

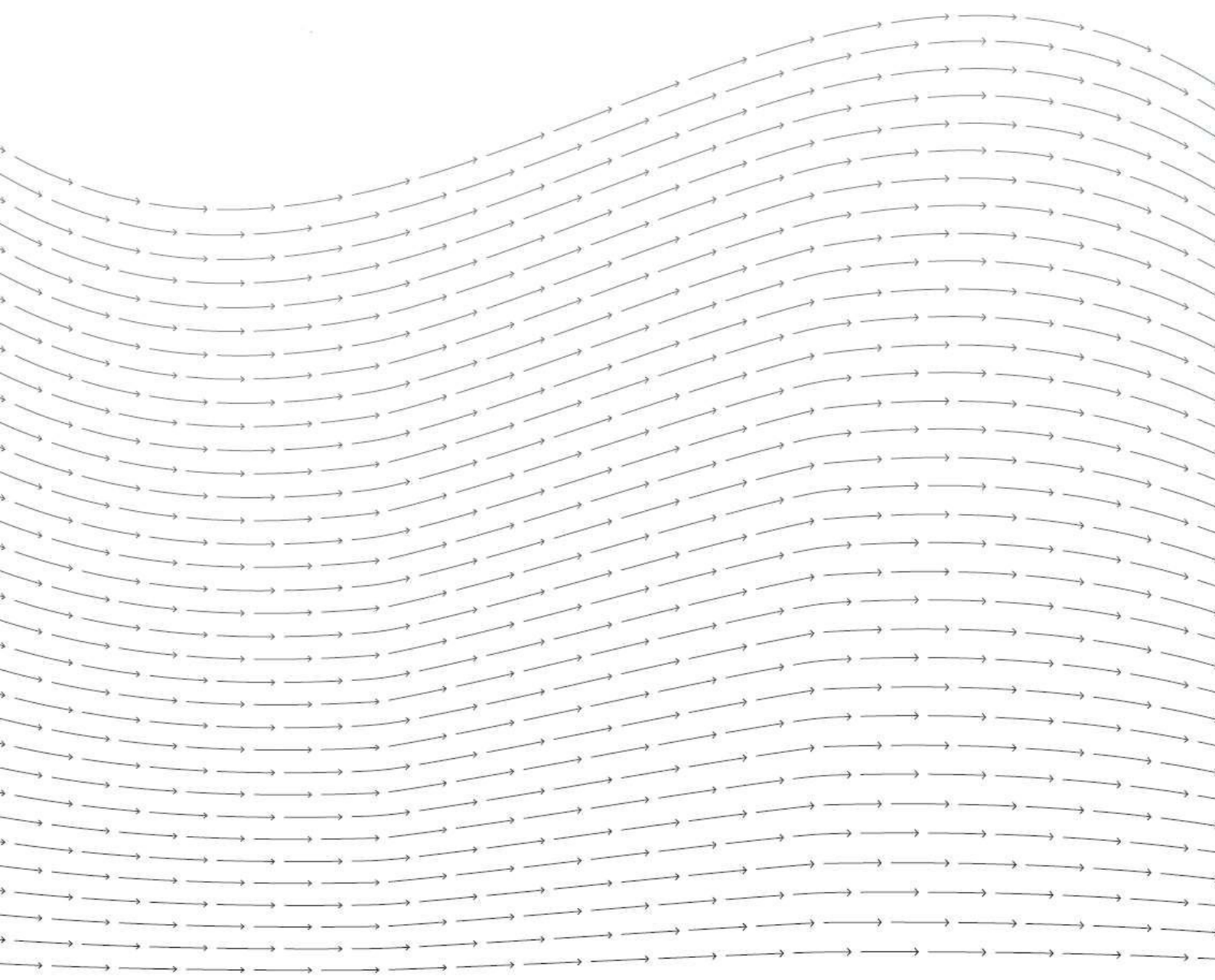


NEW RIDES SOLAR FARM

Statement of Community Involvement

Energiekontor UK Ltd

June 2021



1 CONSULTATION PROCESS

Background

- 1.1 Energiekontor UK Ltd ("the Applicant") is proposing to develop a solar farm at New Rides Wind Farm on the Isle of Sheppey.
- 1.2 During the pre-application stage the Applicant had intended to hold an in-person public consultation event; however, due to COVID-19 this was not possible and thus public consultation was conducted through other means, including online. Information that would have been shown at the public consultation event, was available as downloadable documents on the Energiekontor Website¹ (see Appendix 1).
- 1.3 A link to an online questionnaire was also provided on the website, as well as contact details for the Applicant's Project Manager, in which comments and questions could be submitted and responded to.
- 1.4 In addition to the above, a pre-application letter was sent to the local parish council, Eastchurch Parish Council, notifying them of our proposals at that stage, as well as a link to the project website.

Policy and Guidance

Swale Borough Council - Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.5 Swale Borough Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in 2018, which sets out how the community can get involved in the preparation of local planning policy documents and in decisions on planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement is part of Swale's Development Plan.
- 1.6 In relation to the Proposed Development, the Swale Borough Council SCI provides advice on 'What Applicants Need To Do' in terms of pre-application consultation for 'Major' developments (in which the Proposed Development constitutes). Table 1.1 below illustrates these points, as well as detailing how the Applicant has met them.

¹ <https://www.energiekontor.co.uk/our-projects/new-rides-solar-farm>

Table 1.1 – Swale Borough Council Pre-Application Consultation Advice for ‘Major’ Applications, plus Applicants Actions

What Applicants Need To Do	Applicant's Actions
<i>Choose appropriate methods to involve the community prior to submission of the planning application e.g. Public meetings/exhibitions, workshops, consultation website.</i>	Due to COVID-19, in-person consultation was not possible, thus consultation material was posted on the project website, including Public Exhibition Boards.
<i>Provide a statement with the application describing how the community was involved and what their views were.</i>	The information contained within this Statement of Community Involvement fulfils this requirement.
