

Belltown Power UK Ltd

HOB LANE SOLAR FARM Planning Application Summary Points

June 2025

Belltown Power UK Limited, is a limited company registered in England and Wales Registered number 09677724 Registered office: 10 Victoria Street, Bristol, England, BS1 6BN

The Site

Belltown Power has submitted a planning application for Hob Lane Solar farm which seeks full planning permission on land north and south of Rake Lane, Dunham-on-the-Hill, Chester (NGR: E 346360, N 373852) for the Construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic ('PV') farm with associated infrastructure and landscape and ecological enhancements for a temporary operational period of 40 years.





If consented, Hob Lane Solar Farm would:

- Provide up to 30MW of clean renewable electricity; enough to power approx. 13,000 UK homes each year and displace 695,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It would contribute 10% of the Cheshire West and Chester Council's goal to generate 0.3GW of solar energy by 2025.
- Create significant biodiversity enhancements: **35% of the total land area is set aside for biodiversity enhancements**, and the development would lead to a **biodiversity net gain in habitats of 37.7%**.
- Provide Community Benefit and Education Funds totalling £15,000 per year or £600,000 over the project's lifetime (todays money, funds would be index linked).
- Have minimal impacts on heritage buildings on and off-site, not increase flooding risk, not appreciably increase noise above background levels, and have negligible visual impact from most viewpoints in the surrounding area.
- Be **a temporary application for 40 years**, after which the panels would be removed and recycled and the land returned to its current state, with improved biodiversity and rested farmland.

More details about the site are available on the project website at www.hoblanesolarfarm.com

The Planning Application is now live on the Cheshire West and Chester Council Planning Portal, with the **Planning Reference number 25/01339/FUL.** To view and submit a response or comment on the proposals, click on <u>this link</u>, or search for the Planning Reference Number: 25/01339/FUL and follow the prompts on the Planning Portal on the website here: <u>https://pa.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/online-applications/</u>.

Further instructions are available on the Council's website here:

https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/see-or-comment-on-planning-applications/how-to-comment-on-an-application

The consultation period is formally 21 days, however this can be extended by the Local Planning Authority should they decide to do so, and responses and comments can also be supplied by statutory consultees and the public outside of this.

Planning Application Documents

This section gives an overview of the planning application documents for Hob Lane Solar Farm.

The key planning application documents are:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS). This report describes the proposed solar farm in detail, summarises the conclusions of the other reports and presents the arguments as to why we believe Hob Lane Solar Farm should receive planning consent.
- The Site Location Plan (Fig.1.1), Site Layout Plan (Fig.1.2) and Landscape Mitigation Plan (drawing ref: 1000_02). Together, these provide a good overview of the site location and proposals

There are also several individual reports completed by specialist consultants, regarding:

- Visual Impact (Landscape and Visual Assessment). Visualisations of the scheme from various local viewpoints are found in Appendix 3. This report assesses the potential impact of the projects on local landscape and from key viewpoints.
- Agricultural Land Classification (Agricultural Land Classification Report; Desk-based Assessment and ALC Letter 'Land off Hob Lane' (dated 24-04-205)). This report assesses the quality of the agricultural land using a standardised soil sampling and testing methodology.
- Ecology and biodiversity (Ecological Assessment Report, including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Calculations). This
 report assesses potential impact on wildlife and birds, including improvements proposed through biodiversity net
 gain.
- Flood Risk and Drainage (Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment). This report assesses potential impact on flood risk and details how this would be avoided through design.
- Access and Transport (Transport Statement and Traffic Management Plan (TS&TMP)). This report assesses potential impact on the road and transport network from construction and how this would be minimised.
- Heritage (Historical Environment Assessment Report). This report assesses heritage assets in the area and if or how they would be affected by the project.
- Noise (Noise Impact Assessment). This report assesses the potential impact of noise from the operating scheme.
- Glint and Glare (Glint and Glare Impact Assessment). This report assesses potential impacts from light reflecting off the solar panel surfaces.
- Statement of Community Involvement. This report summarises the public and stakeholder consultation carried out regarding Hob Lane Solar Farm

In terms of the potential impacts, the proposed project:

- Would have minor to negligible visual impact
- Would be located on 98% on lower quality Grade 3b agricultural land
- Would not increase flood risk or drainage issues
- Would protect and enhance existing habitats and increase biodiversity by 37%
- Would have no appreciable impact on background noise levels
- Would not impact any designated heritage assets and cause at most minor impacts on non-designated heritage assets on site.

