Qualitas energy

Environmental considerations

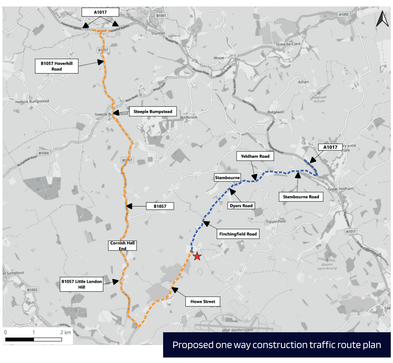
Transport and access

We are proposing to create a new access junction for the Robin Hood Solar Farm directly onto Finchingfield Road.

In terms of vehicle movements, the average number of HGVs per day during the construction phase is expected to be no more than 20 trips per day (10 in and 10 out) – for around 15–18 months. The peak construction traffic volume during construction will likely be no more than 30 trips per day (15 in and 15 out). The peak number of staff coming to the Site during construction activity is around 70–80, however workplace travel planning is expected to reduce staff car trips by approximately half – a total of approximately 40 in and 40 out. The traffic volumes for the decommissioning phase will be similar in volume and nature to construction traffic. The Site will require a transformer delivery – which will be delivered as a single abnormal indivisible load.

We are currently proposing to route the construction traffic on a one-way arrival and departure system whereby arrivals would be from the north-east from the A1017 via Stambourne with departures to the west to the A1017 at Haverhill via Howe Street, Cornish Hall End and Steeple Bumpstead.

During the operational period of Robin Hood Solar Farm, approximately 3-4 light goods vehicles are expected per month.



Proposed one way construction traffic route plan

Agricultural land classification and use

The proposed Robin Hood Solar Farm is on agricultural land which is primarily used for growing wheat & barley for livestock feed. A site specific survey has been undertaken which classifies the site as predominantly Grade 3A agricultural land, save for a small area of Grade 3B in the western part of the site. Grade 3a is classed as 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, but is of lower quality than grade 1 and 2. Taking account of national mapping of agricultural land value, no other suitable sites of lower agricultural land quality which benefit from the grid connection are available in the vicinity of the project.

Should development consent be granted, our proposals are to have low intensity sheep grazing beneath the panels to help manage and maintain the grassland. As such, the scheme will support the viability of the current farming enterprise and will not be lost to agricultural use.

Solar farms also support the long-term viability of agricultural land by giving time for intensely cultivated land to 'rest' and recover soil nutrients.

Solar farms play an important role in supporting the continued food supply in the UK, primarily through addressing climate change which is one of the biggest threats to food security.[2]

Solar farms provide a direct and long-term revenue stream, ensuring that farms remain viable for future generations.

Glint and glare

As a solar farm there is potential for glint and glare effects. Our project team are preparing assessments of the project to identify any effects which may arise from glint and glare from the panels. Due to the limited visibility from highways and nearby residential properties and existing mature hedgerows, glint and glare effects from the development are not considered likely to occur.

Noise

Our project team are undertaking surveys and assessments relating to baseline noise in the area around the Robin Hood Solar Farm. This will feed into a noise assessment which we will use to inform our design, ensuring that any effects are appropriately mitigated through careful locating of equipment and choosing quieter technologies if needed.

[2] Met Office (2023), *Food security under pressure from climate change, citing the UK Food Security Report 2021*. Food security under pressure from climate change - Met Office