

Solar Park to generate enough energy to power over 6,000 family homes proposed for West Oxfordshire

British Solar Renewables (BSR), through its development arm 'BSR Energy', has submitted plans for a solar park (Akeman Solar Park) and battery storage facility on land south of Ramsden, Akeman Street, Ramsden, OX7 3AY. BSR work with landowners, environmental specialists and planning authorities to develop, build, operate and manage solar parks. The developer ran a programme of public consultation to find out what local residents thought about the proposals. The consultation used a range of online and traditional consultation tools purpose built to ensure local people's voices were heard during Covid-19.

It is estimated that the generating station would have an export capacity of up to 20MW for distribution to the National Grid and would generate an estimated 20,000MWh of clean, renewable and sustainable electricity per year. This is the equivalent to the annual electrical needs of approximately 6,060 family homes. The need for increased renewable energy is urgent and is in a context of declared national and local climate emergencies. The UK Government has set an ambitious target of reducing emissions by 78% by 2035 and Renewable electricity generation, including solar, will play a key role in meeting this target. The anticipated CO2 displacement of the proposed site is around 8,600 tonnes per annum, which represents an emission saving equivalent of a reduction in 3,970 cars on the road every year.

Detailed assessments have been undertaken that have helped design a scheme that is sensitive towards and compatible with the local landscape and environment. Each BSR solar park secures natural spaces for future generations. By building on low-grade farmland, BSR has been able to protect around 2700 acres of land so far and have eco-initiatives such as beehive building, bug hotels and wildflower planting. The proposed solar park at Akeman offers the opportunity for ecological enhancements including wildflower and wild bird seed grasslands. A range of breeding boxes for bats and birds are also being considered as part of the application. There will be a significant positive net biodiversity impact (over 48%). New hedgerow planting is also proposed to contain and screen the solar arrays and no public rights of way will be closed during or after construction.

Local residents were invited to a public consultation webinar that was held in December last year, where BSR Energy's project team presented plans and took questions regarding the draft proposal. In response to a number of issues raised during the public consultation process, recent amendments to the scheme design have included the removal and setting back of parts of the solar array in consideration of local viewpoints. To watch a recording of the public consultation webinar and to learn more about the proposals visit <https://bsrenergy.com/akeman-solar-park/>.

The UK Government and many local authorities, including West Oxfordshire District Council, have declared Climate Emergencies in response to the growing and imminent threat posed by climate change, and this application proposes precisely the type and location of new energy infrastructure needed to help counter that very serious threat.

BSR Energy's approach to consultation during the Covid-19 pandemic follows the guidance issued by UK Government's Chief Planner, which emphasised that planning applications that positively impact the country and local communities must continue to come forward. BSR hopes to inspire further communities to understand the value of renewable energies.

Colin Ramsay, Development Director at BSR Energy said:

"It has never been more important to change the way we make energy in the UK. Our application follows West Oxfordshire District Council's declaration of a climate emergency, and the emergence of national climate change targets that are enshrined in law. We've listened closely to the feedback from the local community and have made recent amendments to the scheme design including the removal of sections of the proposed solar array".

-ENDS-

British Solar Renewables

BSR specialise in developing, constructing and operating ground-mounted solar PV and energy storage projects, either to deliver power to the grid or to feed the demand of large energy users.

BSR work with landlords, private businesses, utilities, Distribution Network Operators (DNO's) and investors to deliver optimised projects with a focus on delivering quality and sustainable land practices.

With over 10 years' solar development experience, BSR's expert teams will create value for your project as well as identifying and mitigating development risks, providing the highest opportunity to result in a successful project.

BSR pride themselves on engaging and working with all local stakeholders, including Parish Councils and the planning departments of Local Authorities, discussing and reviewing potential project plans, and taking into account the flora and fauna of the location.

