Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Why We Need More Solar

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council Climate Emergency

On the 10th of September 2019, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council declared a climate emergency and set ambitious targets for the council to become carbon neutral in its operations by 2025 and a net zero carbon borough by 2030.

Energy Security and Cost of Living

Renewable energy is one of the most cost-effective and reliable sources of non-carbon power, reducing the UK's dependence on imported electricity and strengthening energy security.

According to the International Energy Agency, solar energy now provides the "cheapest electricity in history". Further to this, intelligence company Rystad state that developing new solar energy projects would be ten times cheaper than new gas-fired power stations in the long term. This means that new solar farms like Monk Sherborne can help drive down the cost of generating electricity and tackle the ongoing energy crisis.

Delivering Net Zero

The UK Government has made a legally binding commitment to achieve Net Zero, meaning a power grid with minimal carbon emissions and a transition away from fossil fuels. This requires a significant expansion of reliable renewable energy, including solar.

The Clean Power Action Plan set out by energy secretary Ed Miliband on Friday 13 December 2024 sets the objective of reaching 45GW-47GW solar generation capacity by 2030. This goal is part of a broader strategy to develop cleaner, more affordable, and secure energy sources—an essential step toward Net Zero and greater energy independence.

Renewable energy projects, such as our proposals for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm, will make a significant contribution towards these goals.

[1] According to the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2020.
[2] "New solar capacity 10 times cheaper than gas, says Rystad", PV Magazine.

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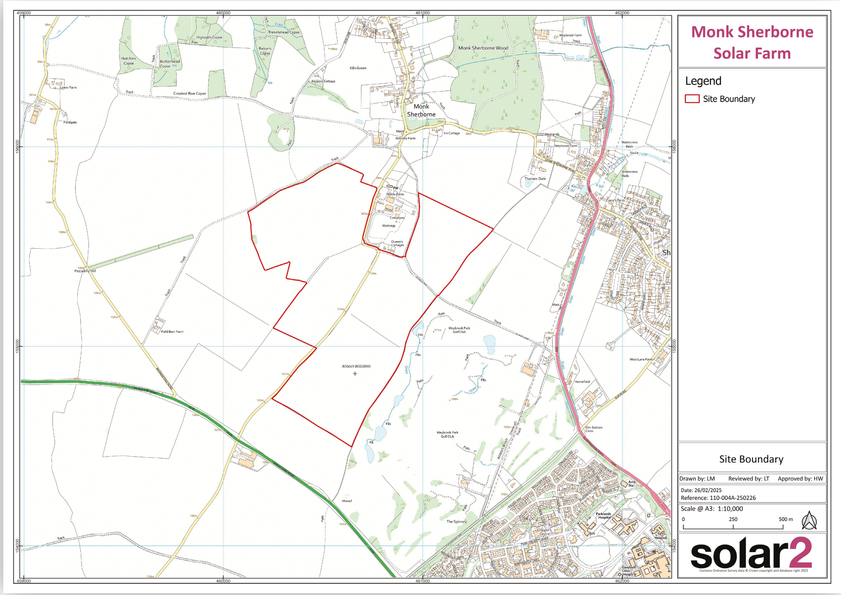

The Site

The proposed location for Monk Sherborne Solar Farm is approximately 500m south of Monk Sherborne, 700m northwest of Basingstoke and 400m west of Sherborne St John and is wholly within the planning authority area of the Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

The site is approximately 57 hectares (140 acres) which is denoted by the red line on the map above. The red line is the development boundary and will not be entirely used for panels.

The site has been chosen because:

- It is close to a distribution grid connection with available capacity. Options for the grid connection route are being investigated.
- The orientation and topography of the site is suitable for solar panels.
- It is well-screened with opportunities to provide further landscape and biodiversity enhancements and is a suitable distance from nearby homes. This means the development will have a minimised impact on local residents and the wider surrounding areas.
- The site is not within any areas designated for landscape, ecology or heritage sensitivity, including Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).
- It is well-located for construction and maintenance access.
- There is sufficient land to accommodate the development alongside significant biodiversity enhancements.

