



Statement of Community Involvement

Ford Oaks Solar & Green Infrastructure Facility

For:

Taiyo Power & Storage Ltd

CRM.3025.001.PL.R.003



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Pre-Application Consultation Report

Project:	CRM.3025.003
For:	Taiyo Power Ltd
Status:	FINAL
Date:	May 2022
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CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Methodology.....	2
3	Website Feedback.....	5
4	Consultation Events & Outcomes	14
5	Conclusions.....	17
	Appendix.....	18

Tables & Figures

Table 3.1 Consultation Feedback.....	13
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Appendix

Appendix 1	Consultation Leaflet

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This report has been produced by Enzygo Ltd, with input from Low Carbon Alliance Ltd on behalf of Taiyo Power Ltd (hereafter referred to as ‘the applicant’) to set out the pre-application consultation activities undertaken in support of the proposed Solar & Green Infrastructure Facility on land to the west and south of Marsh Green, 6.5km east of Exeter, EX5 2EU.
- 1.1.2 The proposed development will provide renewable energy equivalent to the c.37,000MWh consumed by 18,500 homes across the EX5 2 postcode area in 2020.
- 1.1.3 The scheme also has been designed in collaboration with local residents and in conformity with the guiding principles of the Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy. It presents extensive green infrastructure and ecology enhancements across the site and is aiming to be the first Solar Scheme in the UK which successfully achieves the Building with Nature accreditation.
- 1.1.4 This Consultation Report accompanies the planning application for the proposed development. A more detailed description of the proposed development is provided in the Planning Statement and associated technical reports.
- 1.1.5 The applicant has actively undertaken meaningful engagement with local residents and stakeholders and is committed to an open and inclusive approach to consultation. This included:
- The provision of a website to inform and allow members of the public to ask questions;
 - Attendance at three Parish Council meetings;
 - Site meetings with Devon County Council (DCC) archaeologist, DCC Area Highways officer (Aylesbeare) and DCC PROW Definitive Map researcher,
 - A residents’ walk through the lanes, and
 - A site meeting with the Chairmen and Clerks of the two host Parish Councils.
- 1.1.6 This report presents an overview of the views and feedback from the consultees that have been engaged in the process. All the comments received during the consultation have been logged and analysed and where appropriate taken into account in the development of the final layout. These comments have assisted in understanding the issues that are of most interest to consultees; especially those residing in the surrounding local community.
- 1.1.7 The consultation is likely to extend throughout the post submission phase.

2 Methodology

2.1 National Policy on Consultation

- 2.1.1 Community involvement is an essential part of the planning process and helps to ensure that development is shaped by local views. The applicant recognises that community involvement is an integral and important component of planning and its approach to consultation with the local community reflects this.
- 2.1.2 While there is no legal requirement to undertake pre-application consultation on most planning applications, it is widely recognised that involving local communities leads to better development. Consultation provides the opportunity to glean information and ideas from a local community which can enrich a scheme. It also provides the opportunity to understand local concerns and aspirations.
- 2.1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), revised in 2021, encourages applicants to undertake pre-application consultation. Paragraph 39 states: *“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”*
- 2.1.4 The NPPF also states that local planning authorities should encourage those applicants, who are not already required to do so by law, to engage with the local community before submitting their applications: *“Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer”* (Paragraph 40).

2.2 East Devon District Councils Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.2.1 All local planning authorities are required by law to adopt a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out how consultation takes place on planning issues. Most SCIs also provide guidance to developers on how they should undertake pre-application consultation within the local community.
- 2.2.2 In designing the engagement strategy for the Solar & Green Infrastructure Facility, the applicant has taken into account the recommendations in East Devon District Councils SCI. This encourages all potential applicants to discuss their proposals with the authority and engage with the local community prior to submitting a planning application.

2.3 Consultation Methods

Introduction

2.3.1 Consultation was a central component of the design iteration of the scheme. The methods of consultation are outlined below.