<i>Consider local planning documents and national guidance.</i>	Local and national planning guidance has been considered across all documents submitted as part of the planning application for the Proposed Development.
<i>Strongly consider undertaking pre-application advice from the Council and appropriate statutory and non-statutory consultees.</i>	An EIA Screening Request was submitted to the Council and EIA Screening Opinion received prior to submission of the planning application.

Swale Borough Council – Addendum to the Swale Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (2018)

- 1.7 Published in February 2021, and even though not specifically in relation to pre-application consultation, the addendum recognises and provides temporary changes in respect of availability of planning policy documents for inspection. Stating that owing to the closure of certain locations (e.g. libraries and Council offices), the Council cannot deposit documents in these locations. This further confirms the appropriateness carrying out consultation online.

Swale Borough Council – Renewable Energy Planning Guidance Note 2, The Development of Large Scale (>50kW) Solar Arrays

- 1.8 This guidance note provides planning advice in respect of solar photo voltaic (PV) installations with a capacity in excess of 50kW. Planning application considerations in relation to Community Involvement are stated as follows:
- *‘Community involvement should be considered as an integral part of the development process. The local community should be engaged, by the developer, at the pre-*

design, conceptual stage, ideally utilising a local exhibition/presentation where community views can be sought and recorded. Consultation should allow sufficient time to seek community views/opinions, and take them into consideration, prior to the submission of any planning application. Any planning application should detail the exhibitions/presentations, any views/representations received and how any planning application was influenced/amended to accord with such representations.'

- 1.9 In relation to the above, the Applicant has engaged with the local community prior to final design, having provided project information online, including Public Exhibition Boards, and invited comment on this information. This process and any feedback is detailed as part of this Statement of Community Involvement.

Consultation Materials

- 1.10 The public consultation materials that were available to view online included:

- EIA Screening Request;
- EIA Screening Opinion;
- Public Exhibition Boards (see Appendix 2):
 - Welcome;
 - About Energiekontor;
 - Why Solar;
 - Proposed Development;
 - Environmental Considerations.

