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Your ref: EN010147



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VIA WEBSITE AND EMAIL

To: BotleyWestSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Case Team,

Application by Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) on behalf of SolarFive Ltd for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Botley West Solar Farm project – Rule 6 Letter

Thank you for your Rule 6 letter dated 28 March 2025. Natural England is an Interested Party (IP) within the examination of the Botley West Solar Farm project. Please accept this letter as Natural England's comments in relation to the contents of the Rule 6 letter.

1. Examination Timetable concerns relating to outstanding further information

In our Relevant Representations [RR-0761] we provide advice on potential impacts to the significant bat populations present and recommendations for the further information required to allow for the full assessment of these impacts.

Since the publication of our Relevant Representations, we have met with the applicant (19th March 2025). The applicant has confirmed they intend to incorporate many of these recommendations into their ongoing survey programme and also confirmed there are ongoing and prior surveys which were not reported in the Environmental Statement (ES) [APP-036 – APP-224]. We have asked the applicant to confirm the future survey timeline in writing in meeting minutes. Whilst we await their response, we are unable to provide a definitive timeline, however we believe it is likely that the latest survey information will be reported **May/June of 2025**. We have not yet been party to the written survey methodology.

This survey data is necessary to identify sensitive areas of the site, to inform the design of the masterplan and to target specific mitigation measures. Once the survey data is fully reported, and if it is agreed adequate, then the results will inform updates to a number of documents including but not limited to the Illustrative Masterplan [APP-062], bat mitigation design and location, the oLEMP [APP-235], the Landscape, Ecology and Amenities Plan [APP228], and the monitoring requirements.

Whilst we note that impacts to bat Annex II bat populations have not been considered a Principal Issue (PI) in Annex C of the Rule 6 letter, we raise the above matter due to concerns regarding the potential for submission of substantial new evidence occurring late in the Examination process. Whilst Natural England will endeavour to review and respond to this new information in a timely manner, we remain concerned at the potential for disruption to the examination timetable and the associated pressures this places upon staff. Regularly updated information from the Applicant regarding the predicted submissions and arrival times could help manage this to some extent and we would welcome the ExA's support in this.

2. Attendance at the Preliminary Meeting

Thank you for your invitation to the Preliminary Meeting on the 13th May 2025. Natural England will not be attending, but hope this letter will suffice in providing our input into this meeting. We are not currently expecting further information from the Applicant prior to Deadline 1 and so expect our Written Representations to reflect, in the main, the same issues raised in our Relevant Representations.

Yours sincerely

██████████
Senior Officer

Major Infrastructure

Thames-Solent Team

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