Identifying stakeholders

2.3.2 As part of the consultation, various local stakeholders in the vicinity of or with a likely interest in the proposal were identified.

2.3.3 The stakeholder list included:

- Councillors and officers at Devon County Council and East Devon District Council.
- Members of the Devon County Farms Committee.
- Members of Rockbeare and Aylesbeare Parish Councils.
- Local residents.

Engagement with local planning authority

2.3.4 In order to inform the development proposals and scope of assessment work, various pre-application discussions were held with East Devon District Council throughout the pre-application process to assist in gaining an understanding of key issues. These included:

- A project briefing to the Leader of Devon County Council mid June 2021.
- A pre-application advice meeting between the applicant, Enzygo Ltd (agent), Devon Wildlife Trust (Ecology Consultant) and EDDC Planning and Landscape Officers on 28th January 2022 and subsequently on 8th March 2022.
- Consultation with the Devon HER and Senior Historic Environment Officer.
- A meeting with the Devon County Senior Historic Environment Officer was held (remotely) on 21st September 2021.
- The Devon County Senior Historic Environment Officer attended a site meeting on 6th October 2021.
- Discussions with the Devon County Senior Historic Environment Officer during March 2022 concerning the outcomes of the Geo-Physical surveys.
- Consultation with County Highways in November 2021 and February 2022.
- Further technical discussions with the County Landscape Officer in March 2022.

- Consultation with Simon Bates, Green Infrastructure Project Manager on 2nd February 2022 and 28th March 2022 regarding wildlife, mitigation and net gain.

2.3.5 A formal Screening Process was then undertaken to confirm that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required in support of the planning application.

Invitation Leaflet

2.3.6 A leaflet promoting the 18th November Resident's Walk was distributed from 27th October 2021 to the residents of Marsh Green and Aylesbeare. A copy of the leaflet is contained within Appendix 1 of this report.

Project website

2.3.7 A dedicated project website, <https://fordoakssolarnature.co.uk/>, was launched in December 2021 to provide visitors with information about the scheme. The website also includes a link to provide comments back to the project team.

Devon County Farms Committee

2.3.8 The following meetings have been held with the Devon County Farms Director as follows:

- Devon County Council Corporate Assets and County Farms managers and Director on the 3rd June 2021.
- A presentation to the Devon County Farms Committee on the 27th September 2021.
- Various emails and meetings up to and including April 2022.

3 Website Feedback

- 3.1.1 This chapter provides details of the local community's views on the proposed development. In this chapter we identify the comments provided by the local community and the applicant's response.
- 3.1.2 The comments and associated responses are provided in table 3.1 below:

	Comments/Questions	Suggested improvements	Applicant Response
18 residents' emails 01.11.21 to 16.11.21	Requesting information about and registering to join the Resident's Walk on 18 th November	None	Resident's Walk promotional leaflet distributed by hand at Parish Councils, posted by hand through doors and sent by Royal Mail and emailed.
Applicant email to Parish Clerks and the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator 08.11.21	N/A	None	Invitation to 1100am 18 November: Proposed "Ford Oaks" walk - from Marsh Green cross & bus shelter.
Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator 08.11.22	To: Parish Clerks of Rockbeare and Aylesbeare Parish Councils.	None	Circulation of information
Email from Resident 16.11.21	<i>"I've contacted Devon Wildlife Trust to see if I can access the survey data that is cited in your Ford Oaks project leaflet and while they acknowledged my email I've heard nothing since. I'd be interested in looking at the survey data ahead of our walk on Thursday. Are you able to supply the data or are these not available to external parties yet?"</i>	None	A response was sent back confirming that this data was not yet available, but information would be provided at the residents walk on the 18 th November 2021.
Email from Resident 16.11.21	The map posted on Rockbeare Residents FB page with details of the meeting [Residents Walk] on November 18 th to see the site.	None	17.11.21 Applicant acknowledged the leaflet quality and confirmed that additional face to face opportunities to comment on the application would be forth coming.

