parish Council, to provide a project update and to answer further questions. A summary of questions asked and the Applicant's responses are included in **Table 2** below.

6 Feedback and Applicant's Response

6.1 Public Exhibition Feedback

- 6.1.1 Of the 20 feedback forms received from the exhibition, one hundred percent were supportive of renewable energy.
- 6.1.2 **Table 1** below summarises the responses received on feedback forms and during discussions at the exhibitions. Where the same point was raised in both discussions and feedback forms, the feedback form comment and response has been listed.

Table 1 – Points raised during public exhibitions

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|--------------------|---|
| <u>Ecology</u> | | |
| <p>Interested in potential to improve biodiversity & habitat ie. Pollinating plants (even low level) and hedgerows for habitat.</p> <p>Important that biodiversity proposals are realistic/appropriate and can be maintained.</p> | Feedback form | <p>Biodiversity enhancements are planned as part of the proposal. These include species rich grassland with wildflowers; hedgerow planting and restoration; and, provision of bird and bat boxes.</p> <p>A draft biodiversity and landscape management plan is included in the material supporting the planning application. This plan includes management and monitoring measures.</p> |
| <p>Would like to be reassured that a biodiverse environment around the proposed solar farm would be carried out and maintained.</p> <p>Annual maintenance of wildflower planting etc. is essential to maintain biodiversity on the site.</p> <p>Provision of as much biodiversity in the area as possible and well managed areas of trees and hedges.</p> <p>We would like the ground under the panels to be used for sheep grazing or a</p> | Feedback form | <p>See the biodiversity and landscape management plan is included in the material supporting the planning application.</p> <p>The plan includes a line of rowan trees in the south eastern part of the site.</p> <p>Sheep grazing could be utilised as part of the management measures to maintain the grassland after the summer.</p> |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| managed wildflower meadow. | | |
| I fully support your proposals in principle and trust that should they come to fruition your company will plan in biodiversity net gain that is at least best practice for solar farms in the UK. | Feedback form | <p>The Ecology Chapter (see Chapter 9 of the Environmental Statement that accompanies the planning application) includes the biodiversity net gain calculation results.</p> <p>Following implementation of the biodiversity management plan, there will be a net 66% gain in habitat units, from 152 to 253 Biodiversity Units. Hedgerow units will increase by 2% from 123 to 126 Units (from 1.1km of new native hedgerow and a further 2.5km of existing hedgerow restored to native species-rich hedgerow).</p> |
| Any environmental measures for turtle doves? | Exhibition discussion | It is noted that turtle doves are the fastest declining bird in the UK (RSPB). This species was not identified as being present during the bird surveys. However, the biodiversity measures proposed would provide additional feeding habitat for turtle dove. Some of their preferred foods, such as fumitory, could be included in the seed mix. |
| Any research studies been done on the interaction of birds and the operational noise from inverters and the substation components? | Exhibition discussion | <p>The Applicant is not aware of any specific research on this. However, Natural England's Technical Advice Note (TIN101) considers biodiversity enhancements at solar sites and states:</p> <p><i>You can also consider planting wild bird seed mixtures for birds and nectar and pollen rich margins for bees and butterflies.</i></p> <p>This suggests that, with appropriate management measures, birds will be encouraged into the area.</p> |
| Bird and bat boxes would be great. We'd like to learn more about the plans for these! | Exhibition discussion | <p>As part of the biodiversity management plan:</p> <p>Songbird nest boxes – 20 boxes of mixed type (5 x small hole for tits, 5 x larger hole for sparrows, 5 x larger boxes for starlings and 5 x open-fronted boxes for flycatchers/robins/thrushes). In addition, 10 bat boxes in similar locations to the bird boxes.</p> |
| Deer could get trapped in the triangular area enclosed by the A11 and A14. | Exhibition discussion | Should deer be identified in this area during construction, a 12m wide corridor could remain open to allow the deer to traverse through the site. |
| Which of the proposed environmental enhancements contribute toward the net gain? | Exhibition discussion | The restoration of lowland species rich grassland and the hedgerow planting. |
