

SHEERHATCH SOLAR

AN INNOVATIVE SHARED OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

What is Shared Ownership?

Shared ownership of renewable energy projects in the UK allows communities and commercial businesses to jointly own and benefit from renewable energy developments in their neighbourhood, such as wind and solar farms.

While this has been encouraged by the Scottish Government for wind farms for many years, its potential has only recently started to be realised in England's solar sector. Sheerhatch Solar will be one of the first large-scale solar farms in the UK to offer shared community ownership.

Quintas Cleantech, the project developer, intends to invite the local community to invest in and own up to 10% of the solar farm.

Who's involved?

Central Bedfordshire Community Energy Network comprises of organisations working in the community energy sector in Bedfordshire, delivering energy advice and developing renewable energy projects fully owned and operated by their local communities, with an initial focus on rooftop solar. This network of community energy organisations is actively expanding their reach and are keen to work with any groups with a connection to Sheerhatch Solar to shape the project and the community benefit in the best possible way.

Community Energy Pathways supports a network of more than 50 community energy groups across England. Based in Lewes, East Sussex, it is very highly regarded in the sector and has been instrumental in pushing the boundaries of community energy solutions and building capacity within the sector since 2013. Its role in Sheerhatch Solar is to support and advise

the local community groups who will be investing in the solar farm.

Quintas Cleantech is a solar farm developer, working across the UK, to develop a handful of good quality solar projects. Its sister company **Quintas Energy** is an asset management company specialising in the long-term management of solar farms. They currently manage 200 solar farms throughout the UK. Together, Quintas Cleantech and Quintas Energy are enthusiastic about the potential for shared ownership to deliver strong local benefits and build a positive long-lasting relationship with the community.

"Our dream is a vibrant green landscape where community-owned energy becomes the norm. Community energy is playing a critical role in achieving the UK's net zero emissions, it democratises our energy infrastructure and creates a more sustainable energy system through driving local engagement. The community benefits from this project can be used to support local renewable energy and biodiversity projects that meet local needs, deliver energy efficiency measures and tackle fuel poverty."

**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE
COMMUNITY ENERGY NETWORK**

What are the community benefits?

Shared ownership has the potential to generate substantial financial benefits for local communities. A Community Benefit Fund will be established for the solar farm with two income streams:

- A direct contribution from the project each year, index-linked, for the life of the solar farm.
- A share of the surplus revenues from the project relating to the size of the community stake in the solar farm, expected to be 10%. Actual income will vary depending on final project costs, energy prices and market conditions.

The community groups will administer the community benefit fund which will be used to support other local measures to tackle the climate and nature crises. The idea is to build a sustainable resilient community for the future.

"Research shows that community energy projects generate 2 to 8 times more local revenue than a project carried out by an external actor"

