Mallard Pass
Solar Farm

Mallard Pass Solar Farm

Stage One Consultation

November 2021

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Windel Energy and Canadian Solar are proposing a new solar farm near Essendine called Mallard Pass Solar Farm. Mallard Pass Solar Farm will generate in the region of 350 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy, making a critical and meaningful contribution to achieving net zero carbon emissions through the development of a clean supply of electricity.

Mallard Pass Solar Farm will supply the equivalent of 92,000 homes with clean energy through the use of ground mounted solar panels. Energy storage will be utilised to save the energy generated during times when there is an excess supply, which can then be fed directly into the national grid when it is needed.

The June 2021 Climate Change Commission Progress Report gave the starkest warning yet that more action is needed to deliver the ambitious climate change targets of achieving net zero by 2050. The report states that the majority of the renewable energy generation needed to reach these targets should come from solar and wind power.

Although the final output of energy from Mallard Pass Solar Farm is still to be determined following detailed site refinement, consultation and design development, the project will have a generating capacity of more than 50 MW, meaning it will be classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and require a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008.

This document describes the early-stage proposals for Mallard Pass Solar Farm, who we are, and how you can influence our plans. If you would like to discuss our plans in further detail, you can get in touch with us using the contact details at the end of this document.

1.1 Who we are

Mallard Pass Solar Farm is being promoted by Windel Energy and Canadian Solar, who have strong track records in delivering renewable energy developments.

Windel is at the forefront of low carbon technologies including solar, energy storage, and onshore wind. and are helping to pave the way to achieve the UK's net zero target by 2050.

Founded in 2018, Windel is a privately held company that specialises in the development and asset management of renewable energy projects and low carbon technologies. Windel has more than 3 gigawatts (GW) of clean, renewable power and battery energy storage in various stages of development.

Windel Energy is committed to responsible land use and believe that the development and delivery of a large-scale solar farm can be achieved in harmony with its surroundings.

Canadian Solar was founded in 2001 in Canada and is one of the world's largest solar power companies.

It is a leading manufacturer of solar photovoltaic modules and provider of solar energy solutions and has a geographically diversified pipeline of utility-scale solar power projects in various stages of development.

Over the past 19 years, Canadian Solar has successfully delivered over 49 GW of premium-quality, solar photovoltaic modules to customers in over 150 countries.

Windel and Canadian have appointed a professional project team to provide support and expertise throughout the consenting stages of Mallard Pass Solar Farm. Together, the project team have significant experience of working across solar and DCO projects.

1.2 Why do we need solar power?

In 2019, in response to international agreements to combat climate change, the UK Government extended its green ambitions by legislating to commit the country to achieving 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Committee recently stated that "we are in the decisive decade for tackling climate change".

Mallard Pass Solar Farm is an opportunity to take a vital step on the path to meeting net-zero.

Mallard Pass offers a significant opportunity to make a critical and meaningful contribution to achieving net zero through the development of a clean, renewable supply of electricity. The solar farm benefits from its proximity to a major connection to the national electricity grid, meaning it can be connected to the national grid with minimal intrusion to the environment. Mallard Pass will ensure that the clean electricity generated can be supplied to UK consumers, wherever it is needed. Alongside favourable environmental conditions, the site offers the potential to deliver a major investment in the UK's future, cleaner, energy supply.

Increasing energy demands

Combating climate change requires drastic changes in the way we lead our lives and power our future. Fossil fuels, which release carbon when they are used, must be phased out, and be replaced with energy sources which are carbon free. This means decarbonising all forms of transport, heating and industry. Clean, renewable electricity will be the primary source of energy across all global sectors, either directly or through intermediary energy carriers such as hydrogen. Because of electrification, the UK Government estimates that overall **UK demand for electricity may double by 2050.**

The UK must ensure that the "lights stay on" even as demand increases, and clean, renewable sources will be needed to keep our national electricity supply secure. By closing down carbon-intensive electricity generation, such as those fuelled by oil or coal, and replacing them with solar, wind and other renewable sources, the UK electricity supply has achieved the highest level of decarbonisation of all major sources of emissions.

Over the coming decade, more UK generators will reach the end of their commercial lives or will be closed because they cannot operate with net zero carbon emissions. These will need to be replaced with even more clean, renewable sources of electricity, and the sooner this happens the greater our likelihood of achieving net zero in 2050.