| How do the proposed environmental enhancements compare to the environmental enhancements provided as part of the development of | Exhibition discussion | <p>The Great Wilbraham solar farm includes a Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, which is a planning condition associated with the planning permission. The plan includes:</p> <p><i>A diverse grassland will be established beneath the panels through seeding with appropriate native species; bird and bat boxes; protection of field margins adjacent to the development area.</i></p> <p>The environmental enhancements proposed at Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park compare well with the above enhancement measures.</p> |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| neighbouring wind and solar farms? | | Key to the effectiveness of the measures will be the ongoing management and monitoring measures put in place. |
| <u>Landscape and Visual Impact</u> | | |
| Scheme appears to have minimal visual impact on landscape and this will be further reduced by proposed planting of trees and hedges. | Feedback form | Noted. |
| Screening very important. | Feedback form | Additional planting is proposed adjacent to the A14, to extend the roadside hedgerow in the area and reduce any visual effects on road users. Additional planting is also proposed along a portion Heath Road that is currently not screened by hedgerow. |
| <u>Transport and Access</u> | | |
| Concern re traffic to site during construction using Wilbraham Road. This road is busy with locals, 16 HGVs per day will be a serious problem. | Feedback form | A Traffic and Access Statement accompanies the planning application. This includes a review of road safety and an assessment of the effects of the construction traffic. A peak of 8 deliveries (16 vehicle movements) per day is not considered as significant. However, the construction traffic will be managed through a Traffic Management Plan, in agreement with East Cambridgeshire District Council and the Local Highways Department. |
| The access route for construction vehicles along a road which is already very dangerous. | Feedback form | A Traffic Management Plan will ensure that appropriate safety measures are in place for the delivery of equipment during the construction phase. |
| All lorries with deliveries to the site must not come through Bottisham. | Feedback form | There will be no deliveries through Bottisham. |
| Initial disruption in the Wilbrahams. | Feedback form | There will be no deliveries through the Wilbrahams. The underground grid connection route is likely to within / around Great Wilbraham. This will form part of a separate consenting process or be undertaken by the Distribution Network Operator. |
| A14 gets snarled up, which has a knock on effect onto the A1303. | Exhibition discussion | Noted. Peak times could be avoided and this would form part of the Traffic Management Plan. |
| Why not run the access route along A1303 and down Heath Road toward the site? | Exhibition discussion | Access is via an existing farm access and utilises the existing farm track. Heath Road has been avoided to ensure that this right of way can continue to be used during the construction phase. There is a single crossing of Heath Road and this will be managed with appropriate signage and the presence of a banksman. |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Noise | | |
| The noise from traffic travelling on the A14 and A11 is unpleasant. Will construction and operational noise from the solar farm make noise in the area worse than it is at present? | Exhibition discussion | An acoustic assessment accompanies the planning application. The calculations indicate that operational noise from the renewable energy park during the likely operating hours would be relatively low in absolute terms and an assessment using Government's planning guidance would indicate no observed adverse effect. |
| Can operational noise from the solar farm be heard from Bottisham or the Wilbraham's? | Exhibition discussion | As noted above, there would be no observed adverse effect, including on the closest properties to the renewable energy park. Bottisham and the Wilbrahams are about 1.5km further away than the closest properties, therefore, it is not expected that the proposed development would be heard from these areas. |
| How much noise would the cooling fans make during peak operation? | Exhibition discussion | The sound power level of the air conditioning units during peak operation is 78dB, as described in the acoustic assessment that accompanies the planning application. |
| Will the community be made aware of the outcome of the noise assessment before the planning application is submitted to East Cambridgeshire District Council. | Exhibition discussion | The acoustic assessment is not available until the submission of the planning application and accompanying documents. Once the application is registered, a newsletter will be issued to the properties within 2.5km of the site, with details of where to find the application material (the planning portal and the Applicant's project website). |
| Agricultural Land | | |
| In the long term I'd rather have food (from the field) than electricity. | Feedback form | The original site design has been amended to avoid the use of grade 2 land (grade 1 land being the best agricultural land classification). The proposed development will utilise 15% grade 3a land and 85% grade 3b land, with the grade 3a land being in two separate patches amongst the grade 3b land. In terms of land use, within Cambridgeshire, the proposed development equates to 0.031% of total farmland in the county. The land will not be lost and during the operation of the project, enhancements will be established for the benefit of biodiversity in the area. At the end of the project lifetime, the land will be returned to agricultural use and will be in a better condition, having not been cropped for 40 years. |