Belltown Power also engaged with the Cheshire West and Chester Council through their formal pre-application process, to ascertain the Council's views on the principle of the proposed development and agree the scope of the required supporting technical reports to accompany the planning application.

In the response received, the Council acknowledged that Hob Lane could help reach the council's carbon neutrality goals and that their Local Plan supports renewable energy development (see Policy section below).

They also advised that priority should be given to previously developed land and the site would need to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances to justify its location in a Green Belt (see Green Belt section below); and requested a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Assessment to support the application (see Landscape and Visual section below).

More information is available in PDAS Section 1.5.

The Proposal

This section describes the proposed infrastructure and layout of the Hob Lane site.



Site Layout Plan (Figure 1.2 in Planning Documents)

- Indicative scale drawings of all infrastructure components are included in the Planning Documents as Figures 2.1 2.9
- The Red Line Boundary shows the extent of the proposed site and is for planning purposes only. It doesn't indicate a fence line. Only the **panels areas and substation would be surrounded by security fencing** approx. 2.5m high. Mammal gates would be included at ground level to minimise the impact on wildlife movements.
- Panels would be arranged in rows oriented east-west, mounted off the ground on steel frames at a **fixed angle of around 20 degrees and facing south.** The lowest edge would be min. 0.8m above the ground and the highest edge would be max. 3.2m above the ground, and there would be 2-6m spacing between each row.
- The panel frames would be piled into the ground up to 2m in depth, with no need for concrete foundations, to minimise ground disturbance.

- Solar panels generate Direct Current (DC) electricity, which would be converted to Alternating Current (AC) and increased to high voltage (33kV) by **14 inverter and transformer units** around the site.
- The **onsite substation** would contain switchgear to export the electricity to national grid. The compound area required would be 40m x 35m, including the substation building (max 6m height), vehicle parking and laydown area.
- Where new internal access tracks are required, these would be approx. 4m wide and constructed of porous stone aggregate to minimise any potential impacts on flooding.
- **CCTV cameras facing into the site** on 3m high poles would be located along the security fencing around each field. Lighting would be limited to motion sensor-operated directional lighting at the substation building, orientated downwards with minimal light spill. There would be no permanent lighting at site.

From the onsite substation, the grid connection would run to Ince local substation, approx. 2km to the north of the site. This would be either run underground or on wooden poles. The local district network operator, Electricity North West, would determine the exact grid cable route which would be subject to its own planning application process.

Planning Policy Support for the Development

This section reviews National and Local policy documents that are relevant to this planning application. Every Local Planning Authority (usually the County Council) develops a Local Plan approximately every 10 years, which outlines their priorities and guides decision making for that period of time. In general, development is supported where it aligns with the Local Plan and other relevant national and local policies. At Hob Lane, these policies are all supportive of renewable energy as a means to tackle climate change.

National Planning Policy (see PDAS section 4.4.10 - 4.4.42):

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is supportive of renewable energy. Particularly, paragraph 168 sets out that local planning authorities should "not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future."

Local Planning Policy - Cheshire West and Chester Council (see PDAS section 4.3):

- The Council declared **a Climate Emergency in May 2019**, with the aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. In their Climate Emergency Response Plan (ch.4), the council aims to reach a **25x increase in solar generation** from 2019's installed capacity by 2050. Residents' recommendations in response to the climate emergency included expanding renewable energy generation, such as solar.
- The Local Plan (Policy DM 52) support proposals for ground mounted solar where they meet the requirements of Policy ENV 7 (see below); are sited on previously developed land wherever possible, and where this isn't possible avoid best and most versatile land and demonstrate the site can be reinstated to its previous use and condition (see PDAS and Site Selection section below); ensure visual and landscape impact is thoroughly assessed and impacts minimised and mitigated through layout design (see Landscape and Visual Assessment and section below), and demonstrate no unacceptable harm to the historic environment (see Historic Environment Report and Heritage section below).
- Policy ENV 7 adds that renewable and low carbon energy proposals are supported where there are no unacceptable impacts on Landscape, visual or residential amenity; Noise, air, water, highways or health; Biodiversity, the natural or historic environment.
 - These elements are addressed throughout the planning application documents and no or minimal impact is concluded for each (see relevant sections in this document and the Noise Impact Assessment; Health Impact Assessment; Transport Statement and Traffic Management Plan; Environmental Assessment Report and Historic Environment Report).
- Policy STRAT 9 sets out that the character and beauty of the Cheshire countryside will be protected, and that that additional restrictions will apply to development for those areas of the countryside also subject to Green Belt designation in accordance with the NPPF. This is addressed in the PDAS, and summarised in the Green Belt section below.