Feedback

- 1.11 The consultation period for comments ran for 28 days. Nevertheless, the consultation materials were kept on the website for continued viewing.
- 1.12 No responses were received from members of the public via the questionnaire or via email during the consultation period, or to date.
- 1.13 Consultation was also undertaken separately with Eastchurch Parish Council during the pre-application stage.

Summary and Conclusions

- 1.14 The Applicant is proposing to develop a solar farm at New Rides Wind Farm on the Isle of Sheppey. Due to COVID-19 the Applicant has been unable to carry out in-person pre-application consultation. Nevertheless, utilising other means of consultation, including online, the Applicant has been able to engage with the public in line with the Council's guidance. The Applicant will continue to consult and engage with the public during the planning application stage.

APPENDIX 1 – PROJECT WEBSITE

EnergieKontor

New Rides Solar Farm

Site Name	New Rides Solar Farm
Site Location	Approximately 1km south of Eastchurch, Isle of Sheppey, Kent
Proposed Panelled Area	Approximately 15 ha
Approximate Installed Capacity	13MW
Planning Authority	Swale Borough Council
Status	Screening submitted (ref: 20/503677/ENVSCR)

Project Description

Energiekontor are proposing a solar farm within the site of our operational New Rides Wind Farm, on the Isle of Sheppey. The solar panels are to be located on approximately 15 ha of agricultural land and have an approximate installed capacity of 13 MW. Energiekontor have commissioned environmental surveys and assessments for the site and are now refining the layout with the intention to submit a planning application and supporting documents in February 2021.

Screening

Energiekontor submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Request to Swale Borough Council in August 2020 for an initial layout. The local authority responded with their EIA Screening Opinion in September 2020 and concluded that the project is not likely to result in significant environmental effects, therefore is not considered EIA development and an Environmental Statement is not required.

Public Engagement

Energiekontor is currently consulting on its proposals for a solar farm at New Rides. Due to current restrictions on public gatherings due to the COVID-19 crisis we are conducting this public consultation through other means, including online. The downloadable documents on this page contain the consultation material that we would have presented at a public exhibition for the solar farm. We would be grateful for any comments or questions from the public on our proposals, and these can be sent directly to the Project Manager, Fred Brown at Fred.Brown@energiekontor.co.uk. Any comments or questions should be submitted by 12 February 2021 and we will aim to respond within 48 hours of receiving them.

Click [here](#) to complete a questionnaire on the proposal. Please provide completed questionnaires by 12 February 2021.

Site Location



Project Documents

 [EIA Screening Request.pdf](#)

 [EIA Screening Opinion.pdf](#)

Consultation Documents

 [01 Welcome.pdf](#)

 [02 About Energiekontor.pdf](#)

 [03 Why Solar.pdf](#)

 [04 Proposed Development.pdf](#)

 [05 Environmental Considerations.pdf](#)

APPENDIX 2 – PUBLIC EXHIBITION BOARDS



Welcome to New Rides Solar Farm Online Public Exhibition

Thank you for coming along.

Should you have any questions please direct them to
Energiekontor Project Manager, Fred Brown
(fred.brown@energiekontor.co.uk) who will be happy to assist.

>>> Who Are We?

ENERGIEKONTOR UK LTD

Energiekontor UK Ltd was founded in 1999 and is part of the Energiekontor AG group of companies which develop wind and solar projects across Europe and North America. Our UK projects are developed by our teams in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Leeds. As a complete service company, we manage our projects from site selection through planning, finance, construction and on to operation and maintenance of the project.



The turbines and solar panels shown in this image are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to represent the proposed development

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We have achieved planning permissions for approximately 250 MW of clean renewable energy in the UK - with 86.55 MW already built and generating.

Energiekontor has a long international history of developing wind energy projects, and has seen the industry grow from a niche technology aimed at combating climate change to a fully-mature, major power provider, capable of producing electricity that is not only clean but is also low-cost whilst making a valid contribution to carbon neutral electricity generation targets. This experience alongside our strong project portfolio, is what gives us the security and confidence to continue developing large-scale wind in a zero-subsidy market.