| Slight issue with the use of arable land for this proposal. | Feedback form | |
| Many people are concerned by loss of agricultural land when a solar PV site is built. | Feedback form | |
| In my opinion all available land should be used for growing crops - especially after the war with Russia and Ukraine may limit essential grain imports. Why not use church, school and factory roofs? | Feedback form | |
| Why are we not making use of poorer quality land south of the site rather than | Exhibition discussion | |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| develop on this parcel of land? | | |
| Install panels on all suitable structures, both old & new, to keep fields free to grow crops or livestock. | Feedback form | The Applicant agrees that solar panels should also be installed on buildings. The essential transformation to a low carbon economy will require a very significant increase in renewable energy generation, which will include the use of greenfield sites. |
| Why not place solar panels on 11,000 + homes instead of using green belt land which should be used for crops? Solar panels should be placed on all new homes. | Feedback form | |
| Excellent use of medium quality farmland. | Feedback form | Noted. |
| What is the soil quality of land immediately around our site? | Exhibition discussion | The land around the site is grade 3b, grade 3a and grade 2. |
| Community Benefits | | |
| Use of the facility for educational use - engineering, science as well as nature. | Feedback form | Should the planning application be approved, the Applicant will explore this further after the site has been commissioned and begins operating. |
| We have plenty of ideas for initiatives to reduce both personal & community carbon footprints in the Wilbrahams. Would be very interested to talk further about these, eg. Your app for village footprint/electric car charge at community building/car share/transport schemes. | Feedback form | Noted. Discussions can continue during the planning application; during the pre-construction phase (should the application be approved); and, during the construction and operation phases. |
| Electric charging points. Helping to get cycle paths connecting the village (Great Wilbraham) to the cycle network. | Feedback form | Noted. As above, the Applicant is willing to engage on these matters throughout the process. |
| Occasional pre-arranged visit by schools and interested adult groups would ease public concerns. | Feedback form | Noted. This can be arranged once the site is operational. |
| Hopefully a cleaner energy and cheaper electricity passed on to the households. | Feedback form | Noted. |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Use of community fund to improve footpaths around Bottisham/Gt Wilbraham to improve access and health. | Feedback form | Noted. These can be discussed as part of the community benefits. A figure of £500 per MW per year is proposed, which would equate to approximately £25,000 per year for the 49.9MW project. |
| A footpath between Bottisham & Little Wilbraham. Resurface the path beside A1303 at Bottisham. | Feedback form | |
| Funding to school for education. | Feedback form | |
| Establish local advisory centre on home insulation and use of energy. | Feedback form | |
| Contribution (money) to have panels installed on some suitable local buildings (schools, care home). | Feedback form | |
| Bottisham is lacking a playpark, charging points to encourage people to choose electric vehicles. | Feedback form | |
| Walks through the facility with poster type display boards. Not just nature but the education - engineering & science. | Feedback form | Noted. Display boards could be installed along Heath Road and Street Way to provide information on the renewable energy park. |
| What is the radius used to determine who will receive benefits from the community benefit fund? | Exhibition discussion | A specific radius is not proposed. It is expected that Bottisham and the Wilbrahams will qualify for the community benefit fund. The exact amounts and projects supported will be determined through discussions with the local community. |
| A nearby project allocates its community contribution on a rotational basis – one community each year receives 100 percent of the funding available. Would we consider a similar approach? | Exhibition discussion | Noted. This option can be discussed with the local community. |
| The cycling route terminates at Bottisham and does not continue into the Wilbrahams. Would Ridge Clean Energy be willing to contribute toward this connection | Exhibition discussion | The Applicant is willing to discuss supporting cycling routes. This would be in the context of discussions with the community as to which projects should be supported by the community benefit fund. |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| and enhance other cycling routes in the area? | | |