Meeting carbon targets

The need for renewable electricity generation now is greater than ever. Our climate targets are challenging and we must adapt to meet them. The UK's sixth Carbon Budget sets the path for a **78% reduction in carbon emissions by 2035** (vs. a 1990 baseline) and so provides a vital milestone in the journey to reach net zero by 2050. Additionally, the UK Government has committed to shifting all energy generation to clean sources by 2035.

However, in 2020 fossil fuels still accounted for nearly four fifths of energy supplied in the UK, demonstrating the size of the challenge our country faces. The advances made show that through the development of greater capacities of clean, renewable sources of electricity, it is possible to create a carbon-free backbone for the UK's energy supply.

Providing low-cost energy

Solar power already contributes enormously to the UK's carbon-free electricity needs through 13 GW of generation capacity. It is already one of the cheapest sources of electricity in the UK and increasing efficiency, reducing material costs and more advanced technologies means that solar will remain one of the cheapest sources of electricity in the UK into the future.

It is also quick and easy to build, leaves no lasting marks on the landscape when it is decommissioned, and can provide biodiversity net gains. In 2021 the UK's Electricity System Operator, National Grid, modelled three electricity supply scenarios which would achieve net zero by 2050, each with over 200 GW of renewable generation capacity. **Across the scenarios, solar contributed 57 – 89 GW (29 – 36% of total projected renewable generation capacity).**

This demonstrates that the need for solar generation is high, and we need to step-up our development of solar to maximise installed capacities.

2.0 Our proposals

Mallard Pass Solar Farm is proposed to be located on agricultural land either side of the East Coast Main Line near Essendine.

The site is close to the Ryhall 400 kilovolts (kV) substation at Uffington Lane, which is where the electricity generated from the proposed solar farm would connect to the national grid. The land to deliver this project falls partly in South Kesteven, Lincolnshire, and partly in Rutland.

2.1 What we are proposing

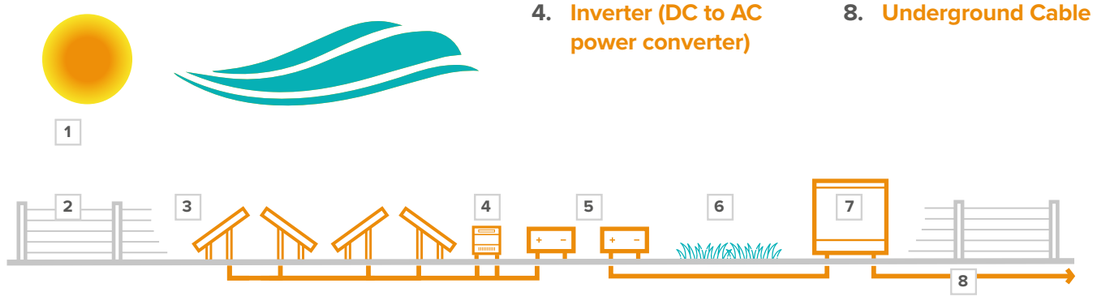
Mallard Pass Solar Farm is a proposed new solar energy farm with energy storage and infrastructure to connect to the national grid. It will also include any necessary and appropriate environmental mitigation and enhancements to allow the proposals to respond sensitively to the local area.

To deliver in the region of 350 MW of solar energy, we currently expect to locate Mallard Pass Solar Farm on around 880 hectares of land, which is equivalent to 2,175 acres. The concept plan on page 10 shows the land currently proposed for the project.

The solar farm development will comprise the following components:

- Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to generate electricity from the sun.
- Energy storage that will allow Mallard Pass Solar Farm to provide balancing services to the national grid. This means that when electricity is produced by the solar arrays, that energy could be stored and released to the national grid when it is needed the most. It would also enable energy to be imported from the national grid and stored until it is needed – although this wouldn't be its primary function.
- Substations, inverters, transformers, switchgear, internal cabling and other electrical infrastructure required to support the solar PV panels and energy storage.
- Grid connection infrastructure which will allow us to export or import in the region of 350 MW of electricity to and from the national grid, including a new substation.
- Mitigation for any potential environmental impacts.
- New planting for enhanced biodiversity and landscape improvements.
- Other associated infrastructure required for the construction and operation of the site, such as construction compounds, access tracks and welfare facilities.