RESCOOP.EU

Government support for community energy

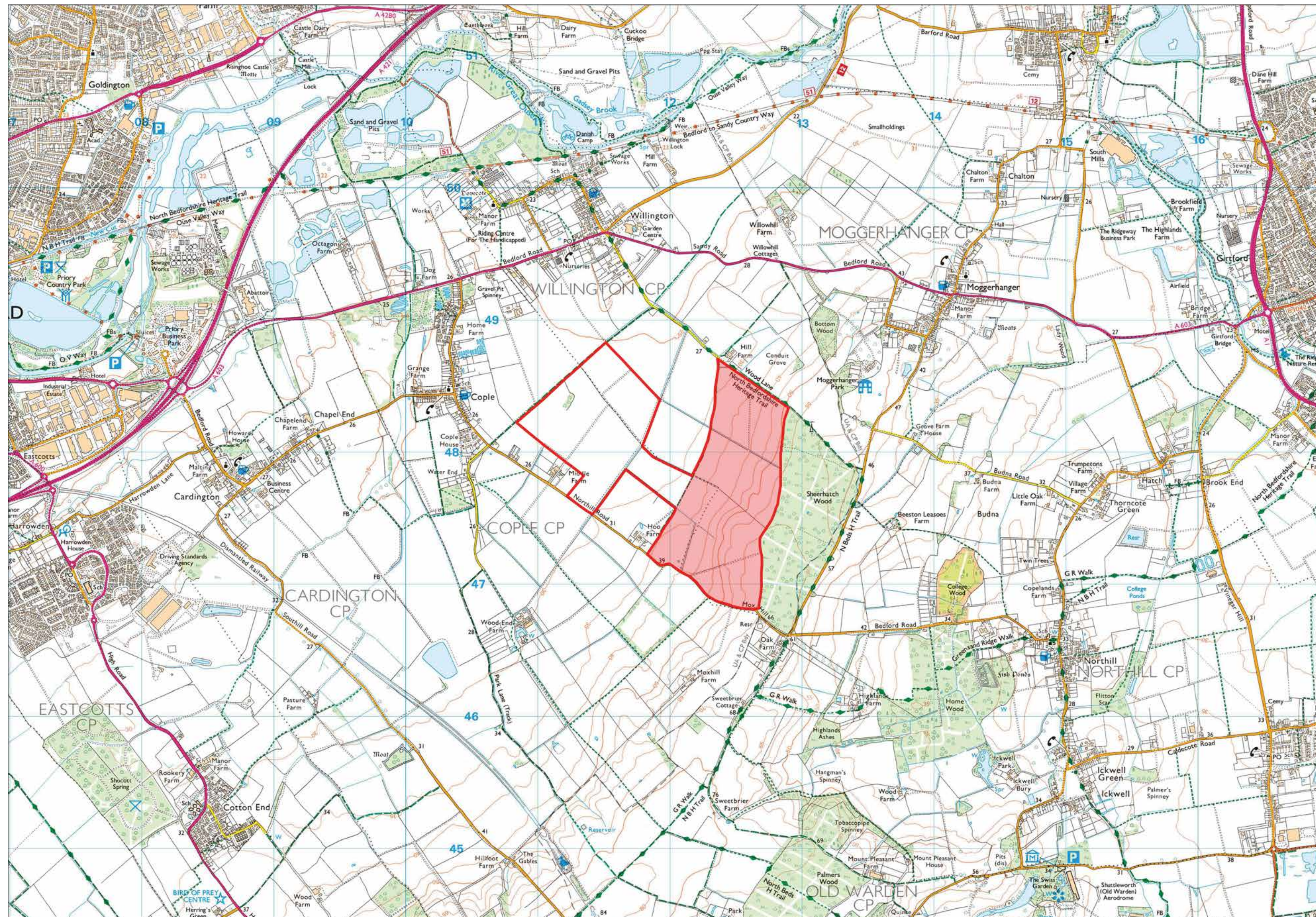
The government's **Clean Power 2030 Action Plan** published in December 2024 has pledged to support the community energy sector as part of its broader push towards clean energy.

"Local and community power generation can contribute significantly to the prosperity of local places, driving down electricity bills, encouraging people to engage with the green economy, providing energy resilience, and promoting skilled jobs."

**UK GOVERNMENT CLEAN POWER
2030 ACTION PLAN**

SHEERHATCH SOLAR

SITE LOCATION



SITE LOCATION PLAN

Key Facts

- Installed capacity: 49.9 MW
- Co-located Battery Energy Storage
- Electricity generated equivalent to the consumption of approximately 15,000 average homes
- Approximately 8,690 tonnes CO2 avoided each year
- Total site area c. 196 ha, of which c. 106 used for deploying solar panels (the shaded area within the redline boundary in the map opposite)
- The Site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest risk category
- Time-limited development for up to 40 years with the site being restored afterwards
- Fixed-tilt bifacial solar panels to maximise energy generation
- Continued agricultural use with sheep grazing encouraged
- Substantial biodiversity improvements leading to a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain
- An Agricultural Land Classification survey is underway, to determine the agricultural quality of the land
- Access from Northhill Road

Community Benefits

- Shared community ownership with members of the local community
- Community Benefit Fund to be spent in the local area, with substantial additional funds arising from ownership stake. The members of the CBCEN will play a pivotal role in selecting projects that can benefit from this fund, ensuring that local considerations are taken into account in how it is spent
- 30% of tree cover will be delivered across the development site, to contribute to the 'Forest of Marston Vale' initiative, creating natural screening of the solar farm and extensive habitats for wildlife
- **What other community benefit would you like to see?**

SHEERHATCH SOLAR SITE LAYOUT

Landscape Vision

- Develop a strong green infrastructure framework for the solar farm.
- Enhance ecological corridors and site boundaries.
- New planting to mitigate the impact of solar panels and related infrastructure.
- Improve site boundaries to create natural habitats for local species.
- Incorporate 30% additional new tree planting to contribute to the 'Forest of Marston Vale' initiative and create extensive habitats for wildlife.