Dunham-on-the-Hill and Hapsford Parish (see PDAS section 4.4.1 - 4.4.5):

- The Dunham on the Hill and Hapsford Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) (2025-2030) is in the final stages of development, pending formal examination.
- It encourages renewable energy generation development provided that (Policy DHH10) landscape sensitivity has been identified as being low/moderate or moderate and the impacts on key landscape characteristics are considered to be acceptable; impacts on the landscape would be mitigated through layout, siting and design, and there would be no unacceptable harm to the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting. Again, these considerations are addressed in the relevant reports and summarised in sections in this document.

Green Belt and Site Selection Process

This section summarises the very special circumstances the site demonstrates to justify its location within Green Belt Land, and shows that no more suitable land was available through the site selection process.

Green Belt

The proposed site is in land designated as Green Belt. National Policy requires that solar farms located in Green Belt need to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' in order to get planning permission. Very special circumstances 'may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy form renewable sources.' There are numerous examples of solar farms successfully demonstrating 'very special circumstances' and receiving planning permission.

The application for Hob Lane addresses this in three sections: by justifying the site location through the Site Selection Process text (see below); by assessing the relative impact of the proposals against the reasons for Green Belt designations; and by making a case for the 'very special circumstances' that apply to the project. For more details, see PDAS Sections 6.2.5 - 6.2.23.

Reasons for Green Belt Designation

The fundamental aim of Green Belt land is to prevent urban sprawl through keeping land open, with the essential characteristics of openness and permanence. The five purposes of Green Belt are (NPPF paragraph 138):

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- o to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- o to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The proposed development would not result in urban sprawl, the merging or coalesce of settlements, impact on historic towns or undermine urban regeneration initiatives. There would be a degree of encroachment into the countryside, however, the site is well screened from the surrounding landscape and the general absence of public views means its contribution in serving this particular Green Belt purpose is limited.

The proposed development would result in a minor infringement to one of the five purposes of Green Belt only and the temporary nature of the permission would safeguard the permanence of the Green Belt overall.

Very Special Circumstances (VSC)

There is no formal definition or criteria on what constitutes 'very special circumstances' and it is very much a matter of degree, planning judgement and each case's circumstances.

The VSC proposed for this development are:

 Provision of clean renewable energy, contributing 10% of the Council's 2025 solar energy target. This is to be afforded substantial weight in the planning balance, as NPPF (para 156) explicitly references renewable energy generation as an example of 'very special circumstance' for proposals located in the Green Belt, and has been recognised and afforded weight accordingly in recent solar farm appeals.

- Improve UK energy security, with the proposed development making a valued contribution to an independent and secure energy supply which is particularly necessary in the current geopolitical climate.
- The temporary and reversible nature of the proposed development means the land would be restored to its current form and not establish a precedent for any other form of development that would conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt designation.
- Accessibility to a viable grid connection with capacity to receive energy from the proposed development. Proximity and availability of a viable grid connection has been cited in recent appeal decisions and attributed significant weight as a determining factor that restricts the location of development.
- Improvements to the overall landscape fabric and strengthening of existing landscape features once additional planting has established and matured.
- Significant gains in biodiversity that exceed the mandatory 10% requirements for BNG.
- The creation of long and short-term job opportunities within both the local area and the regional / national green employment sector.
- Community benefits at the local level with the proposed development able to serve as an educational resource for local schools on the climate change emergency and the need for renewable energy projects.
- Diversification of farm businesses, ensuring the landowners have a secure income supply to reinvest in their agricultural businesses to help safeguard their long-term viability, and improvements to agricultural land quality from 'resting' the land for 40 year period without intensive use of fertilisers and agricultural chemicals.

