



BOTLEY WEST SOLAR FARM

OXFORDSHIRE HOST AUTHORITIES RESPONSES FOR DEADLINE 5 | FRIDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2025

- Cherwell District Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council
- Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire Host Authorities (“OHAs”)

Botley West Solar Farm (EN01014)

OXFORDSHIRE HOST AUTHORITIES

RESPONSES FOR DEADLINE 5

The Oxfordshire Host Authorities (the “**OHA**”) are comprised of the following host authorities who are working collaboratively to represent constituents on key issues during this Examination and assist the Examining Authority (“**ExA**”) with the Examination’s smooth running:

- Cherwell District Council (“**CDC**”)
- Value of White Horse District Council (“**VWHDC**”)
- West Oxfordshire District Council (“**WODC**”)
- Oxfordshire County Council (“**OCC**”)

In these submissions, the Oxfordshire Host Authorities may be referred to variously as the OHA, the Host Authorities or the Councils.

Purpose of this Submission

The purpose of this submission is to provide written confirmation of the OHA’s comments and response on documents submitted at Deadline 4 (**D4**), responses to Second Written Questions (**ExQ2**). The written comments provided below do not prejudice the OHA’s ability to make further comments on these matters.

Comments on submissions received at D4

REP4-002 – 1.3 Guide to the Application (Clean) (Rev 7)

OHA have no comments to make on the changes to this document currently.

REP4-004 – 3.1 Draft Development Consent Order (Rev 5)

Comments on Schedule 2, requirement 5 made at D3 [**REP3-072**] remain to be addressed by the applicant.

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Outstanding issues with regards to the dDCO (as of D4) can be found the OHA's response to ExQ2 [**REP4-074 Annex 1**].

REP4-006 – 3.3 Explanatory Memorandum (Clean) (Rev 5)

VWHDC note that section 1.4.7 appears not to cover the construction compound for the National Grid substation. The recent NGET screening opinion request to VWHDC indicates a compound in a different location to the applicant's compound.

REP4-009 – 3.6 Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker (Clean) (Rev 5)

OHA have no comments to make on the changes to this document currently.

REP4-010 – 6.3 Environmental Statement Chapter 9 - Ecology and Nature Conservation (Clean) (Rev 3)

OHA have no comments to make on the changes to this document currently.

REP4-012 – 6.5 Environmental Statement - Appendix 4.4 Glint and Glare Study Rev 1 (Clean) (Rev 1)

OHA have no comments to make on the changes to this document currently.

REP4-014 – 6.5 Environmental Statement - Appendix 6.1 Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule (Clean) (Rev 1)

OHA welcome the changes made to this document on hydrology and flood risk and air quality.

REP4-016 – 6.5 Environmental Statement Appendix 6.2 - Cable Laying Methodology and Indicative HDD Crossing Locations (Clean) (Rev 1)

OHA welcome the changes made to this document to avoid fish spawning periods during construction. Please also see the comments on Q2.3.4 in the table below regarding archaeology and arboricultural impacts.

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REP4-018 – 6.5 Environmental Statement Appendix 10.2 Conceptual Drainage Strategy (Clean) (Rev 2)

Please see our response to the applicant’s answer to ExAQ2 2.7.9 in the table below.

REP4-020 – 6.5 Environmental Statement Appendix 15.2 Outline Skills, Supply Chain & Employment Plan (Clean) (Rev 2)

OHA have no comments to make on the changes to this document currently.

REP4-022 – 7.6.1 Botley West Outline Code of Construction Practice (Clean) (Rev 2) - Part 1

Core working hours (including mobilisation) should be amended to:

- 7.30am to 6pm from Monday to Friday
- 8am to 1pm on Saturdays
- No work on Sundays and Bank Holidays

OHA have no other comments to make on the changes to this document currently.

REP4-023 – 7.6.1 Botley West Outline Code of Construction Practice (Clean) (Rev 2) - Part 2

OHA have no comments to make on this document currently.

REP4-026 – 7.6.2 Botley West Outline Operational Management Plan (Clean) (Rev 3)

Paragraphs 2.2.3 and 2.4.1 - Maintenance and construction activities should only be carried out during reasonable hours to give neighbouring residents some peace and quiet outside these times, which OHA define as:

- 7.30am to 6pm from Monday to Friday
- 8am to 1pm on Saturdays
- No work on Sundays and Bank Holidays

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OHA see no reason to widen site work beyond these hours.

Paragraph 2.3.2- Please refer to the OHA’s response to Q2.7.8 in [REP4-074]. The OHA clarified that a further CTMP would be required if 30% of panels were replaced within each of the three project areas individually (i.e. 30% of c.1/3 of the scheme). As such the applicant’s modification of the oOMP [REP4-026] does not sufficiently address the OHA concerns on this issue.

Table 3.1 - Noise impact. For clarity, the nearest Residential Receptors mentioned for assessment should be identified.

Waste

Whilst the OHA maintain the position that further detail regarding projected waste arisings, specifically in relation to waste types, anticipated timescales, and proposed management routes (particularly for the PV modules and piling) for construction, operation and decommissioning phases should be provided in advance of any decision, to enable a comprehensive assessment of the development’s waste implications and to be able to plan for future waste requirements, we do acknowledge and support the newly proposed inclusions within the Operational Management Plan of the additional information on waste to be included within a future Waste Management Plan.

In addition, we would welcome the inclusion of clear management routes alongside the measures identified for handling the waste within the Plan to be included. Furthermore, the proposed Waste Management Plan is expected to outline a programme detailing when waste will be generated during the operations and maintenance phase, we consider it essential that this programme explicitly identifies the types and volumes of waste, as well as the corresponding management routes, against a specified timeframe.

Other

Please also see comments in the table to below in relation to Q2.14.4 (noise), Q2.17.2 (bill of quantities), Q2.17.3 (waste management).