Components of a typical solar project



1. Solar Energy
2. Fencing
3. Solar Panels
4. Inverter (DC to AC power converter)
5. Energy Storage
6. Landscape Area
7. Substation
8. Underground Cable

3.0 Our vision for Mallard Pass Solar Farm

Mallard Pass will support the urgent need to decarbonise our electricity system, deliver reliable and sustainable low-cost energy, enhance the local environment and be a responsible neighbour.

At a time when gas prices are at an all-time high due to our reliance on imported energy, it is our ambition to create low-cost energy that is kind to the local environment and delivers for the planet.

3.1 Project design principles

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) provide expert impartial advice to Government on major infrastructure projects. The NIC's Design Group has identified four principles to guide the planning and delivery of major infrastructure projects: climate, people, places and value. These four principles have been used to help frame the design objectives for the Mallard Pass Solar Farm.

Adopting these principles will help ensure the project fits sensitively into the local context, mitigating and providing enhancements to community and environment where possible whilst achieving the requirements of energy production to help meet growing demand for low carbon energy.

Climate

- Positively contribute to delivering the UK to net zero by 2050.
- Design for resilience to future climate change.
- Prioritise sustainable techniques and technologies in construction and operation.
- Minimise carbon throughout the project lifecycle.

People

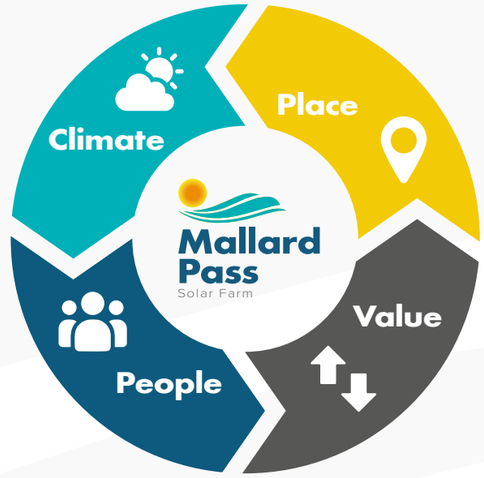
- Engage openly and transparently with local communities, stakeholders and neighbours, making use of local knowledge to improve our project.
- Consider feedback carefully and engage and respond meaningfully.
- Behave as a considerate neighbour though both construction and operation.
- Respect public amenity.

Value

- Recognise the evolving and advancing nature of technology and seek to ensure we retain the ability to use the best and latest available to maximise efficiency.
- Learn from comparable projects using best practice to design and deliver our project.
- Provide wider economic and supply chain benefits, and a positive legacy for the communities in and around Mallard Pass Solar Farm.
- Deliver a successful project, free from Government subsidy, helping contribute affordable energy to the national supply.
- Respect the wider landscape and the intrinsic value of the countryside and natural environment.
- Respect and respond to features of heritage value.

Place

- Deliver a project-wide biodiversity net gain.
- Maximise opportunities to create appropriate multifunctional spaces to achieve energy generation, continued agricultural use, biodiversity enhancements, water and flood management and green spaces.
- Reduce any environmental impact, sensitively designing Mallard Pass Solar Farm to fit into the landscape and explore reasonable opportunities to mitigate potential visual impacts.
- Respect the distinctive and unique character of the countryside.
- Recognise and respect heritage value, understanding the direct and indirect impacts on cultural heritage assets.



3.2 Concept plan

This plan identifies some of the key sensitivities and potential landscape opportunities that Mallard Pass Solar Farm would need to respond to in meeting the identified Project Design Principles.

0 — 1 mi — 1.6 km

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New planting for enhanced biodiversity and connectivity is being considered to support the Ryhall Pasture and Little Warren Verges Special Site of Scientific Importance, and other features of ecology value across the site.

We have been conducting ecology surveys since spring 2021.

We will respect the setting of locally and nationally important heritage assets. For instance, we have identified a buffer zone opposite Essendine castle to ensure that solar panels are set back from the area immediately opposite this important local site.

Existing hedgerows and ditches will be retained and existing gaps used for internal access tracks and/or cable crossings, where possible.

The West Glen River runs through and adjacent to the project. This, and existing ditches within the site, offer suitable habitat to support water voles.