| Would Ridge Clean Energy be willing to contribute toward the Bottisham Bowls and Social Club venue? | Exhibition discussion | The Applicant encourages organisations to apply for funding from the community benefit fund. The fund would be established once the site is operational. |
| Would Ridge Clean Energy make someone available on site to give school tours in person? | Exhibition discussion | A site tour for the school can be arranged once the project is operational and remain over the project's lifetime. |
| General comments | | |
| The site appears to be well suited to this type of development which is badly needed to help our carbon footprint. | Feedback form | Noted. |
| Does this mean that Bottisham will have cheaper electricity? | Feedback form | Increasing the amount of renewable electricity generation in the UK will lead to savings on electricity bills. Although the site would not lead to a direct reduction in bills for Bottisham, there will be a community benefit fund to support local projects. |
| I do not support this project, Wave energy should be explored, it is reliable - unlike wind and solar. | Feedback form | Noted. Wave energy has been explored in the UK for more than 15 years. However, the engineering is difficult and expensive, therefore it has not yet become commercially viable on a wide scale. |
| I support the proposal to use battery storage. The site is well located to make connection to electric grid. | Feedback form | Noted. |
| Interesting exhibition and fruitful conversations with your representatives. I was asked about recycling of panels - this is something that you could give more info on. | Feedback form | Noted. More than 90% of the solar arrays (including modules and frames) can currently be recycled. This figure will increase as more solar farms are installed, due to economies of scale and improvements in technologies to increase the amount of material that can be recycled. |
| I wish you well with the project and look forward to seeing the site during construction and when operational. | Feedback form | Noted. |
| Very good exhibition and very helpful staff on hand. | Feedback form | Noted. |
| Well presented exhibition, friendly and approachable staff. | Feedback form | Noted. |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| The Village of Lode has important roots back to Roman times and its people played an influential role in both agriculture and transportation. This land around Lode has had a reputation of being fertile. Has our decision to use this land taken into account this area's history? | Exhibition discussion | A Historic Environment Assessment accompanies the planning application. This report has assessed the potential effects of the proposed development on listed buildings, scheduled monuments (including Roman) and archaeology. The study area includes the site and a 1km radius around the site boundary (Lode is more than 2km from the site boundary). A geophysical survey was conducted across the site to identify any potential archaeological assets. |
| The main issue a neighbouring solar farm had was its connection into Fulbourne substation. The developer made a mess of the ground while trenching the wire toward the substation. Have we been made aware of this issue and how will our development prevent this from happening? | Exhibition discussion | Noted. The Applicant has been made aware of this issue. The grid connection route will either be a separate consenting process or will be undertaken by the Distribution Network Operator. Further consultation will take place to discuss previous issues and what mitigation measures can be put in place to avoid and/or reduce potential impacts from the work associated with the connection route. |
| Why have we not chosen a grid connection point closer to the proposed site? | Exhibition discussion | The 400kV transmission line across the site is at too high a voltage to connect into. The 33kV lines crossing the site do not have the capacity to take the electricity from the renewable energy park. |
| What will the battery energy storage system look like? Is there anything in the current environment that compares in terms of look and size? | Exhibition discussion | The battery energy storage system comprises shipping container type structures that house the batteries. There is a relatively new battery system opposite the Burwell substation on the western side of Burwell. Figures 7.9, 7.10 and 7.11 of the Environmental Statement provide an illustration of the proposed battery energy storage system arrangement which is based on the use of containers to house the batteries. |
| Has the site design taken into account the footpath from 'Spring Hall' toward Heath Road? | Exhibition discussion | In the event that part of a footpath within the farmland becomes enclosed with the fence line, a new permissive path can be created along the western side of the site to provide a route to Heath Road. |
| If more efficient solar panels come along sometime during the 40 year operational period, would we consider swapping out existing panels at the proposed site? | Exhibition discussion | This could be considered if it became economically viable to replace the panels. |
| What specific distance are we leaving between the various rows of panels? | Exhibition discussion | A distance of 3m to 5m between the rows of panels. |