Biodiversity Enhancement and Green Links

- Strategic planting will use native and locally appropriate species.
- Existing field boundaries will be enhanced by filling gaps and disused access gates to strengthen ecological corridors.
- Habitats and foraging opportunities for local wildlife will be created.
- Visual impact of the development will be mitigated from various directions.

Solar Farm Areas

- Solar panels will be mounted on frames angled for maximum generation.
- Planting will be tailored to complement solar panel areas and sensitive site views.
- Native hedges and individual trees will define boundaries and soften views of the development.

Green Infrastructure

- Retention and reinforcement of existing boundary hedgerows and trees with appropriate buffers.
- Long-term management to protect visual amenity and landscape character.
- Providing important habitat and foraging paths for wildlife.



INDICATIVE LAYOUT PLAN

SHEERHATCH SOLAR

GET INVOLVED



Sheerhatch Solar is a chance for local people to own a stake in a genuinely green asset and promote a sustainable future and community resilience. We need your help:

Join our community energy groups

All the groups in the **Central Bedfordshire Community Energy Network** are run by volunteers and they welcome input from anyone and everyone who wants to get involved in this project and make a meaningful difference. You can give as much or as little of your time as you can spare and it's a great chance to work with other like-minded individuals and help shape our local energy future. Register your interest on the feedback form today!

Consider investing when the offer is launched

We intend to launch a community share offer/bond offer to raise funds to buy into the project in 2028. We want it to be accessible to everyone so we'll be keeping the minimum investment low and offering a fair return on your investment (although investment returns are not guaranteed). We'll publish more information about this in due course.

Tell your local councillor and parish council you support the project

There is a lot of evidence that the majority of the general public supports solar farms, and now is the time to make your views known to your elected representatives - don't be the silent majority! Your feedback will be particularly important after the planning application is submitted during the public consultation run by Bedford Borough Council.

Volunteer for community activities after construction

As a community-led project we'd like to hear your ideas for broader benefits from the solar farm. And after it's built there will be opportunities to volunteer to help with activities like tree planting, leading school visits and biodiversity monitoring on site.

Keep in touch

The best way to stay informed about the progress of the project, to have your say on how any community benefits should be spent, to get yourself or your organisation involved, and to know how to take advantage of the community opportunities that come with it is to visit our website sheerhatchsolar.co.uk or email info@sheerhatchsolar.co.uk.

SHEERHATCH SOLAR

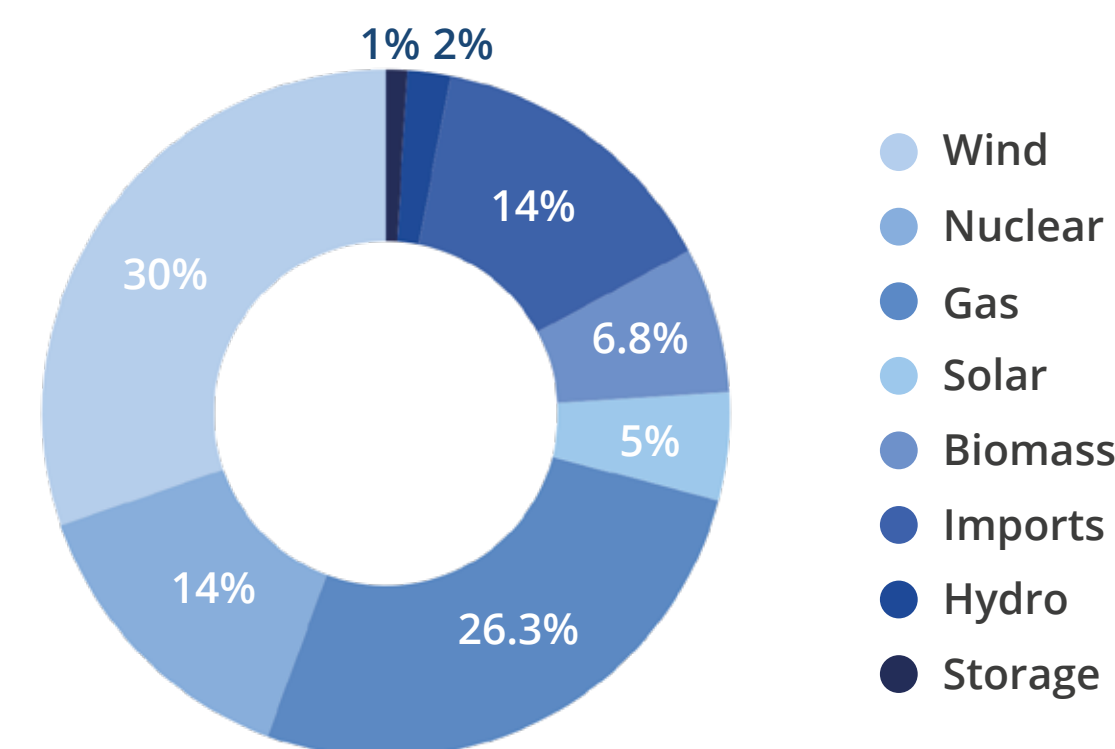
BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Energy security and lower bills