Site selection process

To justify its location in a Green Belt, the planning application includes details of the site selection process for Hob Lane. For more details, see PDAS Section 5.2. In summary:

• The national grid is very constrained, so the starting point is finding a substation with capacity available to export electricity. With capacity secured at Ince local substation, potential sites were considered within a 2km site search area (radius), which is accepted in planning precedence as the maximum distance from the point of grid connection that a solar project of the scale of the proposed development can viably support.



Built Development/Infrastructure Constraints (Fig 1 in PDAS) Belltown Power UK Limited, is a limited company registered in England and Wales Registered number 09677724 Registered office: 10 Victoria Street, Bristol, England, BS1 6BN

- A significant amount of the search area is comprised of existing industrial and residential areas, as shown in the figure above. Most sites within the Council's brownfield register are significantly smaller than the area required to deliver a viable solar farm. Two of the sites on the register are close to the size of the proposed site area, however they are located too far away from the grid connection point to be viable alternatives. This meant that it was not possible to locate the solar farm on a brownfield site.
- All land within the search area, excluding some existing industrial and residential sites and sites allocated for other developments, is designated Green Belt, as shown in the figure below. This meant that it was not possible to locate the solar farm outside of the Green Belt.
- Environmental planning constraints including statutory historical designations and a large area of flood risk zone 3, reduced the remaining search area further, as shown in the figure below.
- The remaining search area was reviewed in detail and the proposed site was found to be the in the best location in terms of minimising impacts on the environment, wildlife, heritage assets and visual impacts.



Local Plan Strategic Policies (Fig 3A in PDAS)

Site Evolution

• Once the site location was identified, the proposed layout was revised several times in response to survey data to minimise impacts. This is summarised in the Figure below and described in more detail in Section 5.3 of the PDAS.



Site Evolution Plan (Fig. 5 in PDAS)

- Overall, the development area has shrunk from 304 acres to 190 acres by removing the parts of the site which had the greatest potential for ecological and visual impacts. The layout within the final development area has sought to further minimise impacts on ecology, arboriculture, flooding, heritage, noise, and landscape and visuals.
- 65% of the site areas would host solar panels, with the remaining 35% allocated for environmental and biodiversity enhancements, including improved pond, grassland, wildflower meadow and hedgerow habitats.
- The substation and inverter infrastructure has been placed to avoid any risk of flooding and to minimise noise impacts. All existing ponds and heritage buildings across the site would be kept in place and enhanced where possible.

Material considerations considered in specific reports

Finally, the Application contains several detailed of assessments carried out regarding the potential impacts of the development, which are summarised in this section below.

Visual Impact

For more information, see Section 6.3 of the PDAS and the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA). Visualisations of the scheme from various local viewpoints are found in Appendix 3.

- In terms of the surrounding landscape, the LVA concludes a **'Moderate / Minor' adverse effect** at year 1. By year 10, once the proposed mitigation planting has established, this would reduce to a '**Minor' adverse effect**.
- Views of the proposed development would be localised to the site and its immediate vicinity. There would be potential for longer distance views obtained from areas of higher ground around Helsby Hill, however these views would be from around 3km away and the site would make up a small part of the overall view.
- The LVA concludes the largest effect on visual amenity would occur from the Public Right of Way (ref: 114/FP5) along Rake Lane that runs from the edge of Dunham-on-the-Hill to the site boundary. This is assessed as having a 'Moderate' adverse effect at year 1 reducing to 'Moderate / Minor' adverse effect at year 10.
- Other than this, visual effects would be no greater than 'Minor' adverse at year 1 and 'Minor / Negligible' adverse at year 10.
- Overall, the flat landscape and well established hedgerows mean the site would be well screened, and the potential **visual impacts are small** compared to other similar projects.

Historic Environment

For more information, see Section 6.4 of the PDAS and the Historic Environment Assessment Report (HEAR).

- There are no designated heritage assets identified within the site. There are twelve listed buildings, one conservation area and one scheduled monument located within a 1km radius of the site boundary. Given the separation distance, intervening mature trees and field hedgerows, and topography, there would be **no impacts** from the proposed development on these heritage assets.
- There are **4no. non-designated heritage assets within the site boundary**: The design of the proposed development has taken these assets into account and preserved them in situ as far as reasonably practicable. With mitigation measures included, there would be **at most, a minor impact** on one of these assets, with negligible or no impact on the other assets.
- Specifically, the proposed development has been sensitively designed to preserve the WW2 ammunition stores and infrastructure associated with the former ROF Dunham-on-the-Hill and would not undermine the significance of this non-designated heritage asset.