All Public Rights of Way, including Macmillan Way will be retained. This long distance footpath bisects the central and southern parcels of the project, connecting Stamford with Pinchbeck and beyond to Boston on the East Coast.

Landscape enhancement opportunities are being explored, such as the potential to to connect habitats. These include the East Coast and disused railway lines, the West Glen River corridor and many, often isolated, woodland blocks.

The majority of the project area is located within Flood Zone 1, which is an area classed as having a 'low' risk to flooding.

Key

- Site boundary
- Existing hedges, trees and woodland
- Railway line
- Existing National Grid Ryhall Substation
- Existing Public Rights of Way
- Potential solar development
- Potential mitigation and enhancement areas
- Potential substation area

Map is for illustrative purpose only

4.0 The development process

Mallard Pass Solar Farm is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) because it is proposed to have a generating capacity of more than 50 MW.

4.1 The planning process

In order to build Mallard Pass Solar Farm we will apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO), which is effectively planning permission for a NSIP. Unlike local planning applications, DCO applications are made to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The application will be subject to an examination by an examining authority which is appointed by the Secretary of State to make a recommendation to them as to whether development consent should be granted or not. The examining authority will consist of between one and five members. The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will administer the examination on behalf of the Secretary of State. The final decision on whether development consent should be granted or not rests with the Secretary of State.

One of the key parts of the DCO pre-application process is engagement with local communities and stakeholders. We will be undertaking consultation in two phases, including a non-statutory Stage One consultation, and statutory Stage Two consultation. Prior to making its application, developers are required to undertake a statutory consultation which must last a minimum of 28 days, and allows the local community and stakeholders to comment on the proposals. The developer has a duty to have regard to those comments when preparing its DCO application.

Once we have completed our consultation, we will finalise our application and submit it to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will then have a period of 28 days to decide whether to accept the application for examination or not.

Once the application is accepted, it enters the pre-examination phase. At this stage the public will be able register with PINS to become an Interested Party by making a Relevant Representation.

This is a summary of a person's view on the application, made in writing. Interested Parties will then be invited to attend a procedural Preliminary Meeting.

Once the examination period commences there is a period of up to six months to carry out the examination. Interested Parties will be invited to provide more details of their views in writing. The examining authority will set a number of rounds of written questions designed to ensure that it has all the information it needs to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State. It will also hold a series of hearings where specified matters can be considered in more detail.

Once the examination closes the examining authority have 3 months to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to whether the application should be granted or not. The Secretary of State then has three months to review and consider the recommendation report and will decide whether to grant the DCO.

More information can be found at: **https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/**

4.2 Our consultation process

Currently our proposals for Mallard Pass Solar Farm are in the very early stages and work is required to refine them following feedback from consultees.

We are committed to undertaking clear and comprehensive public consultation before we submit our application. We value local knowledge, and we are confident that this consultation process will result in a strong set of proposals that respects the neighbouring community while generating clean energy. Our public consultation programme started in November 2021. Our team are dedicated to working with communities throughout the development of the project and beyond should the project be granted development consent.

4.2.1 Our multi-phase consultation

A key aspect to our process is to ensure people receive information at the right stage and that they are able to comment and provide feedback. We believe in an iterative approach to engaging communities and plan on presenting and refining our proposals across two phases of consultation. Throughout the process, we will report on the feedback that we have received, and how this has helped to shape our proposals.

Our Stage One consultation on our early-stage proposals commenced in November 2021. The team has spent some time understanding the local area, its context, constraints and opportunities and working with landowners to identify land which may be most suitable and appropriate for the project. We are still in the very early stages of design development. However, we are presenting the emerging proposals at this early stage to introduce ourselves and the project.

We will undertake our Stage Two statutory consultation once the project has developed to a point where we can set out what the project is in greater detail. This will include a comprehensive preliminary report of what our environmental impacts are expected to be (see section 6.0 for more detail on what is included).

4.2.2 Our Statement of Community Consultation

We plan to publish a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) in early 2022, ahead of our Stage Two consultation. This will explain how we will consult with the communities and groups who may be affected by the project. It will also explain how the local community can provide feedback and how this feedback will be taken into account in the development of our plans.

