

Solar Farm Guiding Principles

Please see the information available on the Essex Design Guide.

<https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/supplementary-guidance/solar-farm-guiding-principles/protection-and-enhancement-of-the-rights-of-way-network/>

Protection and Enhancement of the Rights of Way Network

Any Public Rights of Way (PROW) through or surrounding the site should remain usable, retain their recreational amenity and character, and be integrated as part of the development proposal.

Applicants will need to demonstrate to the Highway Authority that all PROW impacted upon by a development will remain accessible by the general public and the public's rights and ease of passage over public footpaths / bridleways / byways should be maintained free and unobstructed at all times, including during construction, unless formally diverted, to ensure the continued safe passage of the public on the definitive right of way.

The use of PROW for construction vehicle usage will not be acceptable. Where construction vehicles crossing the PROW cannot be prevented, a banksman is to be used.

If a PROW has to be temporarily or permanently diverted, then no works should affect the PROW until an Order securing the diversion of the existing definitive right of way to a route has been agreed and has been confirmed with Essex County Council and the Local Planning Authority; and the new route has been constructed.

Mitigation and enhancement measures such as consequential improvements to the PROW network through improving connectivity or the installation of interpretation boards or visitor facilities that give benefit to users of PROW should be sought by developers of renewable energy schemes- there may also be further opportunities for public engagement and education in renewable energy.

The importance of PROW as amenities for local communities to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing should be recognised, protected and enhanced (The Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy refers to PROW throughout).

The character and amenity value of retained PROW should be maintained and buffers between paths and panels should be used. For example, for retained PROW passing within a field used for solar panels and passing between them, a width of 5m for the footpath, without newly planted hedgerows, would be required to provide openness and to avoid walkers feeling hemmed in; field-edge PROW should have a width provision of 3m and sufficient additional width for growth of any hedge used as boundary features. Individual planted trees for landscape and visual or biodiversity value could also be used at the edges of the buffer.