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REP4-028 – 7.6.3 Botley West Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (Clean) (Rev 3)

OHA note the addition of a blanket-maintained height of new hedgerow of 3m. This does not account for the character of existing hedgerows or adjust to where there are views over the wider landscape. It is also noted at 8.7.4 that the addition of dense scrub areas adjacent to hedgerows for nightingale, could potentially impact on views and openness depending on location.

REP4-030 – 7.6.4 Botley West Outline Decommissioning Plan (Clean) (Rev 1)

Waste

Whilst the OHA maintain the position that further detail regarding projected waste arisings, specifically in relation to waste types, anticipated timescales, and proposed management routes (particularly for the PV modules and piling) at the decommissioning phase should be provided in advance of any decision to enable a comprehensive assessment of the development’s waste implications and to plan for future waste requirements, we do acknowledge the newly proposed inclusion within the Decommissioning Plan, to include a list of authorised processors and support this addition. We would be interested to know how adequate capacity assessment to manage the panels will be undertaken and whether the cumulative impacts of other solar farms will be included within this assessment.

REP4-032 – 7.7 Outline Layout and Design Principles (Clean) (Rev 4)

OHA consider this document needs further amendment to address OHA comments made at D3 [REP3-072]. It does not adequately reference all design parameters set out in ES Chapter 6 Project Description [APP-043]. Other Infrastructure Parameters (Fence heights, CCTV and lighting) specified in table 6.4 of Chapter 6 are not referenced and these are required.

REP4-034 – 8.3 Schedule of Changes to the draft Development Consent Order (Rev 4)

OHA note the changes to this document.

REP4-037 – 14.2 Applicant's Responses to ExA's Second Written Questions (ExQ2) (Rev 0) Part 1

Question Number	[REP4-037] Page reference	Comments
2.1.3	Page 3	The applicant has confirmed it has engaged with others to link its project to their battery system. The OHA welcome further detail on which BESS site(s) this relates to, given the applicant has stated there is no requirement for any BESS facility to serve this development.
2.1.4	Page 4	The OHA acknowledge that the Applicant has provided a topic paper as part of their response the ExA's Second Written Questions. The OHA have no comments to make on this submission.
2.1.5	Page 5	The updated Outline Layout and Design Principles does not address OHA comments regarding Schedule 2, requirement 5 made at D3 [REP3-072] .
2.1.10	Page 10	<p>Construction work should follow a code of practice that include measures to help keep noise to a minimum. Maintenance and construction activities should only be carried out during reasonable hours to give neighbouring residents some peace and quiet outside these times, which OHA define as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 7.30am to 6pm from Monday to Friday · 8am to 1pm on Saturdays · No works on Sundays and Bank Holidays <p>OHA see no reason to widen site work beyond these hours.</p>
2.1.11	Page 11	Please refer to the OHA's response to Q2.7.8 in [REP4-074] . The OHA clarified that a further CTMP would be required if 30% of panels were replaced within each of the three project areas individually (i.e. 30% of c.1/3 of the scheme). As such the applicant's modification of the oOMP [REP4-026] does not sufficiently address the OHA concerns on this issue.

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		<p>The OHA are open to discussions with the applicant to discuss the definition of ‘emergency’ in the context of the operational phase of the Solar Farm, but general maintenance and panel replacement work should only take place between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 7.30am to 6pm from Monday to Friday – 8am to 1pm on Saturdays – No work on Sundays and Bank Holidays
2.1.17	Page 15	<p>The OHA re-affirm their position outlined on page 8 of [REP3-072] that a decommissioning bond is necessary to ensure that there are sufficient funds in place to allow the scheme to be decommissioned at the end of the operational lifespan of the scheme.</p> <p>The value of the assets on the site after the operational lifespan of the scheme will vary depending on the future markets which are impossible to predict with any certainty. A decommissioning bond provides a greater level of certainty that funds will be available for the decommissioning of the scheme. This is necessary as the applicant is relying on the temporary nature of the scheme to reduce the significance of several environmental impacts. Without the certainty of provided by a decommissioning bond, the OHA do not believe that the scheme can be considered temporary.</p>
2.3.4	Page 20	<p>As commented already in relation to cable locations, please see previous comments consolidated in the Joint LIR [REP1-072]:</p> <p><i>‘However, without a detailed survey of all trees and woodlands adjacent to all works that have the potential to impact on these features, it is not possible to make an accurate and detailed arboricultural assessment of the impact of this proposed development. A detailed arboricultural survey would need to be completed in order to provide accurate comments on realistic tree related implications of the proposal’.</i></p>