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Proposals

The proposal is for a 28MW solar farm. Our conservative calculations show that Monk Sherborne Solar Farm will generate enough clean energy to meet the needs of approximately 11,000* homes, whilst offsetting around 17,000** tonnes of CO2 per year.

Areas will be set aside for ecological and biodiversity enhancement measures as well as screening as set out in the above Indicative Landscape Strategy Plan.

In addition to generating clean energy, we are proposing a suite of features to help the local community and environment.

- The solar panels themselves will be enclosed within a deer fence for safety and security.
- Sheep will be allowed to graze beneath the panels if this is what the landowner/farmer chooses.
- We are exploring the provision of beehives to help biodiversity, increase the bee population in the UK and produce local honey which is found to have health benefits.
- Wildflower meadow planting will be proposed to attract birds and insects, whilst enhancing the biodiversity of the wider area.

At the end of the project's lifespan, the solar farm will be decommissioned. The panels will be removed and recycled and the land returned to its original use with the addition of 40 years of biodiversity enhancements and significant soil improvements by virtue of not being intensively farmed throughout the operational phase of the development.

* Based on the 2021 UK Average Annual domestic electricity consumption (BEIS).
** Based on DESNZ all sources of electricity emissions statistics of 269 T CO2 eq per GWh of electricity supplied in 2022.

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Landscape, Ecology, and the Environment

Landscape

To mitigate visual impact upon the surrounding area, the proposed development includes a range of additional screening such as tree planting and hedgerow infill, as set out in the Indicative Landscape Strategy Plan.

Biodiversity

Under The Environment Act (2021), all major developments are required to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. However, we aim to achieve a significantly greater gain. Reserving the land from intensive farming will improve soil quality, while providing extensive hedgerow and wildflower planting will enhance local wildlife habitats.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The site is designated as Flood Zone 1, indicating the lowest flood risk. Our proposals will offer an improvement on the existing drainage system through a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) design, supported by a Flood Risk Assessment as part of our planning application.

Archaeology

Trial trenching, along with a Desktop Assessment and Geophysical Survey, has been conducted to identify potential archaeological assets within the site boundary. A full Heritage Impact Assessment will be submitted in support of the planning application.

Construction

A Construction and Environmental Management Plan will be submitted to the Council as part of the planning process. This plan will outline how and when construction will occur to minimise disruption. Once operational, the solar farm will generate minimal traffic, primarily consisting of maintenance visits by car or van.

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FAQs?

What are the benefits of solar energy?

Solar energy is the most cost-effective way to generate electricity and a well-established form of carbon-free energy. Solar farms generate energy from a secure and renewable source and will help drive down the cost of electricity, which will be reflected in people's energy bills in the future. They are also crucial to delivering on the Government's response to the climate emergency.

Why have you selected this site?

We have a careful site selection process where we consider the following:

- A local grid connection in close proximity to the site to maximise efficiency
- A willing landowner
- Suitable irradiance levels
- Safe and secure access
- Distance from residential properties
- Distance from landscape, heritage or ecological designations
- Opportunities for biodiversity and ecological enhancement

Will I benefit from this development?

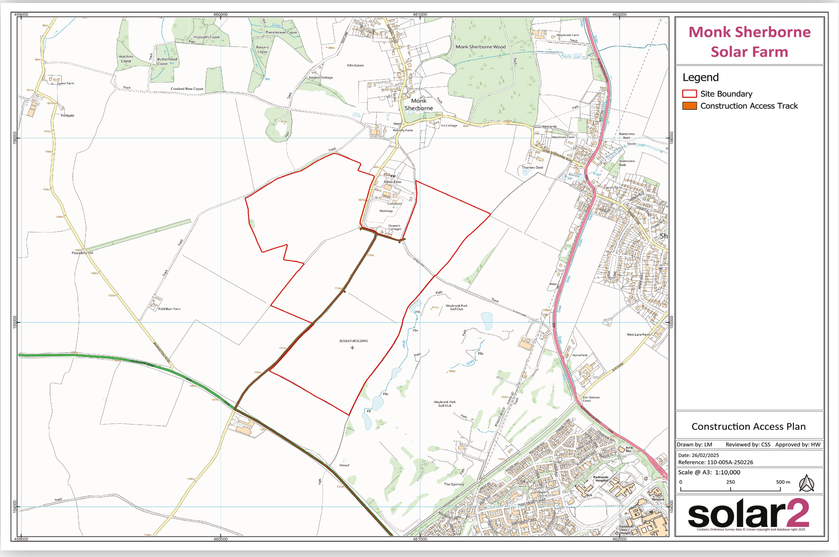
The intention is to invest in improving the local environment and upgrade the footpaths using local materials and labour where possible, helping the local economy. A community benefit payment of £500/MW, to be spent on local community projects will be made available.