Indicative consultation timeline

2021

September 2021
Early engagement with local authorities

November 2021
Stage One consultation

2022

January 2022
Scoping request to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate

November 2021 - Spring 2022
Ongoing environmental studies and engagement with the local community and stakeholders on refinement of proposals

February 2022
Consultation on the Draft Statement of Community Consultation with Local Planning Authorities

Spring 2022
Publication of the Statement of Community Consultation and Preliminary Environmental Information Report and start of Stage Two community consultation

End of 2022
Final DCO application submission to the Planning Inspectorate

*All dates are indicative and subject to change

5.0 Our Stage One consultation

Our public consultation on Mallard Pass Solar Farm commenced in November 2021. Our Stage One consultation comprises of the following activities:

Meetings and events
As part of our consultation process, we are meeting with residents, landowners, local councillors and other interested members of the community. We plan to hold public consultation events in-person and online. Face-to-face meetings are subject to Covid-19 restrictions, which may limit our ability to host in-person gatherings. Community webinar events will proceed as planned.

Dedicated project website
We have launched our dedicated consultation website, offering the opportunity to view the latest project information and provide feedback.

Virtual exhibition
For community members that cannot attend our in-person events, or prefer to work online, we have created a virtual exhibition, with all the same information as will be at our consultation events.

Consultation leaflet
Our consultation leaflet has been sent to 13,000 residents in the area. They provide information on our proposals and how people can provide feedback during the consultation periods. Copies of this information have also been made available online.

Communications lines
A freephone information line, project email address, and freepost address are available for anyone wishing to get in touch about our project and our Stage One consultation. These details are available at the end of this document.

Local media
We have published advertisements about our Stage One consultation and consultation events in local newspaper and media publications to inform local communities.

5.1 Responding to our consultation

There are multiple ways to provide feedback to our Stage One consultation. These include:

Hardcopy feedback forms
Hard copy feedback forms will be available at our consultation events. These can be sent back to us free of charge via our freepost address or handed back at consultation events. We can also post copies to anyone who is interested in providing feedback in hardcopy.

Online feedback form
An online feedback form is available on our project website.

Communications lines
Feedback can be provided via any of our communications lines, including email, freephone and freepost.

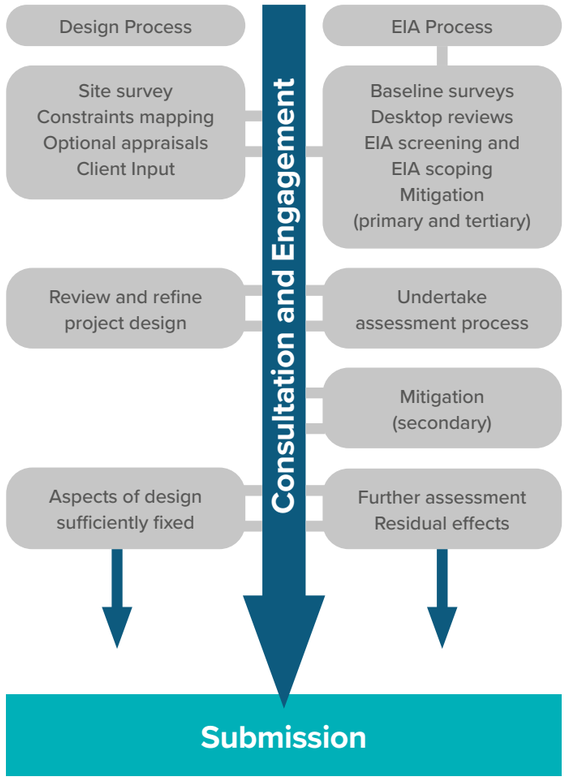
6.0 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and environmental information

Mallard Pass Solar Farm is classed as an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and will require the assessment of the development's likely significant effects on the environment under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

We will be undertaking extensive environmental surveys and studies, and consulting with a range of statutory stakeholders.

EIA is the iterative process in which the assessment of environmental impacts is undertaken in parallel with the design process of a development, as shown in the diagram below. EIA is used as a tool to identify the potential effects our project might have, and how we can reduce and mitigate impacts on the environment and society. Impacts can be positive or negative and it is our responsibility to seek to enhance positive impacts and reduce negative impacts. Reducing negative impacts can be achieved through project design decisions and also through proposing appropriate mitigation measures.

