

Longbreach Solar Farm

West of Marston Road and south of Hogshaw Road, Granborough.
Planning Application Reference – 25/01865/APP

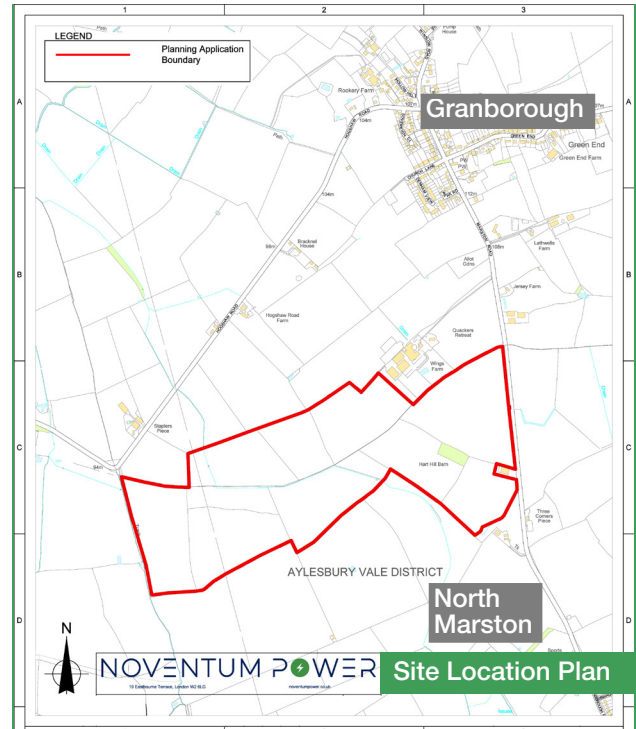
Location

The site is located on 64 hectares (158 acres) of land west of Marston Road and south of Hogshaw Road, Granborough, MK18 3JX.

The Proposal

The solar farm would have a maximum power output of 49.9MWac of renewable energy and be capable of producing clean, green electricity for approximately 20,500 homes every year. No battery storage is proposed. It would contribute towards achieving local and UK climate change targets, and the anticipated CO2 displacement is 29,900 tonnes over its 40-year life span.

The proposed solar farm would generate energy that would be exported onto the local electricity grid. This domestically produced renewable electricity displaces other, more expensive, polluting forms of generation and means the UK will become more energy secure.



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The maximum height of the solar panels would be 3.5m and they would be fixed in place (i.e. not tracking the sun across the sky) so there would be no moving parts. The solar panels would not be on concrete pads; they would be fixed to steel frames pushed into the soil (not pile-driven into the soil).

Panels would be set back approximately 10m from field boundaries, providing enough space to accommodate deer fencing, landscaping, and the space required to maintain the perimeter of the site.

The Point of Connection (POC) will enable the export of power from the development into the local National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) network, facilitating integration with the regional electricity system, and this will be the subject of a separate planning application that will be submitted to Buckinghamshire Council in due course.

Need

The way we consume energy is already changing. The move towards renewables and the transition away from fossil fuels is an environmental and economic necessity. To meet the Government's net zero and climate change targets as set out in Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower (2024), boosting our solar energy capacity is essential. We need to get large amounts of renewable energy in the system to help ensure energy security and combat climate change.

Published in November 2024, [Clean Power 2030](#) proposes a trebling of solar from 15 GW to 45-47 GW by 2030. National Policy Statement EN-1 states that the delivery of low-carbon infrastructure is a critical national priority.

Need - continued

Buckinghamshire Council adopted its Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy in 2021, setting ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions by at least 75% by 2030 and reach net zero in Buckinghamshire by 2050. Both the UK and Buckinghamshire Council require a significant increase in renewable energy generation, as a vital part of the energy mix, to meet their requirement of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

The Applicant

Noventum Power is a British renewable energy company that contributes to the country's transition to clean, sustainable energy by developing over 6GW of solar, wind, and energy storage projects across the UK. The company is committed to working closely with local communities, ensuring that its projects provide both environmental and local benefits. For more information, please visit www.noventumpower.co.uk

Addressing Concerns

Site selection – The application is accompanied by a Sequential and Exceptions Test that sets out a systematic approach to site selection. It explains that site selection is driven by the need for an available grid connection, within a 3km radius of existing electricity infrastructure with a nearby series of connected agricultural fields measuring circa 65 hectares.