	<p><i>"Is of poor quality;</i></p> <p><i>Was the viewing deliberately timed for a weekday, so that working people would not be able to attend ?</i></p> <p><i>Please supply a proper map that can be seen, and reschedule this meeting for a weekend. These problems all foster the opinion that you don't want people to know what is being planned".</i></p>		
<p>Applicant Update to the Parish Clerks and 18 "Residents Walkers" with a copy of the EIA Screening request report</p> <p>17.12.21</p>	N/A	None	Provision of Screening Request to Local Community.
<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>16.01.22</p>	<p>Concern raised about information distribution.</p> <p>Request that Village Coordinator be included in all correspondence.</p> <p>Query regarding attendance at Aylesbeare Parish Council meeting on the</p>	None	<p>17.01.22</p> <p>Confirmation of attendance was provided.</p> <p>Requested that the Community consider how they may use a possible c.1.5 acres community open space area (to the north of the eastern fields).</p>

	<p>12 January and Rockbeare Parish Council meeting on Wednesday 19 January.</p>	<p>The following elements were included in the design iteration as a result of the consultation and progress on design was also confirmed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) omitting solar infrastructure from some c.30 acres of fields and field areas which:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. are most proximate to Westcott; b. are overlooked across the valley from Upcott; c. contains the public footpath connecting Westcott and Rill Farm; d. are either side of the T junction of Withybed Lane and Quarter Mile Lane (southern ridge / South West Water emergency pumping station); <p>Omission of solar infrastructure is also proposed across some additional c.20 acres of the north facing slopes of the southern ridge which are most visible from Westcott Lane and Quarter Mile Lane when leaving Marsh Green heading South – these acres are proposed to continue solely as grazing pastures.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) dedicating one of the Devon County Council fields as a wet meadow, aiming to slow the release of waters down the catchment (under the A30), aided by similar water retention measures within various other fields and along the course of the stream; which also aim to reduce the speed and volume of waters egressing onto the lanes within Marsh Green. 3) ensuring proposed fences allow for open corridors for both small and large mammals. 4) discussions with various District Council and County Council officers, including Planning, Landscape & Green Infrastructure, Archaeology, Highways, PRoW (regarding Withybed Lane as a permissive path).
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<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>29.01.22</p>	<p>Request for information including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated Layout Plan. 2. Identification of fields in the scheme are owned by Devon CC. 3. A timeline for the planned progression of the scheme, including for completion of the scoping the project, further public consultations, the submission of the planning application and the building phase. <p>Request for further detail on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How many solar panels there will be in the amended layout? ➤ How many miles of security fencing will there be? ➤ How many miles of tracks there will be within the site and what will be their locations? 	<p>None</p>	<p>02.02.22</p> <p>Updates provided included:</p> <p>Confirmation that more than 35 acres have been removed from the scheme; including the fields which are most visible from residences at Westcott and Higher Upcott, as well as the north-facing slopes which are most in view whilst proceeding along Westcott Lane.</p> <p>Confirmation that the landowners have agreed for waters to be held within their fields to reduce flooding on the lanes in both Marsh Green and Rockbeare.</p> <p>The detailed commitments to enhance wildlife habitats and corridors are being assessed by East Devon Council's ecologist, landscape and green infrastructure officers and Natural England staff.</p> <p>The Church of England Commissioners have confirmed use of their land near the airport as a reception compound from where escorted convoys proceed through the lanes to the site compound.</p> <p>Collaborative discussions with Devon County highways and public rights of way officers are proceeding with regards both resurfacing of the junction of Westcott Lane and Quarter Mile Lane and the potential for providing permissive access along Withybed Lane.</p> <p>Offer of an area of public open space and discussion of this at Parish Council meeting.</p> <p>Iterative design updated as a result of the consultation provided below and included:</p>
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			<p>i. A plan showing a red line which includes the curtilage of the proposed PV areas, indicative cable routes connecting those areas plus the 5 acre SE woodland extension / wet meadow.</p> <p>ii. An extract of the PV and archaeology layout plan, including confirmation that the fields marked "DC" are owned by Devon County Council (DC02c and DC02d excluded due to proximity to A30; DC03 to be the wetter meadow).</p>
<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>02.02.22</p>	<p><i>"The plans attached below are quite difficult to follow and seem to be partly cut off and I should be grateful if you would kindly send them as pdf files of these with the full information visible".</i></p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Information circulated on the 7th March 2022.</p>
<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>15.02.22</p>	<p>Please provide details associated with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The timeline for the proposed scheme. 2. Completion of the scoping of the project, including discussions with District and County Council officers. 3. Updating of the website to include the information from these discussions, habitat and other reports. 4. Consultation sessions with local residents. 5. Submission of the planning application to EDDC. 6. The construction period. 	<p>"At the 2 February meeting, you will recall I raised the serious safety issue of the Site Access Location into Field D17 and the alternative which could be used into Field DC01a".</p>	<p>Information circulated on the 07.03.22 including confirmation that the Access gate D17 removed from construction plan and new access gate and track provided from DC01.</p>