Our EIA will include a range of surveys and studies, including, but not be limited to, ecology, traffic and transport, cultural heritage & archaeology, noise and vibration, land use and visual impact/effect on the surrounding landscape. The results of the EIA will be reported within the Environmental Statement, submitted in support of the planning application.



The EIA process for major infrastructure projects is broken down into three stages as follows:

Stage 1: EIA Scoping

An EIA Scoping Report is currently being prepared which will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). It will provide an overview of the development proposed and the environmental baseline surveys that we intend to undertake, describe how we will assess any likely significant environmental effects, and set out the proposed scope and content of the EIA and ES.

The scope of the EIA will be informed by technical expertise and by engagement with stakeholders to ensure that the methodologies for environmental assessments are sufficient to accurately identify and understand the environmental impacts of the Mallard Pass Solar Farm. Following submission of the EIA Scoping Report, PINS will publish its Scoping Opinion, which will provide further guidance on the scope and methodology to be used in the EIA and presented in the ES.

Stage 2: Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

We will, as part of the statutory consultation process, prepare a PEIR as required by the Planning Act 2008. The PEIR will build upon the scoping report and environmental assessments, as well as feedback received through consultation. The PEIR will set out the initial findings of the EIA and will identify preliminary mitigation measures that may be required to be implemented in order to reduce any residual impacts to the environment.

The PEIR will be available for examination as part of our statutory consultation process. This will allow stakeholders and the public to develop an informed view of the potential impacts Mallard Pass Solar Farm may have on the local environment.

Stage 3: Environmental Statement (ES)

Following statutory consultation, the ES will be prepared based upon the Scoping Opinion and will advance the content of the PEIR, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and the public and the outcomes of our assessments undertaken. The ES will describe any changes to the project and any mitigation measures proposed to be implemented. The ES, along with a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) will form part of the DCO application to be submitted to PINS.

7.0 The local environment

As with any major infrastructure project, we recognise that our proposals have potential environmental impacts, which need to be fully understood to inform our project. We have been getting to know the local environment through desk-based information gathering, site visits, and early-stage environmental surveys. We started our ecology surveys in spring 2021 and the environmental surveys will continue for the next six to eight months.

This initial survey work will be complemented by further environmental surveys which will help inform the project design and underpin the EIA.

We will be engaging with the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) including South Kesteven District Council, Rutland County Council and Lincolnshire County Council; statutory stakeholders; environmental groups; and the local community to understand the local environment and to help ensure our proposals respond to the local environment.

We are at the very early stages of the project, and the information we are sharing in our Stage One consultation includes details of the work undertaken to date and the surveys that we plan to carry out. The preliminary results of our environmental assessment work will be presented in our Stage Two consultation, indicatively planned for spring 2022.

Our initial environmental work has identified the following environmental considerations, which have informed the masterplan concept for the project.

We will provide information on the following topics:

- Ecology
- Landscape and visual
- Heritage
- Access and traffic
- Hydrology and flood risk
- Land use
- Other environmental considerations

Existing Public Rights of Way will be retained

7.1 Ecology

We began ecological surveys in spring 2021 so to allow for the surveys to be undertaken within the appropriate ecological survey windows. The surveys undertaken to date include:

- A desk-based study and data review
- Extended Phase 1 habitat survey
- Breeding bird survey
- Badger survey
- Water vole and otter survey
- Great crested newt survey

We will be engaging with local stakeholders to gain a better understanding of local wildlife sites, their role within the local network of green infrastructure, and if there are any opportunities for enhancement. Emerging findings from our surveys include:

- There are multiple local wildlife sites located in close proximity to, or neighbouring, Mallard Pass Solar Farm, such as Ryhall Pasture and Little Warren Verges Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Braceborough Great Wood, Banthorpe Wood & Rutland Local Wildlife Sites.
- In addition to hedgerows and ditches, there are specific areas within the site that are suitable for reptiles and have the potential to support bats.
- The River Glen and ditches within the site offer suitable habitat to support water voles; however, no evidence of otter holts were identified within the river bank habitat along the River Glen within the project area.
- The onsite ponds were found not to support great crested newts and a number of offsite ponds, within 250 metres of the project boundary have been identified which we will be seeking to survey in spring 2022.

It is our intention that the onsite woodlands, trees, hedgerows, ditches and other important areas of habitats that support protected species will be retained so far as this is feasible within the solar layout – although small breaks may be needed for internal access routes and/or underground or surface level cables may be required.