In addition to our experience in wind energy, Energiekontor expanded to include solar power in 2010 and since then have constructed or sold 90 MW with a further 200 MW in development. Energiekontor aim to use this experience to expand our solar development portfolio into the UK.

We understand that wind and solar projects can present both opportunities and challenges to local communities - we are always willing to listen and work with communities on both.

LOCAL SUPPLY CHAIN

We see local supply chain development as a key part of how we work with local communities.

We will engage with a wide ranging group of stakeholders to ensure that we are aware of the full range of services available locally, and also that local firms are aware of our projects and how to access our Tender list.

If this project proceeds the range of services that will be needed locally will likely include:

- Construction Companies
- Electrical Contractors
- Plant hire - excavators, wagons etc
- Accommodation
- Cleaning and Waste Solutions
- General Supplies
- Catering
- Fencing
- Drainage



>>> Why Solar Power?

RENEWABLE ENERGY IN ENGLAND

While renewable energy continues to be the main aspect of the UK's contribution to fighting climate change, solar power is quickly becoming one of the the most cost-effective way for us to achieve a secure supply of low-carbon electricity into the future (*BEIS, 2020, Electricity Generation Costs 2020*). Further decarbonisation means we must reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, thus in order to maintain the current level of electricity supply and keep up with forecast increases in demand, a significant amount of new generating capacity is required. Solar power can play an important part in this aspect of the UK's energy transition.



The solar panels shown in these images are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to represent the proposed development

RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGETS

The UK is undergoing a major change in the way it meets its energy needs. In 2019, the Government legislated to commit to achieving 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050 in comparison to emissions at 1990 levels. Further to this, in December 2020 a 2030 interim target of 68% reduction compared to 1990 levels was established by the Government.

Energy generation currently makes up a significant amount of the UK's carbon emissions. The UK must reduce this through a variety of measures including the introduction of new, cleaner methods of electricity generation that are able to come online and provide energy to the grid, as older carbon intensive technologies are phased out. Solar power fits that category of clean technology and is increasingly being developed and is becoming one of the most-cost effective sources of clean renewable electricity generation in the UK. In May 2020, solar met over 11% of UK electricity demand (*STA, 2020*).

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

The UK's long-term climate change targets will require the near-complete decarbonisation of our energy system by 2050, with renewable energy meeting a significant share of our needs. For energy security we require a mix of generating technologies. Having more home-grown energy sources such as solar, combined with demand-side response and improvements to the network, will help to protect UK consumers and businesses.

Energiekontor is an established developer and is committed to developing robust projects which balance commercial, planning and environmental constraints. Our projects present an opportunity to realise benefits for the local and national economy, as well as making a substantial contribution to meet renewable energy targets.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The UK and all the devolved governments recently declared a climate emergency. The declarations provide a clear signal of the challenges and urgent response needed to combat climate change.

In addition to this, in June 2019 Swale Borough Council joined a growing number of local authorities by declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency. The declaration set out carbon relevant goals for the Council, including reducing the Council's operations to be carbon neutral by 2025 and for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030.