		<p><i>‘An updated detailed arboricultural impact assessment once the above surveys have been completed, to cover all works, including the exact location of cable routes’.</i></p> <p><i>‘It is not clear from the information submitted where the exact routes of the high voltage cables will be located. It is noted from reviewing the various plans within the report, it appears to show a wide route located within the roads. However, more specific details of its exact location are required before a detailed arboricultural impact assessment can be made. As locating the cable route in verges would be completely unacceptable due to the significant impact that would have on the roots of a very significant number of trees that are located adjacent to the roads. The routes for cabling between the separate blocks of solar panels also don’t appear to be shown on the plans. Therefore, the impact of these works is unknown and has the potential to be very significant, being essential that it is accurately assessed.</i></p> <p><i>There also appears to be various areas on the plans where the route for the cables will have significant impacts to tree root protection areas (RPAs), that would appear avoidable by relocating the route to avoid RPAs. Whilst the specific routes have not been confirmed, it has the potential to impact on the following trees, where its shown within the RPAs of the following trees: T92, T94, T95, T96, T110, H16, T160, T161, T173, T175, T178, T185, T186, T187, T199, T204, T206, G42, T215-T217, T222, G46, T229, T230-T234, T237, T238, T248, T249, T271, G60, G59, T279, T283, T284, T286, T287, G70, T394, T395, T404, T405, T406, T407, T408, T410, T411, T415, T416-T421, T422-T424, T426, T428-T430, T432, T434, T437, T438, T439-T446, G101, T449, T456, plans to the South of Tree Survey (Page 13 of 16) seem to be missing and therefore, the impact of the route for cables further South is not defined, meaning the impact has the potential to be significant’.</i></p> <p>In addition, the table at 2.1.4 of the latest Cable Optionality Report dated August 2025 does not appear to include Arboriculture as a Topic and therefore it has not been demonstrated that trees and woodlands will be considered when designing the routes to avoid and reduce impacts.</p>
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		<p>At 2.3.5 of the report, it states that ‘<i>This cable corridor follows the eastern perimeter of Bladon Heath, avoiding direct woodland intrusion but passing close to several ecological and arboricultural features, including mature trees, hedgerows, and a veteran tree protected under BS 5837 and the NPPF. To avoid trenching within the tree’s root protection zone (RPZ), a Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) section may be required; the final decision on HDD use will be made in consultation with OCC.</i></p> <p>However, without the detailed arboricultural survey and an updated detailed arboricultural impact assessment, an accurate assessment of the route of this cabling on the arboricultural features including a veteran tree cannot be made.</p> <p>The applicant is reminded of the following standing advice: ‘For ancient or veteran trees (including those on the woodland boundary), the buffer zone should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5 metres from the edge of the tree’s canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree’s diameter. This will create a minimum root protection area’ (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions#avoid-impacts-reduce-mitigate-impacts-and-compensate-as-a-last-resort).</p> <p>OCAS comments on cable routes</p> <p>Cable Optionality Area 1 - Northern Site between the Oxfordshire Way, and B4027, south east of Wootton</p> <p>The area proposed by these two options were not assessed by the archaeological evaluations of the proposal. There are however located in an area of considerable archaeological interest with both options running alongside the Witney Ridgeway, recorded as Grundy’s Road 3 and called Heh Street in the Shipton on Cherwell charted od AD 1005. Both options also cross the known line of Akeman Street, the Roman Road from Alchester to Cirencester. In addition, two parallel linear features have been recorded from aerial photographs from 1961 200m NE of these proposed cable routes. These features have been recorded as a possible Neolithic Cursus monument although a</p>
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	<p>re-examination of the photographs does suggest they are likely to be a pre-medieval trackway, a continuation of which would cross the line of these proposed cable options.</p> <p>As such we cannot agree with the assessment in this document (EN010147) which states that no heritage assets would be affected. This area would need to be subject to further evaluation and mitigation, including preservation in situ of any significant remains as set out in the submitted overarching written scheme of investigation.</p> <p>Cable Optionality Area 2 - Area between the Northern and Central Sites on land to the east of Woodstock and in the vicinity of the Bladon roundabout on the A44</p> <p>Option 1 – This area was not subject to the archaeological evaluation and as such the archaeological potential of the site is unknown. The proposed route is however located in an area of archaeological interest and an area of prehistoric settlement has been recorded adjacent to the southern part of this option (HER PRN 28571). This route option therefore has the potential to impact archaeological features related to this settlement and to impact previously unrecorded archaeological deposits along the route.</p> <p>Option 2 – this proposed route also has the potential to impact on the area of prehistoric settlement recorded adjacent to its southern end. The section along Shipton Road also runs immediately north of archaeological features (HER PRN 28750), identified from a geophysical survey and trenched evaluation undertaken as part of a housing application which form a continuation of the scheduled Blenheim Villa (SM 35545).</p> <p>As such we cannot agree with the assessment in this document (EN010147) which states that no heritage assets would be affected. This area would need to be subject to further evaluation and mitigation, including preservation in situ of any significant remains as set out in the submitted overarching written scheme of investigation.</p>
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2.3.5	Page 21	Whilst the applicant has set out how assumptions about use of habitats by bats have led to retention of ecological features, the information needed to identify key flight lines (and therefore areas which are likely to require additional buffering) have not yet been provided so have not been able to inform design. We maintain concerns that the lack of survey for riparian mammals has not been undertaken and therefore cannot inform design (for example wider buffering to avoid disturbance should an otter holt or resting place be present).
2.3.6	Page 22	We continue to support the use of a wider buffer to ancient woodlands (at least 50m in line with best practice, as opposed the minimum 15m buffer). Please see comments also in relation to Q2.3.5 and lack of survey for riparian mammals.
2.4.3	Page 26	The OHA accepts that according to [Appendix 2, REP1-019] the applicant has carried out an assessment of risks to the project from climate change using the UKCP18 RCP 8.5 emissions pathway, which is a valid assessment methodology. However, the assessment looks mainly at average changes in minimum and maximum temperature and rainfall and does not consider the increasing likelihood of extreme weather events through the completion of an extreme value analysis. The OHA refers to paragraph 7.10.23 in [REP1-072] which notes the extreme value analysis carried out as part of the OCC Climate Risk Assessment. This analysis finds that the highest recorded temperatures in recent heatwaves were “far greater extremes than modelled in the UKCP18 climate projections for the 2020s and not anticipated until the 2050s” (page 5). This demonstrates the importance of combining the UKCP18 pathway analysis with additional analysis of extreme weather events which could impact BWSF.
2.4.4	Page 26	<p>The OHA understands that the precise details of carbon sequestration plans may be decided later, however committing to the principles of sequestration to ensure maximised absorption of carbon can be done at this early stage.</p> <p>This could include land management practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converting to deep-rooted, perennial native vegetation or wildflower mixes • Adopting a no-till/low-mow management plan for the site