| Feedback | Format of response | Applicant's response |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| How does the proposed project compare in area and capacity to the nearby solar farm? | Exhibition discussion | Six Oaks is 49.9MW, whereas the Gt Wilbraham solar farm is 38.1MW. Therefore, Six Oaks would be 30% bigger in terms of rated capacity. In terms of area, Six Oaks is 76 ha, which is about 26% larger than the 148 acres (60 ha) at Gt Wilbraham solar. |
| I understand that the planning submissions will be made to East Cambridgeshire District Council. Will South Cambridgeshire District Council be involved in the planning determination? | Exhibition discussion | South Cambridgeshire is involved as a consultee. |

6.2 Summary of feedback from liaison with Parish Councils & MP

Table 2 – Feedback received during liaison with Parish Councils

| Feedback | Applicant's response |
|---|--|
| How does RCE propose to connect to the national grid? | Six Oaks is expected to connect to UKPN's local distribution network at their Fulbourn substation. The connection from the project would be via an underground 33kV cable. |
| If the project proceeds, Six Oaks would likely to lead to increased noise and traffic pollution, especially during the construction phase. What measures does Ridge Clean Energy propose to put in place to mitigate these adverse effects? | A full acoustic assessment is included with the planning application, which assesses any potential impacts on sensitive receptors. The report concludes that there is likely to be no significant effect from the short-term construction noise. In addition, operational noise from the renewable energy park during the likely operating hours would be relatively low in absolute terms and an assessment using Government's planning guidance would indicate no observed adverse effect. If planning permission is granted, there would be a planning condition requiring a Construction Method Statement, which would include mitigation and monitoring measures to address any potential noise impacts. |
| Under current proposals, Six Oaks would be developed on approx. 200 acres of productive agricultural land. Has Ridge Clean Energy considered any alternative sites (e.g. on less productive land)? | We have developed a site design to ensure that any land with Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Grade 2 would not be used for the project. Moreover, our site has been designed to protect any access to Grade 2 land, as well as ensure its contiguous area remains large enough for productive farming. The Six Oaks project would be located on Grade 3 land (85% Grade 3b and 15% Grade 3a). Therefore, the temporary impact the Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park would have on BMV agricultural land (ALC grades 1, 2 and 3a) is very limited. |
| Please explain how Ridge Clean Energy expects Six Oaks to result in increased biodiversity on the site compared with maintaining an open field. | We intend to plant a combination of species-rich wildflower meadows and chalk grassland, to be sown below and between the panels, chosen specifically to complement the local ecosystem and boost biodiversity. Seeded plants (e.g. sunflowers) would also be planted in specific areas on the site. Hedge gapping along tracks (including Heath Road to the south of the site) would be beneficial for wildlife around |