<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>21.02.22</p>	<p>Request for an update on progress, timeline and plans.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>A response was provided on the 07.03.22 stating that the negotiations with the technical professional officers within both Devon CC and EDDC are developing the proposed layout plan. These discussions include visual screening and buffer zones.</p> <p>The access gate on field D17 (bend from the village up to the bridge) has been removed from the scheme.</p> <p>There is no fixed timetable to share the aim is to collate the agreed multi-disciplinary proposed final design later this month, for subsequent Council and Regulator consultations.</p> <p>Further attendance at Parish Council meetings and information on the website was confirmed.</p>
<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>Including to both Clerks of Rockbeare and Aylesbeare Parish Councils and the Chairman of Rockbeare Parish Council</p> <p>21.03.22</p>	<p>Request for website to be updated and timing of submission and associated public consultation.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Please see response of 25.04.22.</p>
<p>Email from the Marsh Green</p>	<p><i>"In your email of 7 March below, you stated that you were aiming to be</i></p>	<p>None</p>	<p>04.04.22</p>

<p>Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>Including to both Clerks of Rockbeare and Aylesbeare Parish Councils and the Chairman of Rockbeare Parish Council</p> <p>04.04.22</p>	<p><i>available to present updates to the April Parish Council meetings and that the Four Oaks website would have been updated by then.</i></p> <p><i>I am not aware that arrangements have been made for you to present an update to either of the Aylesbeare or Rockbeare PC meeting this month and, having just looked at the website, there is no sign of any updated information”.</i></p>		<p>Email response from Aylesbeare Parish Clerk to Mailing List coordinator, Chairman and Clerk of Rockbeare Parish Council.</p> <p>Confirmation that attendance at the Parish Council meetings in April were not possible due to the Parish's busy agendas.</p>
<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>Including to both Clerks of Rockbeare and Aylesbeare Parish Councils and the Chairman of Rockbeare Parish Council</p> <p>04.04.22</p>	<p>Request for information on traffic movements and Devon Communities Together forum.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>06.04.22</p> <p>Email response from Aylesbeare Parish Clerk to Mailing List coordinator, Chairman and Clerk of Rockbeare Parish Council.</p> <p><i>“Traffic movements - the traffic plan for construction vehicles has been refined but will still involve a one-way system for trucks to and from the storage area near the airport. Further there will be marshalling (and escort vehicles if necessary) at key points of possible conflict along the route. For us this includes the crossroads by our village hall.</i></p> <p><i>LCA are commissioning Devon Communities Together (DCT) to consult the local residents to judge the level of support for the green elements of the project and try to pin down what benefits the community would like to see derived from the Ford Oaks project. We're hoping this will help build our case for the Marsh Green circular footpath/bridleway and the NW-SE safe green route for cyclists, pedestrians and horse-riders through Aylesbeare Parish (both of which incorporate Withybed Lane). He asked if the Parish Council would signpost this consultation to gain as much input as possible using our social media channels, website and newsletter”.</i></p>