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting for microclimates (such as increased shade from panels) when establishing planting plans Managed rotational grazing Decompaction and topsoil protection during build out and decommissioning Planting and management of hedgerows and natural buffers around arrays
2.4.5	Page 26	The answer to this question relates to the response to question 2.4.3 above. The applicant's response does not take into account any extreme value analysis, which would include a review of the likelihood of extreme situations such as 90mph winds or intense rainfall, rather than solely assuming a change in average weather conditions. The current level of climate vulnerability assessment is not sufficient to completely rule out the possibility of high winds and storm activity in excess of the manufacturer's specification of the panels.
2.4.7	Page 27	The applicant's response does not directly address the point about whether these mitigations or manufacturing standards were used in the instances of damage to other solar farms raised by the ExA during ISH1. It is not clear whether the mitigations referenced in [REP1-019] are the same as, or in excess of, the mitigations taken on the solar farms referenced by the ExA.
2.5.3	Page 30	OCC welcomes the Applicant's reply. OCC would welcome discussions on their highways proposals with the Applicant land to ensure they are not inconsistent with the works being proposed under the DCO.
2.5.4	Page 31	The applicant indicates that the 17.6ha proposed to be removed via the applicants second change request will be used for skylark mitigation, this potentially goes some way towards addressing our concerns about loss of habitat for breeding skylark (although please see our comments in relation to Q2.8.9 and we agree with the applicants position that there is a compelling case for acquisition of the land.

2.5.5	Page 32	<p>WODC appreciate the clarification as to what the community food growing area will comprise of. WODC support sustainable agricultural practices including agroecological methods of organic food production which are likely to be beneficial for soil health and biodiversity.</p>
2.6.3	Page 37	<p>The OHA acknowledge the response of the applicant to the suggested project amendments made by ICOMOS UK.</p> <p>The applicant’s response to the ExA’s Second Written Questions states that the understanding of the contribution of the wider rural setting of the WHS to the identified Outstanding Universal Value OUV therefore requires consideration of the physical extent of the ‘traditional English countryside and villages’ within the setting of the WHS, i.e. at what point does the rural landscape cease to become a relevant or material part of the setting of the WHS?</p> <p>This is a point that the OHA have sought to emphasise through previous representations including the Local Impact Report. The OHA consider that the wider setting of heritage assets such as Blenheim Palace WHS includes the topography, natural and built environment, land use and visual relationships, social and cultural practices and more intangible dimensions such as perceptions and associations. Management of the wider setting is important in supporting the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site.</p> <p>The setting of Blenheim Palace WHS is not clearly defined and it does not benefit from the protection that a buffer around the WHS would provide. A degree of policy protection for the setting of the WHS is provided by the Cotswold National Landscape, Conservation Areas and Green Belt, but cumulative developments within the setting of the WHS threaten the Outstanding Universal Value of the Blenheim Palace WHS.</p> <p>Planned developments in West Oxfordshire such as Salt Cross Garden Village which is referenced by the Applicant in their response to ExAQ2 are situated outside of the Oxford Green Belt,</p>

		<p>The OHA have previously drawn attention to an ICOMOS Technical Review (appended to the West Oxfordshire’s Relevant Representation [RR-1102]) which highlights concerns about cumulative development within the setting of Blenheim Palace WHS and threats to the OUV in the absence of a buffer.</p> <p>The OHA wish to draw attention the updated Technical Review submitted by ICOMOS [REP4-052] which further explores the impacts of cumulative development on the OUV of Blenheim Palace WHS with specific reference to the Botley West Solar Farm proposed development.</p> <p>ICOMOS considers that the revised Heritage Impact Assessment continues to fall short of the standards set out in the 2022 Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context. While the Heritage Impact Assessment presents a structured analysis, it remains narrowly focused on visual impacts and does not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of how the wider setting of Blenheim Palace supports the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.</p>
2.6.9	Page 41	<p>The applicant indicates that the assessment of impacts and effects on the significance of a heritage asset as a result of change within its setting is largely subjective. In the case of the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Hanborough (Grade I), the setting makes a reasonable contribution to the heritage significance of the church, with the greatest contribution coming from the enclosing churchyard. The wider landscape which provides the longer views in which the church spire is visible is still considered to be part of the setting, but of reduced significance in comparison with the churchyard. Elements of the Project would be visible in the foreground and middle ground of such views and consequently the setting of the church as experienced in these views would change from the predominantly rural situation as at present.</p> <p>This change from a rural to an industrial setting would be the same as that as experienced at the Church of St Peter, Cassington (Grade I).</p>

		<p>The OHA acknowledge that the project would not impact the fabric of the Listed Building or affect the immediate setting but maintain that the heritage significance of the church would be harmed as a result of the change in longer views towards the church from the wider landscape.</p> <p>The OHA recognise that such harms are likely to be regarded as less than substantial in NPS terms and that impacts must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this regard, the OHA consider that similar harms to other heritage assets of the highest significance, e.g. Church of St Peter, Cassington (Grade I) should be weighed in the balance, particularly as the countryside landscape setting of these heritage assets also contribute to the setting of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site.</p>
2.6.10	Page 42	<p>The applicant indicates that the assessment of impacts and effects on the significance of a heritage asset as a result of change within its setting is largely subjective. In the case of the Church of St Peter, Cassington (Grade I), the setting makes a reasonable contribution to the heritage significance of the church, with the greatest contribution coming from the enclosing churchyard. The wider landscape which provides the longer views in which the church spire is visible is still considered to be part of the setting, but of reduced significance in comparison with the churchyard. Elements of the Project would be visible in the foreground and middle ground of such views and consequently the setting of the church as experienced in these views would change from the predominantly rural situation as at present.</p> <p>This change from a rural to an industrial setting would be the same as that as experienced at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Hanborough (Grade I).</p> <p>The OHA acknowledge that the project would not impact the fabric of the Listed Building or affect the immediate setting but maintain that the heritage significance of the church would be harmed as a result of the change in longer views towards the church from the wider landscape.</p> <p>The OHA recognise that such harms are likely to be regarded as less than substantial in NPS terms and that impacts must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this regard, the</p>