Why are most solar farms built on agricultural land?

Rooftop solar installations are an important element in helping reduce carbon emissions, but many roofs are not suitable and rooftop solar alone will not deliver the expansion of renewable energy needed to deliver energy security, drive down bills and address climate change. To achieve the Government's commitment to delivering 70GW of energy from solar, we will need BOTH rooftop solar installations and standalone utility scale solar farms. There is also significant policy support for farm diversification.

Will there be disturbance from construction?

Traffic will be managed to ensure there is as minimal impact and disruption to local residents as possible. A plan will be designed and agreed in consultation with the Council to ensure that it is effective. Construction is anticipated to take around 6 to 12 months.



If you have questions which are not answered here, please ask a member of the team, who will be able to answer it for you. Alternatively, the answer may be on our website, which you can visit using the QR code:

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Community Benefits

We want the community to benefit from Monk Sherborne Solar Farm. The development will provide tangible benefits for local people, enhance the landscape for local wildlife, and will generate funds to be spent on local projects.

- A community benefit payment of £500/MW will be paid, which can be spent on projects important to local residents.
- Considerable investment in landscape enhancements, including planting, and new hedgerows.
- Improvements to local footpaths, making it easier, more convenient, and more enjoyable to use.
- Using local materials and labour where possible. Construction staff are also likely to use local accommodation and shops, providing a boost to the local economy.

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About

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We are an independently family-owned UK renewable energy developer with offices across England, Wales and Scotland. The team has been operating in the renewable energy sector since 1996, originally as West Coast Energy (WCE).

The founders of Solar2, together with the wider team, have a strong track record in the successful development of renewable projects throughout the UK, being responsible for the delivery of in excess of 1GW of renewable energy.

It is important to us that our sites maintain an agricultural use and enhance the local environment, and that we engage and listen to the local community throughout the planning process.

We are a responsible, considerate developer. As such, we are proposing a suite of measures to improve the local environment, by providing wildflower meadow planting, upgraded animal habitats, and achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain, for the Monk Sherborne site.

RECURRENT ENERGY

A subsidiary of Canadian Solar

Recurrent Energy is one of the world's largest and most geographically diversified utility-scale solar and energy storage project development, ownership and operations platforms.

With an industry-leading team of in-house energy experts, we are a wholly owned subsidiary of Canadian Solar Inc. and function as Canadian Solar's global development and power services business.

Recurrent Energy has completed the development of 10 gigawatts (GWp) of operating utility-scale solar projects and 3.3 gigawatt hours (GWh) of energy storage projects across six continents. Recurrent Energy have more than 26 GWp of solar and 56 GWh of battery storage projects under development.

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Timeline and Next Steps

Public Consultation – March 2025

Analyse Feedback – Spring 2025

Submit Planning Application – Spring 2025

Planning Permission Approx – Spring 2026

Begin Construction – Autumn 2027

Solar Farm Operational – Autumn 2028

Feedback QR code:

Please take some time today to provide your feedback on the proposal. You can do this via the QR code, the tablet or by completing the Feedback Form provided.

Please note our pre-submission consultation period closes on Friday 28th March 2025. Please ensure that any feedback is sent in advance of this date to be included.

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Monk Sherborne Solar Farm

Viewpoint 1

Baseline photo

Photomontage

Viewpoint 5

Baseline photo

Photomontage

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