<p>Email from the Marsh Green Village Mailing List coordinator</p> <p>Including to both Clerks of Rockbeare and Aylesbeare Parish Councils and the Chairman of Rockbeare Parish Council</p> <p>11.04.22</p>	<p><i>“While I’m aware this proposal is not on the agenda for the Aylesbeare and Rockbeare PC’s meetings this month, I should be grateful please for an update/confirmation on:</i></p> <p><i>1. When you plan to submit the planning application to EDDC?</i></p> <p><i>2 When your website will be updated with current information?”.</i></p>	<p>None</p>	<p>25.04.22</p> <p>Confirmation of submission in the next few weeks.</p>
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Table 3.1 Consultation Feedback

4 Consultation Events & Outcomes

4.1 Summary of meetings and matters raised

4.1.1 The meetings and associated comments are outlined below:

4.1.2 **A presentation to Rockbeare Parish Council** with County and District Councillors in attendance, on the 27th October 2021. The matters discussed included:

- The opportunity for a community open space in the field adjacent to Quarter Mile Lane just South of the village was put forward by the Applicant's representative. The Clerk confirmed that the Council held other time-limited capital investment funds and could attract grant funding which could also provide further opportunities.
- The '*No Mans Land*' Millennium Green in the village is now a wildlife habitat not suitable for resident's recreational use.
- The Clerk subsequently reported to the Applicant's representative that the Chairman was initially supportive of the notion of a community space in Marsh Green.

4.1.3 **A presentation to Aylesbeare Parish Council on the 3rd November 2021** with a Councillor from East Devon District Council. The matters discussed included:

- A long-standing aspiration for a section of Withybed Lane to become a permissive path to enable both a circular walking route including the village and Aylesbeare Common and an Active Travel Route between the AoNB and the settlements of and around Rockbeare and Cranbrook.

4.1.4 **A Residents Walk on the 18th November 2021** was attended by over 20 local residents with the Applicant's representative and the project ecologist. Matters raised included:

- The requirement for a permissive circular walk and bridleway.
- The removal of fields D18 and D19 from the scheme.
- Concerns over the use of agricultural land and the impact on food production.
- Concerns over traffic movements during the construction phase.
- Questions regarding the planning status of the land following the decommissioning of the scheme.
- Questions concerning potential impacts on the Public Right of Way.

4.1.5 **A site meeting on the 5th January 2022** was held with the Chairmen and Clerks of Aylesbeare and Rockbeare Parish Councils, DCC Area Highways Officer (Aylesbeare area) and DCC PROW researcher, the project Planning Consultants and Applicant representative. Matters raised included:

- The Quarter Mile Lane / Westcott Lane T-junction should be included within the Red Line Development boundary, together with the adjacent length of Westcott Lane.
- Confirmation that Westcott Lane is likely to be transferred onto the Definitive Map, rather than being maintained as a Public Highway.
- Confirmation from the Church of England Commissioners of the principle of granting a temporary lease of their field off Bishop's Court Lane, adjacent to the A30 at Exeter Airport, for use as a Reception Compound for all in-bound construction related traffic.

4.1.6 **Rockbeare Parish Council Extraordinary meeting on the 2nd February**, at the Hampton by Hilton hotel near Exeter Airport. The meeting was attended by five members of the Parish Council, and the Clerk, and approximately 35 members of the public; many of whom were local residents from Marsh Green and Westcott.

Matters raised included:

- Traffic Management

Some, mainly Westcott, residents (3 noted) are concerned about the access route proposal and would prefer a route through the centre of Marsh Green, due to vehicles passing including the number of delivery vans. A Parish Councillor mentioned concern of increased vehicle movements during school drop off and pick-up times.

- Access

Marsh Green residents were concerned about the use of a field gate on the blind bend of Rockbeare Lane west of the village.