Following a high-level appraisal, areas of land were identified that were capable of accommodating a solar farm of the size proposed. These were further refined based on defined criteria, including topography, field shape and pattern, number and willingness of landowners, minimisation of environmental effects (including on Public Rights of Way) and ease of access.

Having regard to the range of environmental and other criteria including impacts on protected habitats, heritage assets, landscape impacts and proximity to dwellings, the land at Wings Farm was identified as being suitable and was taken forward for proposal. No other site within a considered and justified radius of 3km has been identified as being available or suitable for the development of a solar farm.

Alternative locations – Ground-mounted solar is important because it is able to contribute a much larger amount of generation than rooftop. It will be extremely difficult for the government to achieve its goal of 45-47GW solar electricity by 2030 without the use of ground-mounted solar sites.

There are also technical difficulties with rooftop solar – such as the need to be facing the right direction and be unshaded, which rules out a large percentage of building stock.

Land agreements on existing commercial/industrial buildings also make this problematic as companies who lease buildings are keen to incorporate panels on buildings; however, landlords have no direct benefit of doing so, so can be reluctant to agree to this.

Agricultural land / food security – Provisional mapping indicated the land comprised Grade 4 'poor' quality soils. A detailed Agricultural Land Classification report prepared in April 2025 provides an accurate, tested, grading of the site as 97% grade 3b and 3% in non-agricultural use and therefore the proposals avoid the use of Best and Most Versatile land.

Agricultural land / food security (continued)

Furthermore, the reduction in intensive agriculture and chemical fertilisers during the operational phase would naturally improve the quality of the soils, leaving them in a better condition at the end of the solar farm's life.

The proposed development would not pose a threat to food security. One of the biggest risks to food security is the changing climate. Should the solar farm be consented, there would be provision for sheep grazing between the panels during the operational period, continuing the current agricultural use of the site.

Highway safety and traffic – A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted as part of the planning application, which indicates that the construction of the solar farm is likely to generate an average of 12 two-way vehicle movements per day. This includes movements by articulated lorries, tipper lorries, and 8-10m rigid lorries. It is anticipated that the solar farm would take approximately 12-18 months to complete.

During the consultation event, a number of people expressed the opinion that construction routing to the site should not be through the village of North Marston and should avoid approaching the site from the south. A route has been identified with construction traffic accessing the site from the north via the A413, through Winslow, through Granborough and then along the Marston Road. The CTMP confirms that the width of the route would be sufficient for a large vehicle and car to pass.

The provision of sufficient HGV on-site turning and manoeuvring space, site contractor parking and wheel-washing facilities can be secured by condition.

The existing access to Wings Farm would not be utilised for the construction or operational phase of the project. A new access off Marston Lane into the eastern part of the site is proposed. There would be no access via Hogshaw Lane.

Once operational, the new Marston Road access would be used by maintenance vehicles approximately once or twice per month. The low level of activity during the operational phase of the development is less than the levels of traffic generated by agricultural use.

Public Rights of Way – The majority of the site is free from intersecting Public Rights of Way (PROW) or rights of way immediately adjoining or within close proximity. The exception is the westernmost field where Bridleway No. NMA/20/5 runs north/south along the western boundary of the site. PROW No. NMA/2/1 branches off from the bridleway, intersecting a small part of one of the fields, before exiting the site to the south.

The plans at the end of this document show that the existing routes of the PROW that intersect the site would be preserved and that extensive landscape planting is proposed that would screen views from public vantage points.

During the consultation event, a local rambling group suggested that PROW No. NMA/2/1 that intersects the western field could be diverted around the field boundary to avoid directly intersecting the fields. Noventum is open to this suggestion and willing to explore this further in due course.

Landscape and visual impact – The site is not covered by any national or local landscape designations. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which assesses the visual impact of the proposed development, and the mitigation measures proposed to minimise impacts, including landscape planting.

A landscape plan has been designed to retain all trees and hedgerows on site and proposes landscaping that would enhance the quality and health of existing hedgerow, provide planting in obvious hedgerow gaps, and provide new screening where existing field boundaries do not provide strong visual screening of the site.

New tree planting generally measures 3.5m - 4.5m in height. Where possible, fast-growing species have been selected for use, noting that native hedgerow and tree species should be used if practicable.

