

2. Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 2.1. This section seeks to address the comments that were made by the Public Rights of Way Officer dated 8 January 2024. A meeting was held with Officers on 13 February 2024 and the approach towards this response agreed.
- 2.2. Following a review of the comments made, it is considered that the matters raised are addressed under the following subheadings, taken from the holding objection.

Omission of reference to one of the above PROW routes, SD332, within Application documents

- 2.3. For the avoidance of doubt, there are no physical works to PROW SD332. This route lies outside of the SZTV of the solar element of the development. It is agreed that the LVIA doesn't specifically refer to the route but there would be no potential for any more than glimpses of the substation and no views of the main part of the development.

Site access during construction and operation appear to be aligned along Public Footpath SD333

- 2.4. It is acknowledged that during the construction period traffic will be routed along the existing track through the site which correlates with the alignment of Footpath SD333. As such the applicant is proposing a temporary diversion route for the construction period as detailed below. It is proposed that this alternative route will be clearly signposted so that users are able to continue to utilise tracks safely during this construction period.

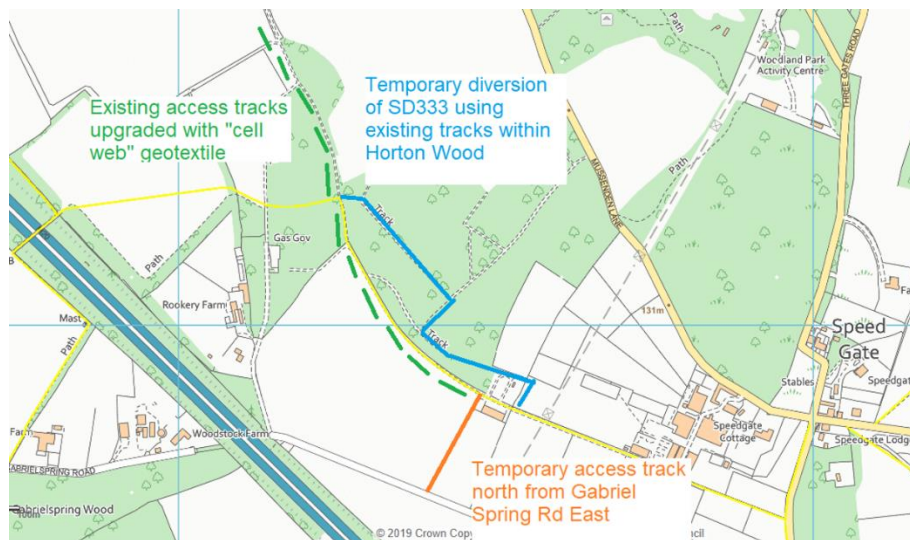


Figure 1 – Proposed Temporary Diversion Route

- 2.5. It is understood that the temporary diversion will be agreed with Kent County Council under a separate agreement prior to any works commencing on site.



Insufficient detail regarding PROW incorporation to enable full comment, insufficient weight given to user amenity of PROW routes

- 2.6. The applicant has sought clarification of the definitive route for PROW SD333 as it passes through Field 9 as marked up on the layout drawing. With this in mind the layout of the panels in this field have been revised in order to remove solar tables and increase the offset from the PROW such that a minimum 11.5m offset (5.75m either side of the PROW) is provided.
- 2.7. It was also confirmed that there is no plan to fence off the PROW or restrict existing views from the route by lining it with hedgerows. Instead, the fences are limited to the boundary of the areas of panels only, with the proposed landscape mitigation in this area being interpretation boards and enhanced grassland which would not restrict the openness of the views from the route.

Additional Matters

- 2.8. Clarification during the consultation period was provided to Kent CoCo PROW that the design of the solar farm has retained all non-designated recreational horse riding routes throughout the site as illustrated in Figure 20 Horse Riding Track (Drawing Reference O5009-RES-PRO-DR-PT-001 Rev 1). This demonstrates the commitment to horsiculture and designing within the existing envelope of the application site.
- 2.9. As part of our discussions a scheme of enhancements to the existing public right of way network was agreed with Kent CoCo PROW Officer. The following mitigation measures are proposed:
- It proposed to lay cell web on the existing footpath SD333 in the northern boundary of Field 9 adjacent to the ancient woodland where it is currently muddy and more challenging. This will allow the continued use for walkers and horse riders therefore making the route more accessible and improve the amenity of the PROW network.
 - It is acknowledged that the current stile at the junction between PROW SD333 and PROW SD156 is in poor condition and is currently restrictive. Under a separate agreement with Kent County Council, this stile will be replaced with a kissing gate to make it more user friendly for pedestrians and walkers.
 - A scheme for the provision of interpretation boards to provide educational details on renewable energy, cultural heritage and the ancient woodland will be provided along the PROW network. The applicant would be happy to agree a condition to secure the locations and text to be included on these educational boards.
 - Additional tree planting is proposed in Field 6 as well as the hedgerow proposals where views are slightly more open, along with a degree of surface improvement to the path in the same area.
- 2.10. These proposals are detailed on the submitted revised Landscape Masterplan (Drawing Number P22-1221_EN_0012 Rev D).