

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025



Simon Raywood,  
Botleywestsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Simon,

**Re: Botley West Issue Specific Hearings (ISH)**

Thank you for providing Natural England with the agenda for Issue Specific Hearing 2. I am writing to inform you that, unfortunately, we are not able to attend. We would be pleased to respond to any questions from the ExA that arise from the hearing at a subsequent deadline.

We note that the agenda includes four items under the ecology topic. Regarding Farmland Birds, Biodiversity Net Gain and Bird Strike, Natural England have no further comments to make. We have provided written answers to questions on these subjects in ExQ1 and ExQ2, but we do not expect to provide any further advice on these matters.

We are still working with the applicant to reach a position on protection of bat habitat and commuting routes. We are unable to attend the hearing to discuss this matter due to limited specialist availability.

We are still waiting for some information from the applicant on bats, namely the collation and interpretation/analysis of the latest bat survey results from summer of 2025. However, we have continued to make progress on the issue, and this week the applicant has shared with us indicative mapping and a technical bat report which helps us better understand the planned mitigation.

We understand that the applicant does not intend to fully update the masterplan with the proposed mitigation for bats. We are comfortable with this, provided that the necessary mitigation is secured and detailed in the oLEMP and that this is certified by relevant DCO Requirements.

We are broadly comfortable with the proposed approach to mitigation; the remaining questions are over technical elements. Namely a) the location and size of each buffer and b) synthesis and interpretation of **all** the underlying data. We currently only have incomplete data. Until the full data has been presented, we cannot fully advise on whether the extent of buffering is appropriate or not.

The applicant has proposed three tiers of hedgerow and buffer treatments to safeguard commuting and foraging routes for bats. The 'A' tier is the most vital, and we advise that the location and extent of these should be certain **prior** to decision. However, we accept that the B and C tier could be more flexible in their location and extent, and that the applicant requires more time to ascertain the details of these. We think that discussions regarding the B/C tier post-consent may be necessary. Provided the applicant is committed to continued engagement with Natural England on the details of the buffer design and locations, this is acceptable in our view.

We would like to highlight that where Natural England does not attend hearings, this should not be construed as a lack of concern on outstanding issues.

We would be happy to discuss the case directly if you wish.

Yours faithfully,

Jonathan Shavelar  
Thames Solent Team