At Hart Hill Barn – a natural highpoint within the site – panels have been omitted and this area would be used to provide ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain.

Cumulative impact – The Landscape and Visual Appraisal also includes a cumulative assessment. The proposed development has been designed to minimise any potential cumulative impact. The design utilises existing vegetation and includes new planting to reduce potential visibility.

Noise – The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment, which concludes that noise from the proposed solar farm during the daytime and night-time would not be significant. The inverter equipment would be at least 100m from the nearest footpath and, at that distance, noise impact would be negligible.

Biodiversity – The primary habitat at the site is currently arable land, which is of low ecological value due to the impacts of modern agricultural use and intensive management. As this habitat is species-poor, the proposal to convert the arable land into grassland beneath and around the panel arrays using native-species grassland mix, which would be managed as a meadow, would be a benefit to biodiversity.

Sections of the site would be further proactively managed for biodiversity and wildlife enhancement, including additional planting. The design and long-term management of the land seeks to maintain and improve functionality through protecting and enhancing potentially valuable wildlife corridors through strengthening the hedgerow network within and around the site. Landscaping proposals would result in a biodiversity net gain of well over 10%.

These benefits, combined with an associated reduction in intensive agricultural management practices such as chemical spray applications and ploughing, would provide dispersal, breeding, foraging and overwintering habitat for a variety of wildlife including invertebrates, birds, small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles if present.

Flood risk – A series of swales and drainage measures would be added to the development site, which would capture run-off from the panels and slow surface run-off from the site. The change in use from agricultural use to grassland would keep the site vegetated throughout the year, and lead to improvements in the soils structure and its capacity to store water.

Security – In addition to fencing, it is proposed that 3m-high pole-mounted CCTV security cameras would be positioned at intervals along the inside face edge of the fencing (between the fence and the arrays). The CCTV cameras would be orientated to face inward, towards the centre of the site and be triggered by motion. No floodlighting is required; CCTV cameras would operate during nighttime using infrared technology.

Carbon footprint – As with all manufactured products, some carbon is emitted in the manufacture of solar panels. However, the claim that solar panels produce more carbon than they save is false. Research has shown that the average carbon payback period for solar panels is 1-4 years. This means that over their lifetime each panel would generate zero-carbon and zero-pollution electricity for decades after any carbon emitted in its production has been paid back.

Decommissioning – The solar farm does not contain any permanent infrastructure and is entirely reversible at the end of its operational lifetime and the land can be returned to its previous use. Once the lifetime of the project has expired (40 years), the site would be fully decommissioned and reinstated to its original condition and use (enforced by temporary planning). Materials would be recycled wherever possible.

Delivering Local Benefits

Longbreach Solar Farm would help to deliver a low carbon future where the UK is self-sufficient in terms of low cost, dependable energy supplies. It is important to Noventum that its projects also serve a local purpose and make a positive contribution to the local community in a way that delivers real benefits now for local people.

Community Benefit Fund – We are committed to ensuring local communities benefit from our projects and we will be looking to provide a community benefit fund. We will develop ideas for the fund in discussion with the local community and stakeholders to ensure we provide a positive, long-term legacy.

Biodiversity benefits – Sections of the site would be proactively managed for biodiversity and wildlife enhancement, including additional planting, ensuring a biodiversity net gain of well over 10% is achieved.

Supporting local employment – The proposal also includes a significant financial investment into the local and wider economy with jobs (both direct jobs on-site and indirect/induced roles) being created during the construction period. We would seek local contractors where possible for civil engineering works, as well as operational phase maintenance contractors to maintain the proposed landscaping and plant on-site. Additionally, local suppliers would also be sought during the construction and decommissioning phase of the proposed development.

Continued agricultural use – The site is currently used for agricultural purposes, comprising arable and equestrian uses. Should planning permission be granted, there would be provision for sheep grazing between the panels during the operational period, continuing the current agricultural use of the site. The site would revert to full agricultural use following decommissioning.

Improvement to agricultural land – Using fields for solar farms helps bring poor agricultural land back in use. Repurposing the land for a period allows the soil to recover from intensive farming and use of pesticides, improving farming prospects in the long term.