We will be applying appropriate mitigation for these features, such as offsets and buffers, that allow for their protection and enhancement and continued use by protected species, if identified, during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the project. We are therefore currently not proposing to undertake targeted species surveys for dormouse, reptiles and bats as their habitats will be retained as part of our proposals.

We have been conducting ecology surveys since spring 2021

7.2 Landscape and visual

We have undertaken initial site visits to understand the local landscape character and visual context of Mallard Pass Solar Farm, in relation to local settlements and viewpoints. Several viewpoints were investigated from within and around the project from publicly accessible locations to understand the nature of existing views towards and within the site.

Emerging landscape findings from our initial investigations include:

- The project area is gently undulating, comprising a mix of small, wooded stands dispersed around and within an arable landscape and dispersed small settlements.
- The existing East Coast Railway Line is a distinctive feature visible in many of the wider views, and industrial elements including large buildings south of Essendine, the railway line and electricity pylons also contribute to more urbanising elements through the project area.
- The railway line and river corridor forms a distinctive linear feature north to south through the centre of the site. Field parcels to the west of the railway line tend to be more enclosed (opening up towards the north). Field parcels to the east of the railway line have greater, longer and wider views available from more elevated areas, and woodland stands are typically more isolated and less connected with less field boundary vegetation to contain fields. However, the gently undulating terrain combined with woodland stands, vegetated field boundaries and roadsides act to provide a wooded backdrop to many views and therefore screening the project from further afield limiting distant views from outside of the project area.
- The project does not lie within any national landscape designations, the nearest of which, the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located over 50 kilometres (km) east of the project. Two local designations identified in the Rutland Local Plan policy are located approximately 1 km west of the project including an 'Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside' (approximately 1.3 km north-west towards The Grange), and an 'Area of Local Landscape Value (approximately 850 west around Ryhall). Two Registered Park and Gardens (RPGs) are located within 3 km of the project including the Grade II* listed Burghley House RPG (approximately 1.5 km south) and Grade II listed Holywell Hall Park RPG (approximately 2.5 km northwest) respectively.
- There is a network of Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) in and around the project, that often end and start at intervals, limiting connectivity. The Macmillan Way long distance footpath bisects the central and southern parcels of the project, connecting Stamford to the southwest of the project with Pinchbeck in the northeast and beyond to Boston on the east coast. Views into the site from along this route as it passes the project are greatly limited by existing vegetation lining the roadsides and field boundaries of this route.
- Other PRoWs, including bridleways and footpaths, run through the site and afford a mixture of short distance views over individual fields that are contained by field boundary vegetation and woodland blocks and wider, longer distance views from more elevated areas over more open landscape. Treatment of the more open routes will be an important consideration in the design of Mallard Pass Solar Farm but equally offer the opportunity for reinstatement of woodland corridors, copses and hedgerow elements in areas where historical agricultural practices have changed landscapes.

7.2.1 Opportunities for landscape enhancements

The site visits also identified opportunities for landscape enhancements, such as the potential to increase connectivity between distinctive local landscape elements. The presence of distinct features across the project area provides the opportunity to reinstate and improve landscape elements, enhance green infrastructure connectivity, and ecology. Features that include the opportunity for enhancements include the East Coast and disused railway lines, the West Glen River corridor, PRoWs across the project area and surrounding landscape, and numerous, often isolated, woodland blocks.

A number of features in close proximity to or neighbouring the project are also valued ecologically, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), ancient woodlands and open access land. Mallard Pass Solar Farm offers an opportunity to enhance these through improving connectivity with each other as well as the new habitats created within the project area itself.

7.3 Heritage

We have undertaken site visits and desk-based assessment to understand the heritage value of the site. Information has come from a variety of sources including information on designated heritage assets, Historical Environmental Records data, on-line historical mapping, topographical features data, aerial imagery, as well as site visits.

This information forms part of an Archaeological and Cultural Desk Based Assessment. Emerging findings from this assessment show that there are some known historical assets within and around the project, such as Essendine Castle moated site (Scheduled Monument), St Marys Church (Grade II*) Banthorpe Lodge (Grade II), and a Parish Boundary marker (Grade II).