Solar is a cornerstone of the UK's drive for energy security and lower energy bills. By harnessing a free and abundant local energy source, utility-scale solar farms reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels, mitigating the risks of global price volatility and supply chain disruptions particularly from hostile regimes.



UK ENERGY GENERATION BY TECHNOLOGY 2024



SOURCE: NATIONAL ENERGY SYSTEMS OPERATOR (NESO)

National targets

Generating energy from fossil fuels is the biggest contributor to climate change, both globally and in the UK. The UK Government has a target to fully decarbonise our energy supplies by 2030, and while we are making good progress - during 2024 over half of UK electricity generation was zero carbon - there is still much work to do.

Local targets

Bedford Borough Council has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, aligning with the UK Government's national targets. Sheerhatch Solar will generate enough clean electricity to power more than 15,000 homes based off the average UK household consumption. The development will therefore contribute significantly to Bedford Borough's low carbon economy.

Community-owned delivers

By ensuring the new renewable energy sources to plug that gap are community-owned, we can deliver up to 8 times the benefit of conventional solar (Source: *Community Energy England & REScoop*) allowing us to do more to promote energy efficiency, tackle fuel poverty and build community resilience.



SHEERHATCH SOLAR

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How can I make sure my views are taken into account?

Please let the team know what you think of our proposals by filling in a feedback form at the consultation event or online. We will take everyone's views into account where technically feasible before submitting the planning application to Bedford Borough Council. After the application has been submitted, the Council will carry out an independent public consultation where you will be able to submit your views directly to them.

Who is Quintas Cleantech?

Quintas Cleantech is a small developer focused on building a small number of good quality, ground mounted solar farms across the UK. It is their intention to remain involved in both the management and ownership of the solar farms

throughout the full lifecycle. Their sister company, Quintas Energy is a well-known asset management service provider, responsible for managing over 200 UK solar farms on behalf of their clients.

Quintas Cleantech are experts in understanding what it takes to develop, construct and manage a successful solar farm. This means they place the highest emphasis on good implementation and management, close cooperation with the landowner, local receptors and the local planning authority as well as any other local stakeholders.

What makes Quintas Cleantech different to other solar farm developers?

Quintas Cleantech's approach enables them to focus on developing and delivering a site that can be properly maintained during its operational

phase, whilst providing renewable, sustainable energy infrastructure. Notwithstanding recent planning policy changes, Quintas Cleantech has its own policy to ensure their sites deliver biodiversity net gain, and always seeks to maintain existing hedgerows, trees and vegetation where possible. On top of this, Quintas Cleantech is one of the first solar developers to encourage investment and ownership from the local community, with a focus on the long-term positive relationship between the project and its neighbours.

What are the benefits for the community?

Through our innovative Shared Ownership model the local community will be able to invest in and own part of the solar farm, contribute to decisions about how the project's community benefit fund will be spent and benefit directly from the project. Shared Ownership is a brilliant way of empowering local people to participate in the green economy. Quintas will also contribute directly to a Community Benefit Fund. The Community Benefit Fund will be spent on projects in the local area and will be directed by local groups who partner with us to deliver this project. The project has environmental benefits, including improvements to support biodiversity and landscaping which will provide visual screening to the site.