Public and Stakeholder Consultation

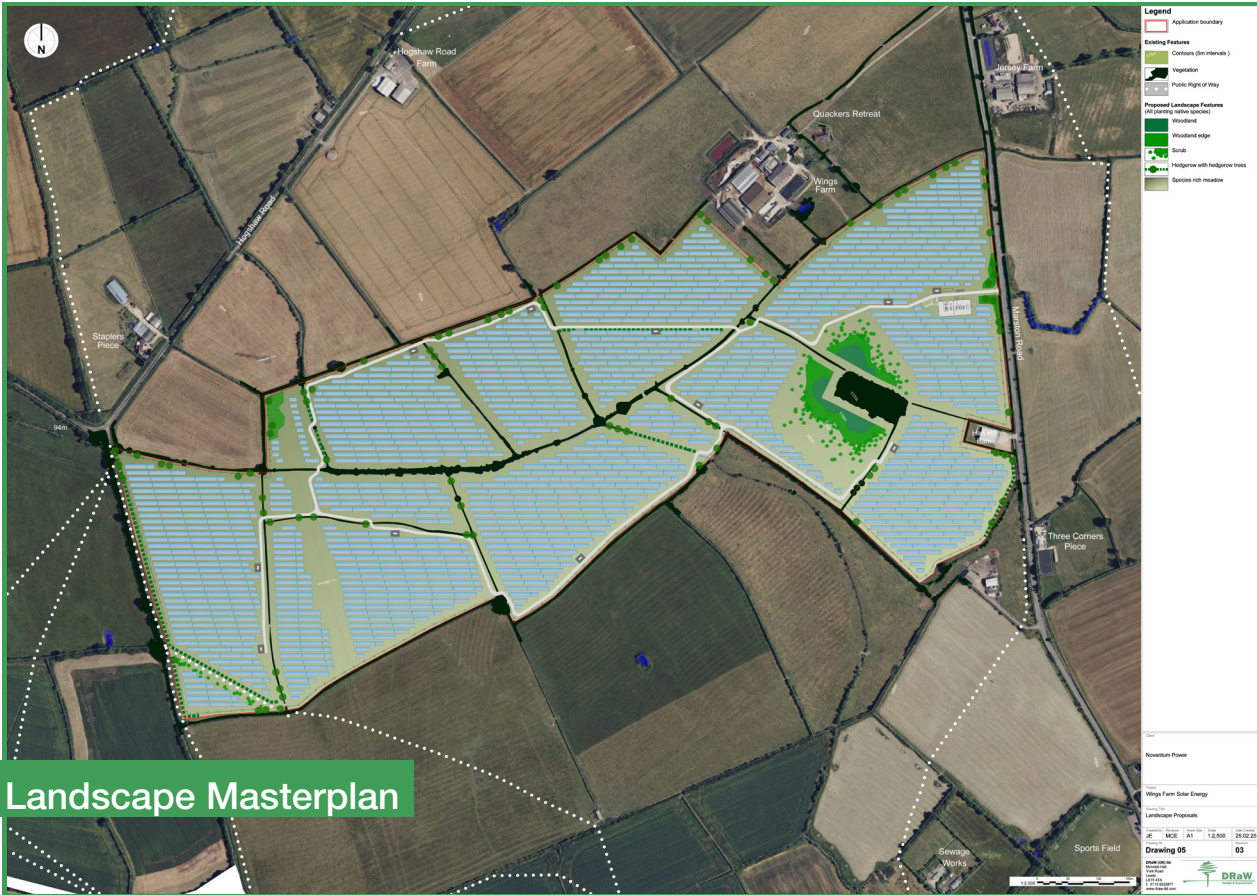
In March 2025, we undertook a comprehensive programme of public and stakeholder consultation about the proposals. The consultation was held via digital and traditional communications channels, including:

- A public consultation web page: <https://noventumpower.co.uk/project/longbreach-solar-farm/>;
- An in-person public exhibition on 8th March 2025 at Granborough Village Hall attended by over 50 people; and
- Meetings with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and Bucks Community Energy.

In total, 11 feedback forms were received. The main issues from the feedback forms and verbal queries at the exhibition are addressed in the section above. The majority of the comments received during the consultation sought justification and understanding of why the development is proposed at this site and the extent of mitigation.