- Surface water and flooding

Concerns were aired regarding existing accumulations of surface water runoff onto the lanes. Also, concerns that the construction processes could compact swales.

- Ecology:

There was a request to read the Ecology Reports and see the commitments to wildlife corridors.

- Community Benefit

The Clerk raised the opportunity for the proffered 'open area' being a larger parcel of land with potential to site a new village hall.

A request was made that should Westcott Lane be included on the Definitive Map it is done so in a way that allows the passage of horses.

- Health and Safety

Concern was raised regarding the potential of increased lightning strikes and noise.

- There were many comments about views and general comments including "We don't want it here", "the sunshine isn't good in Marsh Green", "land should be for food production"

4.2 Amendments/Alterations

4.2.1 These consultations have resulted in the following amendments being made to the scheme:

- Deletion of 35 acres of agricultural land from the scheme.
- Deleting all proposed uses of the gate into D17 which is on the west side of the blind bend along Rockbeare Lane west of Marsh Green.
- Deletion of array tables proposed on the north facing valley slopes, south of Westcott Lane (the slopes of D5, D6, D7, G2 and G3).
- Deletion of array tables being proposed to be installed in the fields most proximate to less than ten residences on the eastern fringe of Westcott hamlet (G4, DC03) and the A30 (DCO2 west).
- Deletion of array tables being proposed to be installed in the two fields north of Marsh Green, reducing visual impacts from Higher Upcott.
- Confirmation with the landowners that the hedgerows, hedgebanks and trees along the lanes and within the development fields will be maintained at, and allowed to grow up to, heights that currently screen the majority of views into and across the fields and through the valley.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1.1 Throughout this report, the applicant has demonstrated that pre-application engagement and consultation has been both inclusive and proportionate to the proposed development. The applicant has worked closely with stakeholders and has actively taken on board consultation feedback to develop and refine where appropriate stakeholder's comments to positively address any issues raised.
- 5.1.2 The channels used during the consultation period will continue to operate following submission of the planning application, to ensure interested parties and surrounding communities can keep up to date as the proposed development progresses. This will include updates to the established website; maintenance of communication channels including email address and proactive measures to update and inform stakeholders following submission and consideration of the applicant's; attendance at Parish Council meetings and dedicated consultation/exhibition events.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Consultation Leaflet

Consultation with Parish residents, East Devon DC officers and Members and statutory regulators will give opportunity to scrutinize, evaluate and enhance the current conceptual proposals.

All survey information and concept designs will be shared through public consultation, and by EDDC, throughout the Winter.

View south along Westcott Lane



This scheme is promoted by Kajima UK supported by Low Carbon Alliance Limited.

Since 2003, Kajima UK have been the recipient of various HSE, RIBA and Industry awards as a sensitive developer of UK hospitals, care centres, schools, libraries and HMG estates.

Since 2010, LCA have advised UK property funds and private clients on delivering their Net Zero strategies.

Sign up to receiving project information by emailing fordoaks@lowcarbonalliance.co.uk



Proposed Ford Oaks solar and green infrastructure scheme

Forthcoming Consultation

A proposed scheme to generate renewable power and significantly improve wildlife habitats across local farmers' and Devon County Council owned fields will be opened for consultation in November 2021.

Residents' perspectives of how the careful and sensitive community open space, ecology, fluvial, grazing, landscape, solar, wetland and woodland conceptual designs could cause beneficial impacts across the fields will be important.