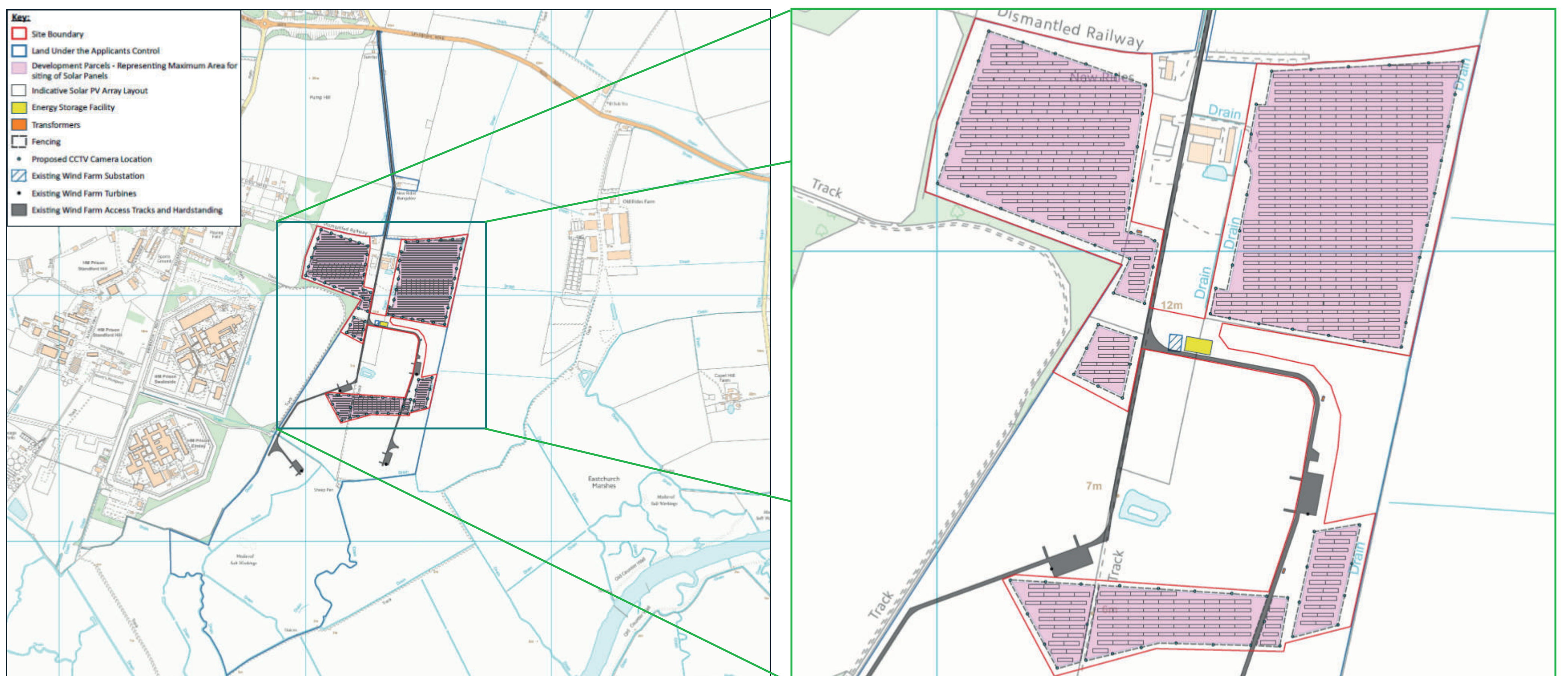
This action and targets are a statement of the local spirit to combat climate change, in which solar power can play an important part.



>>> The Proposed Development

NEW RIDES SOLAR FARM

- The proposal is for the development of a solar farm at Energiekontor's operational New Rides Wind Farm, Eastchurch;
- The Proposed Development would involve erection of solar panels on approximately 15ha of agricultural land;
- Based on the current layout the installed capacity of the solar farm would be in the region of 13 MW;
- The solar farm would also include associated infrastructure including: inverters, transformers, CCTV, deer fencing and an energy storage facility;
- The solar farm would make use of the existing onsite substation/wind farm grid connection, as such no off-site construction works will be required;
- Access to the site would be via the existing access for New Rides Farm and New Rides Wind Farm, off the B2231; and
- The Proposed Development would be operational for a period of atleast 35 years, after which the solar panels and associated infrastructure would be removed and the site restored.