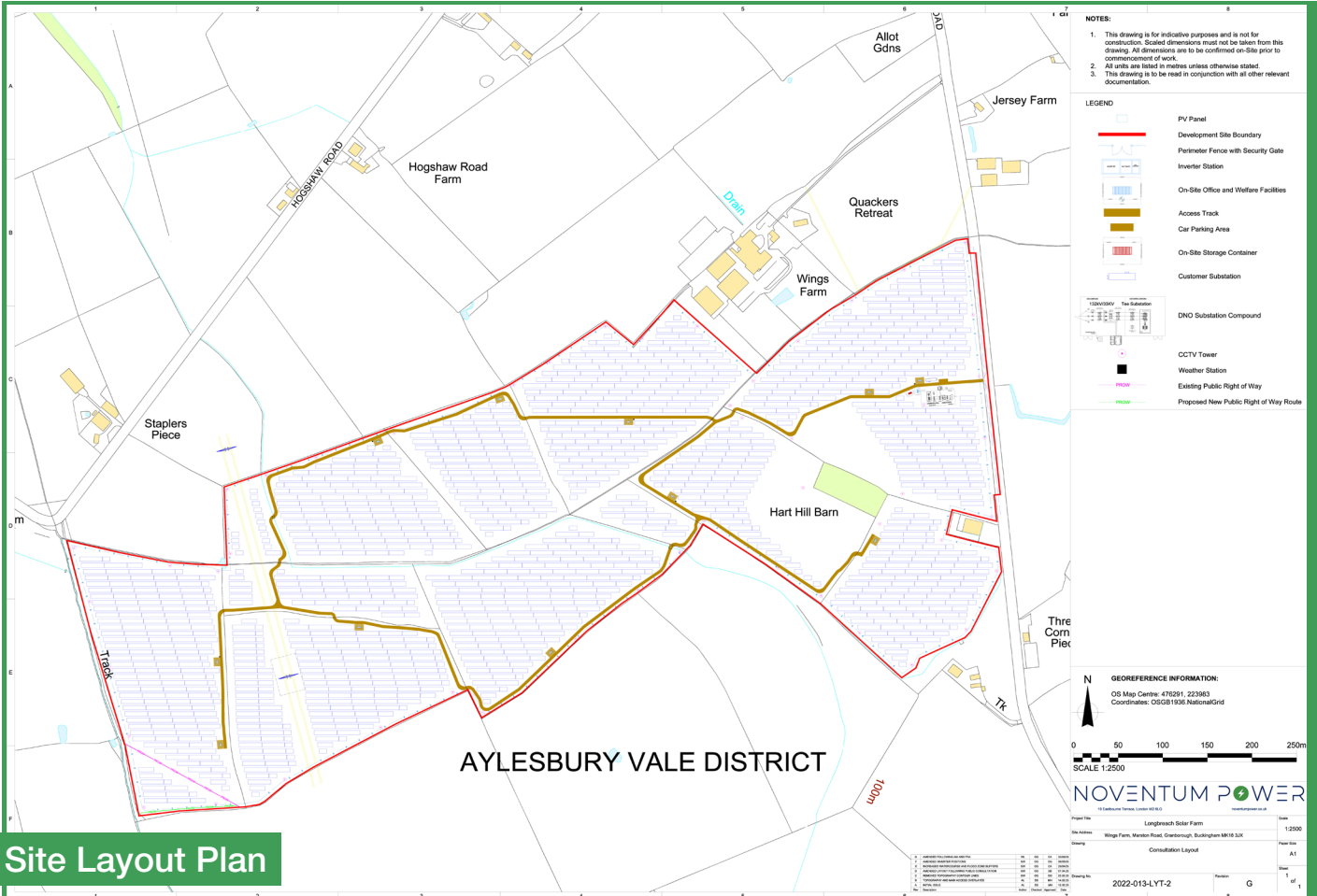
The main changes to the scheme following consultation were:

- A review of the Landscape Masterplan (page 7) to propose additional landscape screening in locations around the site that were identified as being particularly sensitive.
- A review of the planting to ensure native species are being proposed, which would maximise benefit to species that may utilise the site during the operational phase.
- The public consultation event was attended by representatives from Buckinghamshire Ramblers Association. They suggested the PROW intersecting the westernmost field could be diverted to avoid the path intersecting through the agricultural field and felt that it would be better suited to follow the field boundary. Noventum is open to this suggestion and willing to explore this further in due course.



Landscape Masterplan

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Site Layout Plan

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