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		OHA consider that similar harms to other heritage assets of the highest significance, e.g. Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Hanborough (Grade I), should be weighed in the balance, particularly as the countryside landscape setting of these heritage assets also contribute to the setting of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site.
2.6.11	Page 44	CDC notes that a revised assessment will be presented in the next version of the ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment to assess the impact on the Church of St Michael, Begbroke.
2.6.12	Page 45	WODC notes a revised assessment will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment to assess the impact on Hordley House.
2.6.14	Page 46	VWHDC notes a revised assessment will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment to assess the impact on Upper Whitley Farm.
2.6.16	Page 48	CDC notes that a revised assessment will be presented in the next version of the ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment to assess the impact on Hall Farmhouse, Begbroke.
2.6.17	Page 48	CDC notes that a revised assessment will be presented in the next version of the ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment to assess the impact on Begbroke Conservation Area.
2.6.18	Page 49	<p>The of the Cassington Design Guide is not only to raise the standards of design for the purpose of managing future infill development proposals and/or rural exception sites, but also to bring clarity to the definition of the village.</p> <p>The design guide provides useful context for the settlement pattern, significant views within and from the village to the surrounding countryside and potential for landscape enhancement, all of which are relevant to considering impacts on the setting of the Cassington Conservation Area.</p>
2.6.19	Page 50	OCC Archaeology await the submission of the archaeological evaluation report.

2.7.1	Page 52	VWHDC note there are significant differences between the applicant’s land budget for the NGET substation (3.9ha) and the extent of development proposed in the recent NGET screening opinion request (7ha), which overlaps the DCO application site. If the applicant needs to deliver the NGET substation, VWHDC assume they would need to deliver the whole substation facility within their order limit to have an operational connection to the grid. Further clarity on this is required to ensure the DCO limit does not need to change to accommodate further land to the west of the southern site area.
2.7.2	Page 55	<p>Section 23(3)(b) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 (“LDA”) sets a deadline of two months for determining applications under that section.</p> <p>Parliament considers the timeframe to be appropriate and reasonable. OCC agrees and has developed a tried and tested process for determining such applications (which are not always straightforward) within the timeframe.</p> <p>OCC does not consider it reasonable for this timeframe to simply be halved, and officers have concerns that the deadline could always be met. OCC consider it would be more efficient if the status quo were retained because the officers involved in determining applications are expert in that process.</p> <p>Moreover, as explained, the OHA’s LIR [REP1-072], OCC have an Agency Agreement with each District Authority in relation to them determining consents under the requirements of the LDA1991. This agreement provides for these consenting activities to be undertaken per section 23 of the LDA 1991, including the two-month timeframe. The disapplication of section 23 by the Order and its replacement with the proposed Protective Provisions would require new Agency Agreements to be agreed (or the renegotiation of the existing one). The existence of the Agency Agreement is another reason for maintaining the status quo here.</p>
2.7.5	Page 59	The OHA welcome the naming of each body to be consulted in new paragraph (5) of requirement 11 (code of construction practice) and applaud its clarity. The OHA request that similar clarity is

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		provided in respect requirement 7(1) (biodiversity net gain) which current provides that the relevant planning authority must consult “the relevant statutory nature conservation body”. For the avoidance of doubt, the OHA consider it would be preferable if that body were named.
2.7.6	Page 60	<p>OCC appreciate that different approaches to highways agreements have been followed in different DCO applications and, in principle, would be content to enter into an agreement made under the Order itself provided it is based on OCC’s template section 278 agreement. OCC officers are obviously familiar with the document and would not wish to depart too far from it for the purposes of one project only.</p> <p>Certain OCC officers had understood that a copy of this document had been shared with the Applicant and, since this appears not to be the case, a copy has now been provided. OCC would welcome discussions, as soon as possible, with the Applicant on the document and how they envisage it applying to the proposed highways works.</p> <p>In terms of securing a commitment to enter into a highways agreement, OCC consider it would be clearer if such a commitment were included in the Order itself. Such an approach is preceded in article 23(3) of the Sizewell C (Nuclear Generating Station) Order 2022 (SI 2022/853) and is also being followed by the promoter of the Fenwick Solar Farm Order in article 16(3) of its draft DCO [REP5-006]. (The Fenwick examination has recently closed).</p>
2.7.7	Page 61	OHA still consider a Grampian requirement is necessary and reasonable. The differences between the latest indicative plans by NGET (7ha) and the applicant’s land budget for the NGET substation (3.9ha) indicate that the applicant may not be able to deliver the NGET substation within the current order limits.
2.7.8	Page 64	Please refer to the OHA’s response to Q2.7.8 in [REP4-074] . The OHA clarified that a further CTMP would be required if 30% of panels were replaced within each of the three project areas individually (i.e. 30% of c.1/3 of the scheme). As such the applicant’s modification of the oOMP [REP4-026] does not sufficiently address the OHA concerns on this issue.

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2.7.9	Page 65	<p>Whilst OCC is pleased with the applicant’s amendment of the Conceptual Drainage Strategy to ensure that the LLFA is collaborated with in the development of a Surface Water Drainage Strategy, there is no provision within the DCO to ensure that the LLFA are adequately resourced for this collaboration. As was raised in at page 184 of the joint LIR [REP1-072] the DCO only make provision for a fee to discharge requirements (which the OHA has outlined is insufficient to cover the resourcing required to discharge the requirements). The councils also raised the issue that work not covered by the requirements is not covered by the fees proposed in schedule 16 at all.</p> <p>As such, for the LLFA to be able to collaborate with the applicant to develop a Surface Water Drainage Strategy, the DCO would need to make provision to cover the costs of this collaboration with the LLFA. The OHA have indicated how a PPA secured via Schedule 16 of the DCO would be the most appropriate means of ensuring the councils are adequately resourced to undertake this additional work at page 184 of the joint LIR [REP1-072].</p>
2.7.10	Page 65	The OHA note the applicant’s statement that: <i>“the hedgerows which are intended to be removed are shown on the Hedgerow Removal Plans [AS-007], therefore the powers are sufficiently identifiable and limited.”</i>
2.7.11	Page 66	Please see the OHA’s response to this question [REP4-074] .
2.7.13	Page 68	OCC would welcome further discussion on the detail of road widening works as the concerns of Cumnor Parish Council regarding the B4017 are noted and need to be investigated.
2.7.16	Page 71	An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) should be provided for this to demonstrate accurately the impact of these works to the ancient woodland, considering recommendations on buffers. There appears to be space for the compound to be relocated to ensure greater buffer.

