

Date: 14 October 2025  
Our ref: 2025-72390-SPM-NSIP  
(NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE  
PROJECT)



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Dear ██████████

<p><b>DRAFT MITIGATION LICENCE APPLICATION STATUS:</b> INITIAL DRAFT APPLICATION <b>LEGISLATION:</b> THE PROTECTION OF BADGERS ACT 1992 (as amended) <b>NSIP:</b> Botley West Solar Farm <b>SPECIES:</b> Badger <i>Meles meles</i></p>
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Thank you for your draft badger development licence application in association with the above NSIP site, received in this office on the 03/10/2025. As stated in our published guidance, once Natural England is content that the draft licence application is of the required standard, we will issue a 'letter of no impediment'. This is designed to provide the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State with confidence that the competent licensing authority sees no impediment to issuing a licence in future, based on information assessed to date in respect of these proposals.

### Assessment

Following our assessment of the resubmitted draft application documents, I can now confirm that, on the basis of the information and proposals provided, Natural England sees no impediment to a licence being issued, should the DCO be granted.

However, please note the following issues have been identified within the current draft of the method statement that will need to be addressed before the licence application is formally submitted. Our Wildlife Adviser, Cassandra Jackson discussed this matter with Nick Betson via e-mail correspondence on the 13/10/2025 where it was confirmed that the necessary amendments would be made. Please ensure that the method statement is revised to include these changes prior to formal submission. For clarity these include:

### Named Ecologist:

As part of the formal licence application, a suitably qualified individual must be proposed as the Named Ecologist. This person must have held or been named on a previous badger licence that involved a project of a similar scale, methodology and mitigation strategy. The reference numbers for the previous licences that will evidence the proposed Named Ecologist's experience must be detailed in Section 11(b) of the Application Form.

### Surveys:

Natural England highly recommend completing updated surveys before the licence application is formally submitted to confirm that the status of the setts have not changed. Updated surveys

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should be conducted six months prior to the submission of the formal licence application. If additional surveys have been completed since the LONI application was submitted, then the results must be included in the Method Statement document submitted as part of the formal licence application. The date of the most recent survey must also be detailed.

The sett classifications and mitigation & compensation proposals may need to be adjusted based on the updated survey results.

It will strengthen your application if you include recent photographs of the setts to be impacted. Each photograph should be labelled with the date it was taken, and the sett & entrance number it represents.

A map/figure must be provided that shows the location of each sett entrance and its status (active, partially active or inactive). Each sett entrance should be numbered and referred to in the Method Statement. The directions of the tunnels leading from the sett entrances must also be shown, either on the same figure or on a separate figure.

### **Impact Assessment:**

Further information relating to the construction works must be detailed in the Method Statement, including details of all works that will occur within 30 meters (m) of sett entrances as well as the expected duration of the works.

An assessment of other anticipated impacts to badgers pre, mid and post development should be included in the method statement of the formal licence submission. This should include but not be limited to an assessment of the impacts to the badger's ability to forage pre, mid and post construction of the proposed development.

### **Sett closures:**

If disturbance is reasonably expected to result in a longer-term impact (e.g. more than 4-6 weeks) on the badgers occupying setts or cause tunnel collapse NE agree with the proposal that badgers are temporarily excluded from the sett(s) and the sett(s) closed and proofed against re-entry by badgers before the disturbance activities begins and for its duration.

### **Artificial Badger Sett:**

NE welcomes the creation of Artificial Badger Sett (ABS) where main setts are to be impacted and or temporarily closed.

However, if works are to be temporary and where sufficient sett resources by ways of suitable alternative *natural* setts are available to the badger social group during the construction and the disturbing activities it may be more proportionate to demonstrate in the application that the badgers would have sufficient resources (sett building and foraging) to support the social group relying on their natural setts only. The creation of an ABS would not always be necessary.

*Suitable alternative natural setts such as annex, outliers or even disused setts of a suitable size and location, with signs that the same social group have recently visited that area or sett.*

### **Application Form:**

An application form must be completed and submitted as part of the formal licence application.

If a formal licence application is submitted for this development, please include the reference number '2025-72390-SPM-NSIP' in the Pre-Submission Screening Service text box in Section 4 of the Application Form.

### **Generic Advice:**

Please note the correct terminology for individuals working under a badger licence is 'Additional Authorised Person' not 'Accredited Agent'.

## **Next Steps**

Should the DCO be granted then the mitigation licence application must be formally submitted to Natural England. At this stage any modifications to the timings of the proposed works, e.g. due to ecological requirements of the species concerned, must be made and agreed with Natural England before a licence is granted.

If other minor changes to the application are subsequently necessary, e.g. amendments to the work schedule/s then these should be outlined in a covering letter and must be reflected in the formal submission of the licence application. These changes must be agreed by Natural England before a licence can be granted. If changes are made to proposals or timings which do not enable us to meet reach a 'satisfied' decision, we will issue correspondence outlining why the proposals are not acceptable and what further information is required. These issues will need to be addressed before any licence can be granted.

I should also be grateful if an open dialogue can be maintained with yourselves regarding the progression of the DCO application so that, should the Order be granted, we will be in a position to assess the final submission of the application in a timely fashion and avoid any unnecessary delay in issuing the licence.

I hope the above has been helpful. However, should you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Kind Regards,

[Redacted Signature]

Senior Wildlife Officer

Wildlife Licensing – Chargeable Advice and Strategic Casework

[Redacted Contact Information]

[aturalengland.org.uk](https://naturalengland.org.uk)

## **Annex - Guidance for providing further information or formally submitting the licence application.**

**Important note:** when submitting your formal application please mark all correspondence 'FOR THE ATTENTION OF ((*Cassandra Jackson*)).

### **Submitting Documents.**

Documents must be sent to the Natural England Wildlife Licensing Service (postal and email address at the top of this letter).

### **Changes to Documents –Reasoned Statement/Method Statement.**

Changes must be identified using one or more of the following methods:

- underline new text/strikeout deleted text;
- use different font colour;
- block-coloured text, or all the above.

### **Method Statement**

When submitting a revised Method Statement please send us one copy on CD, or by e-mail if less than 5MB in size, or alternatively three paper copies. The method statement should be submitted in its entirety including all figures, appendices, supporting documents. Sections of this document form part of the licence; please do not send the amended sections in isolation.