Agricultural Land Classification

For more information, see paragraphs 6.2.7 – 6.2.11 of the PDAS, the Agricultural Land Classification Survey, and the ALC Letter 'Land off Hob Lane' (Kernon Countryside Consultants Ltd.)

- Agricultural land is classified on a scale of 1 (excellent) to 5 (very poor). Grade 1-3a land is considered as 'best and most versatile' (BMV) for agriculture. The site survey showed that 98% of the site is Grade 3b (moderate quality), with 2% (approximately 1.9ha) surveyed as Grade 2 (very good).
- The Grade 2 land overlays an area already taken out of active agricultural use by existing hedgerow field boundaries, a former WWII ammunition store building, and an existing pond. This significantly reduces the amount of available Grade 2 land that would be temporarily lost to accommodate the proposed development. Moreover, the land is not capable of being used in a different way to the wider field surveyed as Grade 3b.
- The overall percentage of land lying within Grade 2 that would be affected by the proposed development is negligible; it would **not result in an unacceptable loss of BMV land.**

Ecology and biodiversity

For more information, see Section 6.5 of the PDAS, the Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) and appendices, and the Landscape Mitigation Plan (drawing ref: 1000_02).

- Direct loss of habitat would be minimal as a result of the proposed development and would mainly comprise areas of low ecological value agricultural habitat which is widely present in the local landscape.
- All relevant protected species surveys have been conducted and the results detailed in full within the EAR.
 - The survey results show minimal use of the site by wintering or breeding bird species and it is not considered to be functionally linked to the bird wildlife sites on the Mersey Estuary.
 - Five ponds are located within the site boundary, with one indicating likely presence of great crested newts (GCNs), and others showing potential for GCN to be present. All ponds are to be retained as part of the proposed development with buffers of at least 10 metres applied to minimise the impact on the GCN population.
 - The proposals would retain current habitat and provide additional benefits for bats and reptiles. No impact is anticipated for otter, water vole, hare, hedgehog or other invertebrates.
 - Section 5 of the EAR outlines the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures to be incorporated as part of the proposed development to retain and improve wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity, as seen on the Landscape Mitigation Plan.
- The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment indicates the proposed development would lead to a net gain of 37.74% in area habitats and 32.50% in hedgerows, significantly exceeding the mandatory 10% net gain as set out in the Environment Act 2021. Additional species-specific mitigation and enhancement measures, including bat boxes, bird boxes and insect habitat areas, would also deliver further biodiversity gains.

Arboriculture

For more information, see Section 6.6 of the PDAS and the Arboricultural Assessment, including Tree Retention Plan (drawing ref: 13195-T-02 Rev D).

- The proposed development has been designed to retain as many trees as possible and has resulted in changes to the internal access track alignment to purposefully avoid the removal and/or disturbance to the root protection areas (RPAs) of all high-quality, mature English oak specimens.
- Some limited tree removal would be required to accommodate the proposed development, which is mostly confined to short section of low quality hedgerow (category C). This would not be a constraint to development and the loss can be easily mitigated through replacement planting as shown on the Landscape Mitigation Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

For more information, see Section 6.7 of the PDAS and the Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Strategy (FRA).

- The site is **entirely located within Flood Zone 1**, which has a 'low probability' of flooding and is the **area at least risk of flooding**.
- However, the FRA has identified small areas within the site to be at higher risk of surface water flooding. The substation and inverter/transformers are sited outside these areas to minimise any potential impacts on flooding.
- New track sections would be constructed level with the ground surface to prevent any impedance or modification of existing drainage flow pathways. The stone layer used for the tracks is more permeable than the surrounding soils on site, resulting in a **net improvement in drainage** along the access track areas.
- For the substation compound, a suitable Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) has been designed. There would be no decrease in permeable area and no increase in runoff from the solar panel array areas. The site would therefore not increase the flood risk of the site or cause drainage issues.

Access and Transport

For more information, see Section 6.8 of the PDAS and the Transport Statement and Traffic Management Plan.