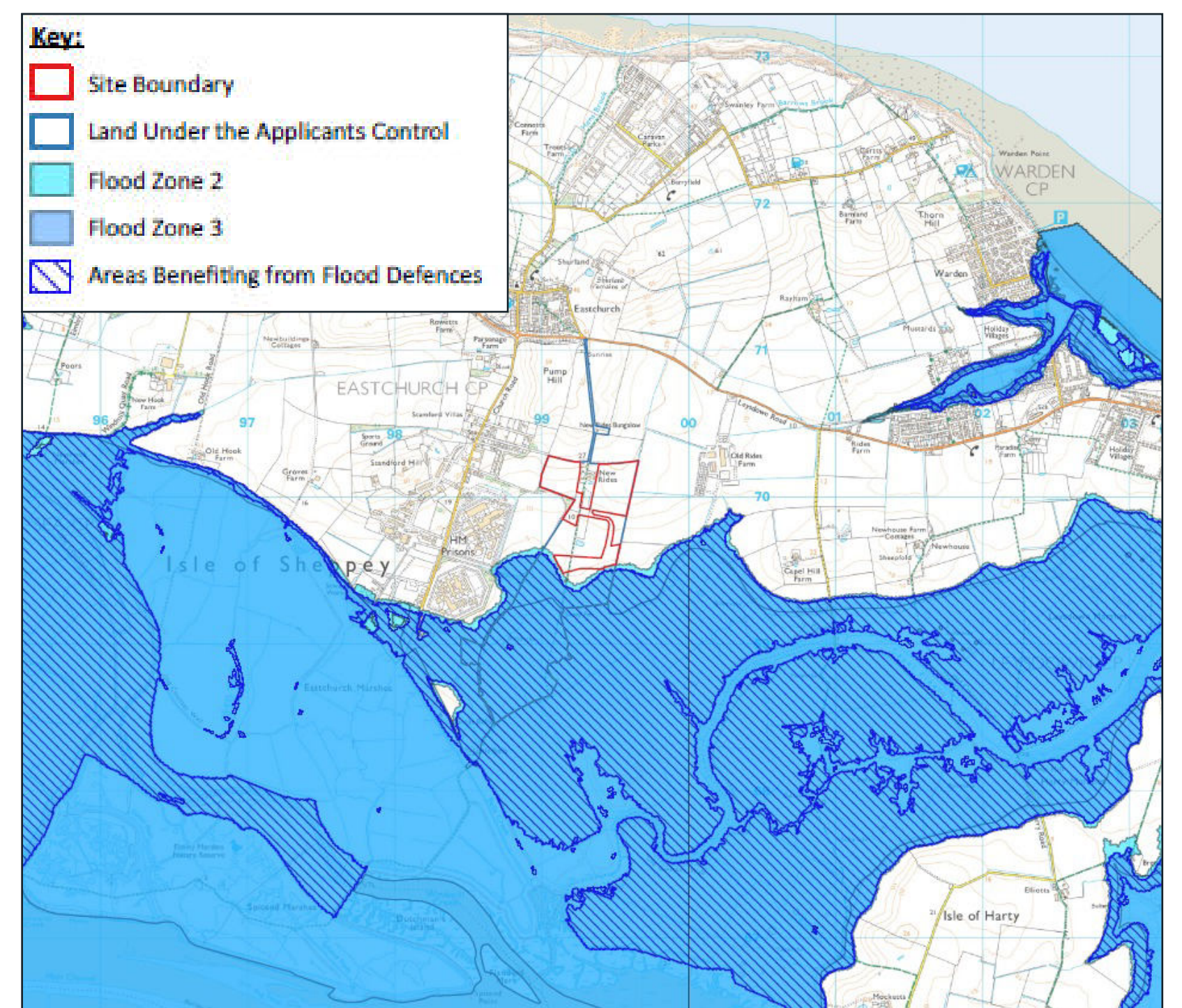
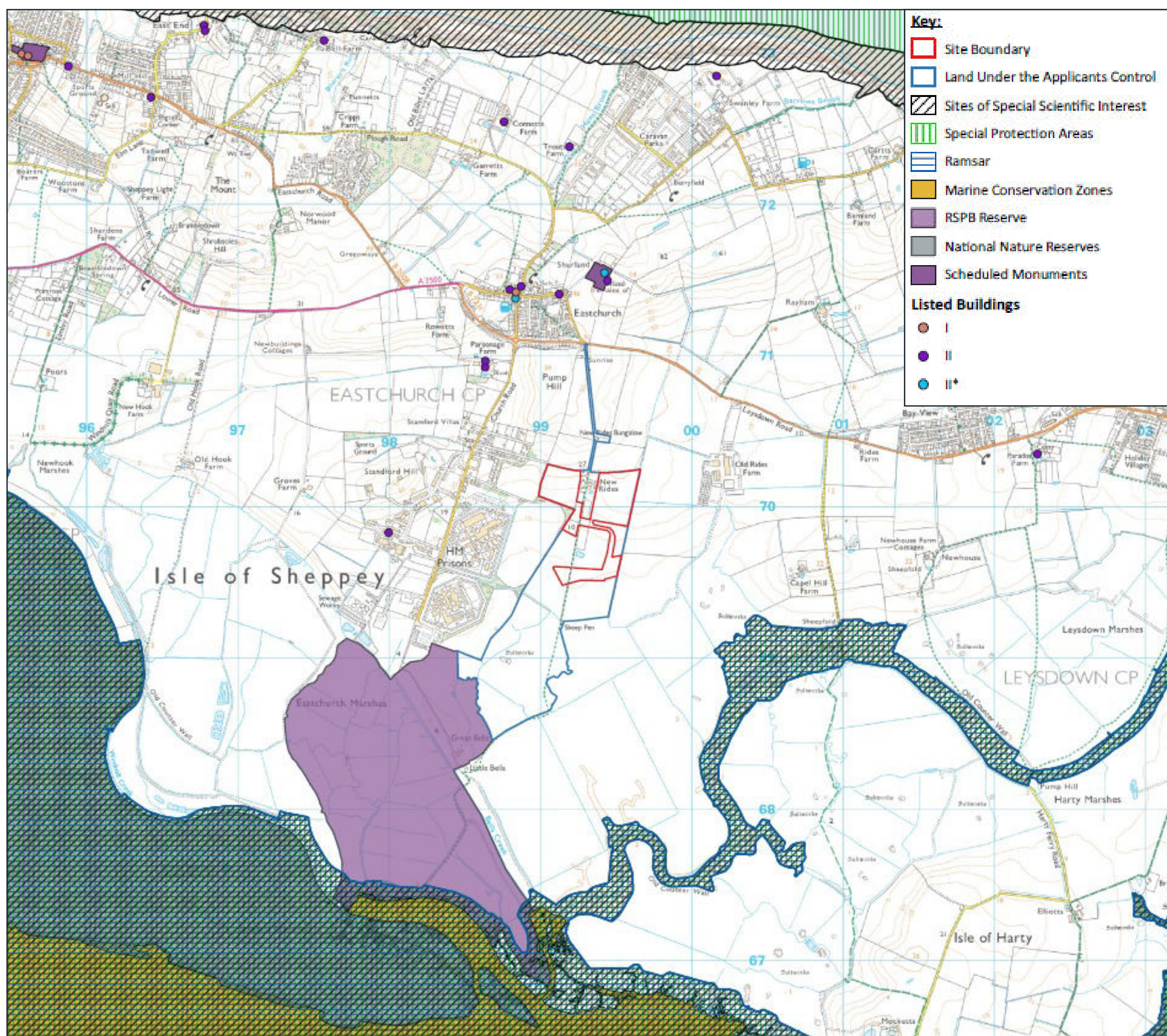


>>> Environmental Considerations

Initial Desk Study

An initial desk study was carried out with the site identification to understand if there are any environmental constraints affecting the site, for example;

- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Buildings
- RAMSAR
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Flood Zones
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- National Nature Reserves (NNR)
- RSPB Reserves
- Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ)



EIA Screening and Further Environmental Studies

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Request was submitted by Energiekontor for the Proposed Development to Swale Borough Council on 10/08/2020. The Council detailed in their Screening Opinion that the Proposed Development is not likely to result in significant environmental effects, therefore is not considered EIA development and thus an Environmental Statement is not required. Both the Screening Opinion and Screening Request can be found on the Council planning portal, reference: 20/503677/ENVSCR, as well as the Energiekontor project website.

Following the Screening Opinion, specific environmental studies are being carried out and will be submitted alongside the planning application, these include:

- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Archaeological Assessment
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Glint and Glare Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Agricultural Land Classification Survey

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