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| | <p>the site, as well as being helpful in screening views. To the south of the land proposed for the battery and substation, it is expected that a row of rowan trees would be planted to provide screening over time. The improvements for biodiversity will be included in the biodiversity enhancement plan, a draft of which accompanies the planning application.</p> |
| <p>What work has Ridge Clean Energy carried out in relation to the possible risks associated with the use of lithium-ion batteries (i.e. fire risk)?</p> | <p>Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) undergo rigorous testing and must meet strict standards, in particular UL 9540A, which is seen as the gold standard in the UK and internationally for energy storage systems and equipment intended for connection to a local utility grid. The battery units will undergo safety checks regularly during the project's 40-year operational period. The safe operation of these units is guided by IEC 62619:2022, the safety standard for lithium cells and batteries.</p> <p>Each battery container unit is equipped with fire detection and suppression systems. Each fire detection system includes several detectors (e.g., a smoke detector, temperature detector, combustible gas detector) that are designed to detect a fire. Should one detector fail, the others would provide operational redundancy. Each battery container unit is designed to contain a fire to that singular container unit. Battery containers are spaced 5m apart to further reduce the risk of a fire spreading.</p> |
| <p>If the project proceeds, does Ridge Clean Energy have any expectation of site expansion in the future?</p> | <p>The Applicant has no plans to increase the solar or battery capacity in the future.</p> |
| <p>Given that only a small percentage of land in East Cambridgeshire is categorised as greenbelt (c. 3%), there are concerns about any developments that could reduce the amount of greenbelt land. With this in mind, have you considered any alternative sites, specifically sites which are not located on the greenbelt?</p> | <p>During the development process we do consider multiple sites. On average, we investigate 5 - 10 sites to identify a potentially suitable site that can be progressed. In the initial stages, we assess sites alongside numerous statutory constraints such as landscape and ecological designations; proximity to houses; and, listed buildings and other heritage assets. Green Belt is an important policy consideration, and we recognise the importance of this in East Cambridgeshire. It is notable that the proposed development is temporary (albeit long-term) and not permanent, therefore Green Belt land would not be lost. The proposed development would also, by its very nature, prevent urban sprawl (a key aspect of Green Belt policy).</p> <p>The Planning Statement that accompanies the planning application includes a detailed assessment of the Proposed Development in the context of Green Belt policy.</p> |
| <p>Would Ridge Clean Energy consider including the construction of a cycle path along the road verge between Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom as part of connecting the solar park to the substation?</p> | <p>The Applicant will consider including the construction of a cycle path along the road verge between Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom, which could be supported by the community benefit fund, as part of connecting the renewable energy park to the Fulbourn substation.</p> |
| <p>Have you considered the potential impacts from glint and glare on users, in particular horse riders, of the Heath Road right of way?</p> | <p>This has been assessed in the Glint and Glare Assessment that accompanies the planning application.</p> <p>There is the potential for glint and glare along the Heath Road and Street Way rights of way. This has been assessed as having a low impact, since the potential impacts (between 06:45 and 07:30 in the morning, March – September) would occur when the sun is low in the sky. Therefore, the presence of the sun would have a far greater impact than any reflections from the solar array.</p> |

6.3 Summary of other feedback (direct community liaison and direct emails)

Table 3 – Other feedback

| Feedback | Applicant's response |
|---|---|
| Ecology | |
| Discussion with the Wilbrahams' Environment Group about the draft Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan. | <p>The Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan has been amended to now include a line of rowan trees, rather than Scots pine; wood piles to encourage invertebrates; and, an area for ground nesting birds.</p> <p>An on site pond was also suggested, however, the response to the Screening Request from the MoD discouraged the inclusion of open water ponds, due to the potential impact of large or flocking birds near Cambridge Airport.</p> |

7 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has provided an overview of the engagement and consultation activities that have been, and continue to be, undertaken by the Applicant for the Proposed Development.
- 7.1.2 The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has allowed the Applicant to identify and respond to local issues and potential concerns. Of the issues raised during the consultation, issues relating to ecology, traffic and use of agricultural land were of particular importance to the community. Constructive comments on these topics have been taken into consideration by the Applicant and their consultants. See Chapter 3 (Site Selection and Design) and Chapter 9 (Ecology) of the Environmental Statement and the Traffic and Access Statement.
- 7.1.3 The Applicant will continue the open dialogue it has established with the local community as the application process continues. The Applicant continues to strive to build trust and relationships with the community.