- All construction traffic would be taken from the site access point off Common Lane and the A5117 from Junction 14 of the M56 motorway. Small access improvements would be required to Common Lane and its junction with the A5117 to facilitate this.
- Construction of the proposed development is anticipated to occur over **approximately 9 months**, with an **average of 12 HGV deliveries per day** plus **6 vehicle trips per day** for construction workers, based upon a worst-case scenario.
- Traffic during construction of the proposed development would be managed via a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and an outline CTMP accompanies the planning application.
- Construction activities on site would take place between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday only. No construction related activities would take place on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays. Outside of these hours, works would be limited to emergency works, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council.
- Once operational, the development would attract negligible trips, anticipated to be in the order of **one visit per month** for routine monitoring and serving of solar equipment. No staff would be permanently based at the site.

Noise

For more information, see Section 6.9 of the PDAS and the Noise Impact Assessment (NIA).

- Potential noise impacts informed the positioning of the noise-emitting sources (substation and inverter/transformers) within the site layout to minimise potential noise impacts.
- The nearest noise sensitive receptors (NSRs residential properties) have been assessed for both daytime and nighttime periods. The predicted noise levels at the closest receptors is reported as substantially lower than limits for both day time and night time. Therefore, **noise arising from the operation of the proposed development has been found to be acceptable without the need for mitigation.**
- Potential noise levels during the construction phase of the development would be temporary and would be controlled through the production of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which would ensure that the working hours, duration of construction and installation techniques would not result in nuisance to nearby residents.

Glint and Glare

For more information, see Section 6.10 of the PDAS and the Glint and Glare Assessment.

- The Glint and Glare Assessment considers potential glint and/or glare impacts on the relevant residential, road/rail and aviation receptors located within 200 metres, 500 metres and 13 kilometres of the site respectively.
- The assessment concludes there will be **no significant impact** upon aviation activity, road/rail users or residential amenity as a result of the proposed development due to a combination of existing screening (embankments, local terrain and vegetation) and the orientation and angle of the proposed PV panels.

Public Consultation

For more details, see the **Statement of Community Involvement** included in the Planning Application Documents.

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Statement of Community Involvement encourages developers to 'carry out independent public consultations prior to the submission of schemes, providing the community with an early opportunity to become involved in proposals in their area.'

To engage with the community as much as possible, Belltown has

- Met in person with representatives from Cheshire West and Chester Council and Dunham-on-the-Hill and Thorntonle-Moors Community Councils
- Sent letters to the nearby community about the scheme, with an invitation to the webinar and a feedback form enclosed
- Run an online community webinar about the proposal and offered near neighbours an opportunity to meet with team individually
- Set up a dedicated project website and run a dedicated email address, freephone telephone number and freepost address for queries relating to the project.

The site would provide a Community Benefit Fund of £400/MW installed capacity each year, or £15,000/yr for a 30MW scheme (index linked). To ensure the funding is used in a way that's most beneficial for the community Belltown would be flexible in how and when the funding is distributed, including offering front-loaded support for projects with high initial investment needs. Additionally, the site would provide a further £3000/yr education fund, to support site visits, classroom activities and educational resources for local primary schools. Together, these funds represent approx. £600,000 in community investment over the project's lifetime.

If consented, the project would contribute approximately £1.8million in business rates (taxes) to Cheshire West and Chester Council and the National Government over the project's lifetime, helping fund essential local services and infrastructure.

Next Steps

The Planning Application is now live on the Cheshire West and Chester Council Planning Portal, with the **Planning** Reference number 25/01339/FUL.

To view and submit a response or comment on the proposals, search for the Planning Reference Number then follow the prompts on the Planning Portal here:

https://pa.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/online-applications/.

Further instructions are available on the Council's website here:

https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/see-or-comment-on-planning-applications/how-to-comment-on-an-application

The consultation period is formally 21 days, however this can be extended by the Local Planning Authority should they decide to do so, and responses and comments can also be supplied by statutory consultees and the public outside of this.

After that date, the Planning Officer at Cheshire West and Chester Council will review all the documents and representations made. There will be an opportunity for Belltown to respond to representations made by statutory consultees. The Planning Officer will then either choose to approve or refuse the application themselves, or take it to the Council's Planning Committee for a vote, with their recommendation for approval or refusal.