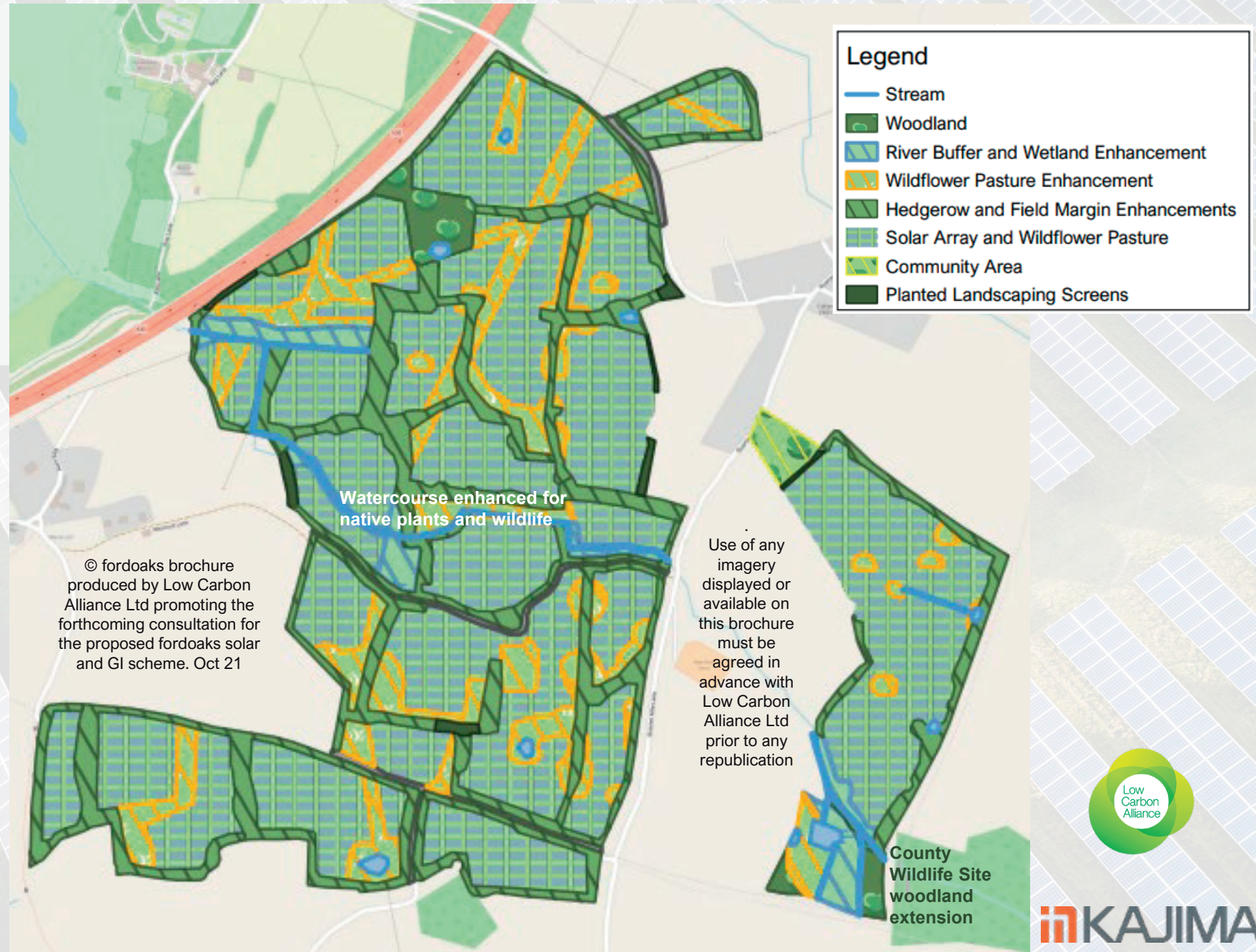
Designed by Devon Wildlife Trust after 7 months of surveys, the landscape and ecology proposals include :-

- Approximately 80 acres of dedicated enhanced biodiverse meadow, hedgerow and woodland habitats;
- Improved pollinator grassland habitats beneath the 110-130 acres of solar arrays.

Proposed Ford Oaks solar & green infrastructure scheme

Conceptual
ecology, landscape,
open space and
solar design layout

In a UK first,
*Building with
Nature* will audit
this scheme
against its'
rigorous standards.





Enzygo specialise in a wide range of technical services:

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