

Nicholas Ely  
Lead Member of the Examining Authority  
National Infrastructure Planning  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Our ref: AN/2024/135611/07-  
L01

Your ref: EN010142

Date: 26 March 2025

By email:

[tillbridgesolarproject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:tillbridgesolarproject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Ely

**Order Granting Development Consent for the Tillbridge Solar Project  
(EN010142) - Examining Authority's third written questions.**

I refer to the Examining Authority's third written questions issued by the Planning Inspectorate on 11 March 2025.

Our answers to the questions where the Environment Agency is referred to in the 'question to' column are as follows:

**1. General and cross-topic questions.**

**Q3.1.2 Question for all parties about the Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs).**

Please ensure that all final SoCGs are signed by the parties to them. Please also ensure that they clearly express any matters not agreed (i.e. outstanding matters in dispute) between parties to each SoCG.

**Environment Agency response:**

I confirm we are working with the applicants with the aim of submitting an updated Statement of Common Ground confirming the latest situation at Deadline 6.

**2. Ecology and Biodiversity.**

**Q3.2.1 Question for the Applicant and Environment Agency on Riparian Mammals.**

**Environment Agency**

Nene House (Pynchley Lodge Industrial Estate),  
Pynchley Lodge Road, Kettering, Northants, NN15 6JQ  
Email: [LNplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:LNplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.gov.uk/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency)

*Customer services line: 03708 506 506*

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geographic numbers (i.e. numbers beginning with 01 or 02).*

Please can the applicant update Construction Environmental Management Plan with reference to the comments raised by the Environment Agency in the response at DL5 (REP5-052). Please can the Environment Agency comment upon the suitability of the existing provisions in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and any possible changes proposed by the applicant for all riparian mammals.

**Environment Agency Answer:**

We made the applicant's consultant aware that we were going to make the comments you refer to from our response dated 18 February 2025 at Deadline 5 (REP5-052) before we sent them to you. In response, they sent us the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that they were intending to submit at Deadline 5 with some updated wording on the topic of riparian mammals for our views.

We considered this and advised we were happy with the wording they were proposing for the updated CEMP subject to them including an extra sentence reading 'The surveys should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and completed as per the industry standard for water voles surveys (Strachan et al 2011)'.

We have checked the CEMP submitted at Deadline 5 (REP5-015 and 016) and note this extra wording is included on page 31.

On the basis of this, and the other extra wording the applicant included in relation to riparian mammals in the CEMP submitted at Deadline 5, it is confirmed we are happy that this point has been addressed.

Please note, we have already provided a similar response on this topic in the first part (paragraphs 2 and 3) of our letter to you dated 10 March 2025 when we responded to the applicant's Deadline 5 submissions.

**Q3.2.2 Question for the Applicant and the Environment Agency about EMF effects on migratory fish.**

With regards to the issue raised by the Environment Agency (REP3-068) at DL3 and subsequently discussed at ISH3. Please can the Environment Agency and the applicant comment on the adequacy of the proposed monitoring regime; and the potential manners in which the risks could be mitigated if the monitoring establishes an impact is taking place?

**Environment Agency answer:**

We are happy that the wording in the Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) on this topic is sufficient to secure the monitoring that is required. We are having ongoing discussions with Hull University to define the detail and are happy for these to continue outside the timescale for determining this Planning Application providing the wording to secure it remains in the OEMP.

Regarding the adequacy of the monitoring, we believe the University will put together a robust monitoring plan to understand the impacts of EMF on fish populations locally within the Tidal Trent.

In relation to possible mitigation measures if an impact is found, when asked about this in connection with the West Burton solar proposal we said 'We do wish to confirm that the possibility of mitigation measures if adverse effects on fish are found would be good. However, our latest position is we are not insisting on this in connection with this solar scheme or others nearby and we do feel this matter should be dealt with consistently'.

We wish to make the same comments in this case.

**14. Water environment including flood risk****Q3.14.2 Question for the Applicant and Environment Agency on the NAFRA update.**

What is the context for flood risk for the proposed development based on the new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) dataset launched by the Environment Agency in 2024?

**Environment Agency Answer:**

There are two areas of the Tillbridge Solar principal site where the flood zones change as a result of NaFRA2. These are the Harpswell Interaction Zone and an area near Westlands Farm.