The early baseline work has already started to inform the potential location for solar development. We will be undertaking further research and modelling to analyse how Mallard Pass Solar Farm contributes to the setting and heritage significance of listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments within close proximity of the project, as well as those more distant heritage assets such as Burghley House. We will be engaging with stakeholders to agree the study area for the baseline survey. The outcomes of the baseline analysis will inform the green infrastructure strategy for the proposals.

The project area has been identified as having potential for buried archaeology. We will be undertaking field walking and a geo-physical survey of the entire project area to get a better understanding of the potential for buried archaeology. Subject to the findings of these surveys, we will consider whether further baseline surveys are likely to required and whether taking the fields out of agricultural cultivation regime may provide an opportunity to protect any buried remains. We will be engaging with relevant stakeholders regarding the approach to the onsite archaeological surveys.

7.4 Access and traffic

As part of our proposals we are evaluating traffic and access considerations. We have undertaken an initial site visit to identify the existing access points into Mallard Pass Solar Farm.

As part of our initial work, we have undertaken an assessment of the suitability of these existing access points, taking into consideration numerous factors such as weight restrictions, visibility splays, size of access, proximity to existing junctions, mature vegetation and utilities. The majority of existing access options are currently agricultural access points that can accommodate large, heavy agricultural machinery. There are also weight restrictions in place on a few of the smaller local roads, that allow local access.

This early information, along with further survey work, will help us to prepare temporary and permanent access options for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the project. We have also been reviewing the routing plan for the Ryhall Substation, to help start to develop a construction routing plan for the project.

We have been engaging with relevant stakeholders to agree the approach to traffic surveys within the local area. The traffic survey data, along with engagement with the stakeholders, will be critically important in helping us to develop an appropriate access strategy and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) that will seek to avoid and minimise impacts on the highway network.

7.5 Hydrology and flood risk

We will also be considering the potential for flood risk associated with the site. Emerging flood risk findings from initial research includes:

- The majority of the project area is located within Flood Zone 1 which is an area classed as having a ‘low’ risk to flooding.
- The West Glen River, which runs through and adjacent to the project, is designated as a main river and its associated flood plain overlaps with the project area with areas of the project being located within Flood Zones 2 and 3 (‘medium’ to ‘high’ risk of flooding, respectively).

There are a number of onsite ditches that we will be reviewing to establish how these could form part of the surface water drainage strategy and green infrastructure strategy for the proposals.

We have have recently received flood data from the Environment Agency to inform our flood modelling. The outcomes of the flood modelling will inform the project design in terms of the height and layout of solar panels. We will be engaging with the Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authority, Internal Drainage Board and Anglian Water to discuss our proposals.

7.6 Land use

The majority of the land is currently under arable cultivation. We have engaged with the landowners to understand in more detail their cropping regimes and the performance of the land across the project area, including information on the soil types which they hold for some of the project area.

The Agricultural Land Classification maps for the area, which are available to view on our website, indicate that the majority the project area consists of Grade 3 land along with pockets of Grade 2 land towards to the southern extents of the project area. We will be undertaking a site-specific agricultural land classification survey to identify and map out the soils across the project area. We will use this survey data to inform the location of infrastructure and inform how soils will be managed through the construction phase.

7.7 Other environmental considerations

As part of the EIA, we will be undertaking baseline surveys, modelling and assessment of a range of other issues including, but not limited to:

- Noise and vibration
- Air quality
- Recreation and amenity
- Socio economics
- Climate change
- Glint and glare

The Project Vision, Project Design Princples and masterplan will continue to evolve as we continue to gather more environmental baseline information through onsite surveys and stakeholder engagement. We would welcome your views on our proposed approach and would be happy to discuss with you any environmental ideas, local initiatives or environmental information you may hold for the project area or the local area that would assist with the evolution of the project, our understanding of the baseline environment and assessment of the effects of the proposal on the environment.

Contact us

We want to keep you informed and hear your views on Mallard Pass Solar Farm.

We have established dedicated communications lines for the project, which will be active for the duration of consultation on Mallard Pass Solar Farm. You can get in touch with members of our stakeholder engagement team using any of the communications lines listed below:

Email:
info@MallardPassSolar.co.uk

Freephone information line:
0808 196 8717

Freepost:
FREEPOST Mallard Pass Solar Farm

Visit our website:
www.MallardPassSolar.co.uk

Twitter:
@MallardPass