		<p>From an arboricultural perspective, in relation to the HDD tunnelling, where possible, this should also avoid buffer zones. Therefore, it is advised that all options should be considered to relocate the route to avoid buffers to the ancient woodland. It is acknowledged that HDD tunnelling is a method to reduce arboricultural impacts and at a depth of around 9m and in this location where it appears to be under a road, it is unlikely to lead to root disturbance. However, further evidence in the form of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement would be required to demonstrate the method and impact accurately, including the precise locations of entrance and exit holes.</p>
2.8.1	Page 72	<p>OHA welcome that the applicant has strengthened its commitment for pre-commencement surveys in the oCoCP in relation to water vole and otter. However, we draw attention to para 99 of government circular 06/05 which states that: <i>“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been made in granting the decision.”</i></p> <p>We also raise concern in relation to the examiner’s question 2.3.5 which requests evidence that <i>“The layout has been designed to avoid minimise direct or indirect effects on valuable flora and fauna.”</i> We question how this can have been achieved without undertaking surveys for riparian mammals, particularly in terms of identifying any otter holts or resting places which would be sensitive to disturbance during construction.</p>
2.8.2	Page 73	<p>Please see our comments in relation to Q2.8.1 and Q2.3.5; we remain concerned, particularly with regard to otters, that their likely use of the site is based on assumption rather than survey data. It is also unclear to what extent ditches within the site may be suitable to support water vole.</p>
2.8.9	Page 77	<p>It is appreciated that the applicant has given further consideration to effectiveness of proposed mitigation for loss of skylark breeding habitat. However, we have some concerns with the</p>

	<p>assumptions made in the Skylark Technical note which used the following perimeters to determine where might support skylark:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater than 50m from hedgerow, tree, woodland and solar infrastructure (including fence lines) (i.e. area is away from any location where avian predators may perch);• Grassland habitat; and• >16m² in area. <p>However, Government guidance AB4: Skylark Plots [https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20250604003130/https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/skylark-plots-ab4] indicates that fields supporting Skylark plots (and therefore it is assumed suitable to support breeding skylark) should be more than 5ha in size if they have an open aspect or >10ha if bounded by trees or woodland. A large proportion of the land parcels listed in Table 1.3 of annex 6 are less than 5ha in size – further detail is needed to understand if these areas are bounded by trees or woodland before it can be assumed they will be suitable to support skylark. It is also unclear whether these areas (particularly those in the Evenlode Corridor) currently support skylark and therefore to what extent their capacity to support skylark might be increased through habitat management.</p> <p>We also question the assumed density of skylark territories of 0.46/ha (equivalent to a spring sown crop) when it is reported that these areas will be managed as meadows (a type of natural grassland) which have a reported skylark territory density of 0.27/ha (see CIEEM In Practice issue 117 September 2022 pp47-51 available at [REDACTED])</p> <p>Additionally, it noted that in calculating the potential number of breeding skylark that could be supported there is reliance on provision of the increased foraging opportunities within the solar farm boosting the carrying capacity of surrounding fields 3 fold, and an assumed existing number of territories in the surrounding fields (which has not been confirmed).As previously stated, skylark plots are designed to increase foraging within a winter sown crop, and it is unclear how effective</p>
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		<p>they will be within a solar farm (with the height of the solar panels potentially a deterrent to access by skylarks).</p> <p>We consider that a requirement for a farmland bird strategy would allow more detailed consideration of suitable measures both on and off-site to maintain the skylark population during operation of the solar farm, we maintain our concern that many of the grassland areas (e.g. the archaeological areas) within the site are likely too small to support breeding skylark.</p>
2.8.10	Page 78	<p>The OHA are satisfied that monitoring can be secured via Requirement 6 of the dDCO. Section 12 of the OLEMP [REP3-034] sets out a monitoring regime which will ultimately be secured by Requirement 6. Section 12 of the OLEMP [REP3-034] will need amending to ensure that it covered all monitoring requirements as set out in the Joint LIR [REP1-072] and the OHA would welcome discussion with the applicant on this.</p>
2.8.13	Page 79	<p>Please see our response to the applicant’s answer to Q2.3.4 above regarding the need for arboricultural surveys.</p>
2.9.1	Page 81	<p>OHA welcome the applicant’s response regarding the size of the generating system and clarification on the export agreement with National Grid Electricity Transmission. The response makes it clear that the export limit is defined by this agreement, and it would be helpful if a definitive response could be provided on the nameplate installed capacity of the proposed facility. This enables us to understand if the proposed facility may seek for a larger export agreement in the future.</p>
2.9.3	Page 82	<p>VWHDC received a screening opinion the NGET substation on 8 August. The supporting screening documentation indicates a proposed 800MW BESS scheme to the immediate west of the substation. This proposal should be included in the cumulative assessment.</p>