In relation to Harpswell, the new flood extents show an increased area of risk which appears to affect solar panels in areas 56, 57, 70 and Principal Site Access 3

The area at Westlands Farm seems to include solar panel area 68.

There is also an area of changed risk at Heapham, but the areas of increased risk are confined to be an archaeology zone and a biodiversity zone both with no built development.

We have made the applicants aware of all of this and have sent them the NaFRA2 information. They have looked into any implications.

The applicants have provided us with the following response (in italics) which it is understood they intend to submit at Deadline 6:

*The Applicant has reviewed the new National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) dataset released by the Environment Agency and where the extended flood extents relate to the Principal Site and the indicative layout as presented on Figure 3-1: Indicative Principal Site Layout [EN010142/APP/6.3(Rev02)].*

*Element of the Scheme within Review  
the updated extent of flooding  
from rivers*

Fields 51, 56 and 57	<b>Appendix 10-3: Flood Risk Assessment</b> of the ES [REP4-018] provided a detailed review of flood risk to these fields on the basis of which minimum solar panel height of 20.06m AOD within these fields were specified within the <b>Outline Design Principles Statement</b> [REP4-020]. The newly published flood mapping indicates a greater flood extent within Field 56, above 20.06m AOD; however, <b>Appendix 10-3: Flood Risk Assessment</b> of the ES [REP4-018] provides a more detailed assessment of flood risk to these fields, compared to the high-level mapping published for the Yawthorpe Beck. As such the assessment presented within <b>Appendix 10-3: Flood Risk Assessment</b> of the ES [REP4-018] is considered to remain valid.
Field 70	The updated NaFRA data indicate the extension of flood extents into Field 70. However, the flood extents only extend into areas of proposed landscaping, with no overlap with proposed solar infrastructure.
Principal Site Access 3	The updated NaFRA data indicate the extension of flood extents across Principal Site Access 3. This is an existing access that is proposed to be used during the operation of the Scheme only. No raising of ground levels is proposed at this location and as such, the use of the access for operational purposes will not impact on flood risk.
Field 77	From a review of the topographical survey and the mapping extents for flooding for up to the worst case extent, for up to 1.2m depth, the maximum depth the water would reach in this field is approximately 200mm; with panels set a minimum 600mm above ground level, it is considered mitigation to raise panels in Field 77 is not required.
Field 68	The lowest ground levels along the southern boundary of Field 68 fall from east to west, from 17.56m AOD, to 16.76m AOD. Comparing the topographical survey to the long term fluvial flood risk mapping, and applying the mapping extents for up to the worst case extent, for up to 1.2m depth, the maximum flood depths relative to the lowest perpendicular ground levels are no greater than 240mm (i.e. in cross section across the floodplain). With a minimum panel height of 600mm above ground, the flood depth at any given point for solar PV panels in Field 68 will not reach the base of the panel with at least 300mm freeboard still afforded. Therefore, it is considered no mitigation is required within Field 68.

*Following this review the Applicant determines that the new flood extents released by the Environment Agency in the NaFRA do not present the need for any changes to*

#### **Environment Agency**

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*Appendix 10-3: Flood Risk Assessment of the ES [REP4-018] of the design of the Scheme.*

The Environment Agency has considered this information and we agree with the applicants' comments on Fields 51, 56 and 57, Field 70, Field 77 and Field 68.

This is because the new extents are mainly very low chance and shallow depths <200mm. In addition, the flood risk is mainly located around the borders of fields and the impact on panels is limited.

In general terms, in addition to the new NaFRA2 data, we would also note that some of the areas have also been modelled by the applicant (the Yawthorpe Beck) to bring the information for them up to date. That modelling still stands and has already been accounted for in their Flood Risk Assessment.

Finally, we note their comment on Principal Site Access 3 states the access will not impact on flood risk. We wish to clarify we are not concerned about the access's impact on flood risk here, rather the impact of flood risk on the access. Nevertheless, the depths are fairly shallow and the access track appears to be a natural boundary between the shallower and deeper flood risk. However, the applicant should be aware it may become impassable during flooding and we wish to make it clear that the route should not be used in the site Flood Warning and Evacuation Plans.

On this basis, we are happy that the new NaFRA2 data has been taken into account in considering this development.

I hope these replies are of assistance. Should you require any additional information, or wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Yours sincerely

  
Planning Specialist

Direct dial 

Direct e-mail @environment-agency.gov.uk