Where will the Community Benefit be spent, and on what?

We are actively working with our partners to shape the community benefit strategy, to make sure that the community benefit is spent in

the best way possible in the local area of the site. So we encourage any interested individuals, groups, parish councils to come forward and help us shape this project and give us your ideas on what the community benefit fund should be spent on. The best way to do this is to talk to a member of our team today and to fill in a feedback form at this event

How long will it take to build?

Solar farms are relatively quick to build and we would expect it to take around 12 months to complete construction of Sheerhatch Solar.

Will there be a lot of construction traffic?

As part of our planning application, we will agree a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with Bedford Borough Council. This document will set out traffic management procedures for the duration of the construction period, including strict guidelines for contractors to ensure that disruption to local residents is kept to a minimum.

The CTMP will also set out the number and type of construction vehicles expected throughout the construction period, as well as the designated construction routes.

SHEERHATCH SOLAR

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the impact on nature?

Giving the land a break from intensive cultivation for extended periods – with minimal or no inputs of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers – can reap big rewards in terms of boosting biodiversity, soil health and regeneration. Exact biodiversity enhancements are still to be determined but are likely to include wildflower meadows, tree and hedgerow planting and enhancements of grasslands to support the creation of new habitats. Ecological surveys are being undertaken in support of a future planning application and these will identify any species and or habitats on site which need further surveying or specific protections. As a result, our proposals will include a series of ecological enhancements.

The project is designed for sheep grazing, therefore allowing for the continued agricultural use of the land.

We are liaising with the Forest of Marston Vale Trust to deliver significant tree and hedgerow planting across the site.

Will the footpath be closed?

It is not envisaged at this stage that there will be any requirement to temporarily divert or close the existing Public Right of Way that runs through the centre of the development site. The scheme has been designed so as to incorporate stand-off buffers from the on-site and adjacent public rights of way. An appropriate landscaping scheme will be developed.

What if archaeological remains are discovered?

As part of the suite of surveys and reports undertaken in support of a planning application, a heritage study will be compiled which will identify the likelihood of there being any archaeological interest below ground on the development site. The findings of that report will be discussed with the Council's archaeologist. Should it be deemed necessary, a geophysical survey and/or trial trenching will be conducted to determine whether there is anything of interest which needs to be further explored. If anything of interest is found, processes will be in place to ensure they are recorded and analysed.

Will there be any noise or light nuisance?

PV panels convert sunlight into electricity with no vibration. The only noise is from inverters and battery storage, while the sound dissipates and becomes inaudible within about 100 metres, so these units are typically located over 100 metres from the edge of the solar farm. Solar panels are designed to absorb light, not reflect it. There are many solar farms next to main roads and major airports.

Noise and glint & glare assessments will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Will the site be secure?

A 2m high rural deer fence (paladin mesh and timber posts) and gates (wire mesh and metal poles) will be used around the site's perimeter for security, with small gaps to allow mammals such as hares and badgers to continue to access the site.

The gates will be secured with safety locks. There will also be further security fencing around the high voltage compound. CCTV/Infrared security cameras will be installed at intervals looking down the fence line which will be remotely monitored. There will be no security lighting, other than possibly during construction.

Will we be able to get electricity directly from the solar farm?

Selling power at a reduced price from the solar farm isn't possible yet due to government legislation. The Local Electricity Bill is currently going through parliament which may change this in future.

Where is the solar farm connecting to the grid?

Sheerhatch Solar will have a point of connection to the north of the site in Willington. Any cabling that connects the solar farm with this substation will be buried.

What is the expected life of the solar farm and what happens at the end of it?

We are seeking temporary planning permission for a 40-year period. Once the project's lifespan has concluded, all equipment will be removed, and the site, which is fully reversible, will be returned to its current state as greenfield land. Solar panels are easy to recycle and have a good salvage value.



How safe is the battery storage?

Battery Energy Storage Systems are designed to strict industry guidelines subject to UK health and safety legislation. They are securely housed with safety measures typically including heating and cooling systems to ensure they operate at safe temperatures; fire detection and suppression systems; and continuous external monitoring so that if any problems arise they are tackled quickly and the system can be isolated. BESS have been installed in major cities like London and New York within metres of residents and businesses.