2.9.5	Page 84	<p>The applicant states <i>‘It is not the Applicant’s intention to make wholesale changes to the LVIA methodology, as this has been produced based on best practice guidance, contained within GLVIA3 and clarified in LI TGN 2024 01, as agreed with the OHA.’</i></p> <p>Whilst the OHA agree that GLVIA3, as clarified in LI TGN 2024 01, is best practice guidance, this does not translate to agreement of the applicant's methodology. In paragraph 1.2.29 of the applicant’s response to the OHA’s response to the Rule 17 Letter [REP3-066] the applicant stated, <i>‘The Applicant’s Position – The use of the National Highways Standard significance of effects matrix (DMRB LA104, Table 3.8.1) adapted to reflect LVIA terminology (Table 8.12 of APP-045) is appropriate for the Botley West Solar Farm project.’</i></p> <p>The OHA remain concerned about the use of the Design ‘Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA104 for a solar development.</p>
2.10.2	Page 87	<p>As set out in our response to this question [REP4-074]:</p> <p><i>Flood modelling for the ordinary watercourses was reviewed by a consultant on behalf of the Host Authorities. This review was of the hydraulic modelling reports only and did not undertake model rerunning or development of its own modelling.</i></p> <p><i>Hydraulic models are a simplified representation of real-world processes, and therefore there are assumptions and limitations. This includes representations of features, landform and calculations to represent the different flood events. The modelling included sensitivity to downstream boundary and information on the operation of the sluices.</i></p> <p><i>The conclusions from the review were that the model for the existing flooding from the ordinary watercourses would require further, more detailed work:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• to cover the potential for validation/calibration from sourcing any known flood incidents and;</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>further testing of the sluice operation and its impact on the flood risk and to understand a worst-case scenario.</i>
2.10.3	Page 88	It is good practice to have information on the ground conditions including infiltration tests during a pre-application stage when relying on this method to drain the site. This would include infiltration testing across different areas of the site boundary to identify any localised conditions. This information then supports the design at the preliminary stage and supports assumptions on the suitability of the proposed strategy. This was identified in our LIR [REP1-072] 001-76 para 7.5.15 with reference to OCC’s Relevant Representation [RR-0793] .
2.11.12	Page 97	The OHA do not consider that the response provided by the applicant adequately addresses our previous comments on the definition of openness. Openness has not been explicitly assessed in the LVIA. Whilst the OHA recognise that the Green Belt assessment touches on the issue of openness the LVIA does not assess the impact of the proposals on openness as an aspect of landscape.
2.11.13	Page 98	OHA continue to disagree with the applicant that the economic, education and sustainability benefits from the proposed development amount to Very Special Circumstances (VSC) to justify inappropriate development in the Oxford Green Belt. Such benefits can be achieved on land outside of the Green Belt and limited or no weight should be attributed to these VSC.
2.13.2	Page 102	<p>Please see our previous response within the Joint LIR [REP1-072] at paras 7.4.38 to 7.4.40 relating to Tree Protection Scenarios.</p> <p>In addition, and as commented before, without a detailed survey of all trees and woodlands and an updated impact assessment, an accurate and detailed assessment of the arboricultural impacts including to tree roots cannot be made.</p>

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2.13.3	Page 103	The OHA expect the updated LVIA to address all of the concerns expressed in Joint LIR [REP1-072] and subsequent submissions. The OHA concerns about Landscape effects during construction as raised in responses to EXQ1.14.11 (rep3-072) remain.
2.13.4	Page 103	The OHA expect the updated LVIA to address all of the concerns expressed in Joint LIR [REP1-072] and subsequent submissions.
2.13.6	Page 104	The OHA expect the updated LVIA to address all of the concerns expressed in Joint LIR [REP1-072] and subsequent submissions with regards to photography and photomontages.
2.13.7	Page 105	The approach is still a standard; one approach for all hedges in all character areas, a 3m height for both existing and proposed hedgerows. This is not a bespoke approach to allow the balance between retaining views while softening the impact of the solar panels.
2.13.8	Page 106	Please refer to the OHA’s response to this question [REP4-074] .
2.13.9	Page 108	The OHA concerns remain with regards to impact of the proposed mitigation on landscape and visual effects.
2.13.10	Page 109	OHA note that the applicant states that discrepancies will be picked up in the revised LVIA Chapter.
2.13.12	Page 110	The OHA expect the updated LVIA to address all of the concerns expressed in Joint LIR [REP1-072] and subsequent submissions.
2.13.13	Page 110	The OHA concerns remain with regards to visual effects during operation.
2.13.14	Page 111	The OHA concerns remain with regards to Viewpoints.

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2.13.15	Page 112	The Glint and Glare Study area considered dwellings that were within the one-kilometre assessment area and have a potential view of the panels. 699 dwellings have been assessed which is considerably different in scale to the 18 number listed in the response to Q2.13.15.
2.14.4	Page 115	The OHA welcome the operational noise limits being defined in the outline Operational Management Plan [REP4-026] but operational noise from the development should be limited to a rating level which is up to 4dB greater than the background sound level, not just at residential receptors.
2.14.5	Page 116	The OHA still consider a noise impact assessment will be required.
2.15.5	Page 117	OCC has previously outlined their support for the concept of educational opportunities, including children being active outdoors. However, none of the OHAs have been involved in any detailed discussions about the proposed educational facility or its recently proposed location.
2.15.10	Page 121	The OHA are content with the applicant’s reasoning for only including a ‘Health’ section in the draft SoCG for OCC.
2.16.3	Page 123	Please see response to 2.7.13.
2.16.4	Page 125	OCC: further engagement with OCC is required; agreement on mitigation to resolve these issues remains outstanding.
2.16.6	Page 126	OCC: It is acknowledged that the applicant would be responsible for maintaining the new permissive paths and cycleways, including associated landscaping and hedgerow planting within the Project site throughout the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases. The applicant however has not answered who is responsible for managing/maintaining diverted PRow.

2.17.2	Page 129	<p>Bill of Quantities</p> <p>We do acknowledge the content of the ES Chapter 18 [APP-055] and the changes to the Operational Management Plan and Decommissioning Plan to include greater detail and timeframes for waste arisings and management in the future, and we support the provision of this information.</p> <p>However, a clear bill of quantities remains the most suitable approach for establishing the quantities and types of waste management required over the duration of the project to be able to assess the developments impacts. For example, in Q2.7.8 of [REP4-037] the applicant states that no more than 30% of panels will be replaced in single year. If there are two million PVs on site, this could be 600,000 PVs being removed and requiring waste management each year over a 5-year period, which is a significant waste stream. This conflicts with the information within the ES Chapter 18 [APP-055] which sets out that estimates of 31,500 PVs to be recycled annually.</p> <p>A clear bill of quantities would address these types of conflicts and enable full assessment of the waste arisings and management of the development.</p>
2.17.3	Page 129	<p>Future Waste Management</p> <p>As above, we do acknowledge the content of the ES Chapter 18 [APP-055] and the information within these sections.</p> <p>Waste arising types and quantity projections over the duration of the development, even if only estimates, alongside clearly defined management routes, rather than just recycling for example, should be set out ahead of any decision being made. It should also be established whether there is current and expected capacity to manage these arisings.</p> <p>If all PVs are to be replaced at least once in the next 38 years of the development, that is potentially 4, 000,000 PVs entering the waste stream over the proposed duration of this development. How this is to be managed should be considered and assessed.</p>

		<p>The applicant has responded that there are existing facilities within the UK to manage end of life PVs. It needs to be established if these have capacity to manage up to 4 million PVs and if not, how many new facilities are required.</p> <p>In addition, if the development is approved, as the panels are to be replaced throughout the development life, a list of processors and the management route for the waste arisings should be established and updated in the Operational Management Plan, not just the Decommissioning Plan.</p>
2.17.5	Page 130	<p>It is considered that the ES Chapter 18: Waste and Resources [APP-055] does not adequately explore existing waste management facilities to handle operational waste, in particular facilities to potential manage and recycle the 2million PV Solar Panels that are replaced during the operational phase.</p>
2.17.8	Page 132	<p>In the latest response [REP4-037] the applicant has now only committed to full removal of all “above ground” infrastructure. Below ground infrastructure will only be removed “where feasible and appropriate” and that “where full removal is not practicable, these will be cut to 1m depth”. They also only refer to cables within mineral safeguarding areas, not the impact of the piles.</p> <p>As the solar panels extend across the minerals safeguarding area—not just the cabling—the installation of support structures for the PV’s necessitates extensive piling within the safeguarded minerals area. As previously set out in our response to the Examining Authorities First Written Questions [REP2-050] this could have significant impact on the mineral safeguarding area as it leaves potentially considerable quantities of 2m steel piles in the ground, as it is understood each panel requires 4 piles. This could significantly damage any future mineral resource viability, thereby potentially sterilising the resource.</p> <p>In their response the applicant has now also confirmed that they are also not intending to remove the HDD cabling where they fall on mineral safeguarding areas, following decommissioning. The implications of these cables would then need to be assessed by any future mineral operator prior to extraction in the area, which could reduce viability even further.</p>

Annex 4	Page 143	<p>Applicant’s Approach to Design Note.</p> <p>The OHA acknowledge this design approach but query that the scheme has adhered to the Design Principles, such as the scheme has been ‘landscape led’. Concerns about the design approach to the scheme are covered in OHA previous responses including the approach to mitigation, [REP4-74] and [EXQ2 2.9.4].</p>
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REP4-038 – 14.3 Applicant’s Responses to other Deadline 3 Submissions

The OHA make the following comments but please note that these are not exhaustive and in some cases the issues arising have been referred to in the table above.

Page 6 – Waste - see our previous responses to the Applicant’s Responses to ExA’s Second Written Questions (ExQ2) (Rev 0) Part 1. Whilst we acknowledge that this development is not the only source of solar panels in Oxfordshire, currently this is the largest development with potentially the use of over 4 million solar panels, therefore producing the most amount of solar panel waste in Oxfordshire, if not the UK. To be able to plan successfully for these arisings the Waste Planning Authority require details on waste types, management route required and timings, even if only estimates. That has not been provided for Botley Solar Farm application.

Page 7 - Minerals Safeguarding. OCC comments to deadline 3 submission relate to the use of secondary and recycled aggregate and the requirement for primary aggregate. The response provided by the applicant does not correlate to the points made by the Minerals Planning Authority. However it should be noted and from evidence within the MRA **[APP-195]**, alongside evidence within BGS Brit Pits data, that Mineral resources can be found at varying depths across the proposed area located within the Minerals Safeguarding Area, and in addition there was an active working in close proximity to the proposed site, Therefore the comment that there are no reserves is considered incorrect.

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Pages 7 and 19 - Quantity of Material & Decommissioning – The response from the applicant to these areas sets out in their response to OHA that all piles will be removed, however in their response **[REP4-037]** the applicant has now only committed to full removal of all “above ground” infrastructure. Below ground infrastructure will only be removed “where feasible and appropriate” and that “where full removal is not practicable, these will be cut to 1m depth”.

As the solar panels extend across the minerals safeguarding area, the installation of support structures for the PV’s necessitates extensive piling within the safeguarded minerals area. As previously set out in our response to the Examining Authorities First Written Questions **[REP2-050]** this could have significant impact on the mineral safeguarding area as it leaves potentially considerable quantities of 2m steel piles in the ground, as it is understood each panel requires 4 piles. This could significantly damage any future mineral resource viability, thereby potentially sterilising the resource.

Page 21 – Minerals and Waste Resources and Page 29 – Compliance with NPS EN-1.

In response to the applicant's response to these two questions, OCC maintain the view as set out within the Authority Local Impact Report **[REP1-072]**. The amount of sand and gravel that would be prevented from being worked is considered significant and would come at a time when central government are prioritising house building and growth which will need the adequate supply of sand and gravel to meet demand. In addition, whilst the applicant states that the planning permission would be temporary, and it would be removed at the end of forty years. It would be the case that the development would be in pace throughout the life of the next Minerals and Waste Local Plan, and most likely for the one following that.

Also, as set out previously paragraph 168(c) of the NPPF states that when determining planning applications for end-of-life extensions to existing renewable sites, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site. This suggests that once the precedent of using the site for a solar farm, there would be planning policy support for continuing to do so once the temporary permission has expired. This principle could be applied to Botley Solar Farm in the future, and this would further prevent or hinder the future working of the mineral.

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A statement of progress on SoCG that remain outstanding and submission of SoCG completed since D4 (if required)

OHAs will continue to work with the applicant on SoCG. Updated drafts are to be provided by the applicant.