

Date: 11 November 2025
Our ref: 502179
Your ref: EN010147



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Dear Sir/Madam

NSIP Reference: EN010147

Natural England's Closing Statement in respect of Botley West Solar Farm

Examining authority's submission deadline: 13th November 2025

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Thank you for today contacting Natural England and inviting us to issue a closing statement. As the DCO application progressed, we have been primarily concerned with the potential impacts to internationally rare bat populations.

As detailed in our Written Representations [REP1-087] we were concerned that there were deficiencies in the survey data and analysis, a lack of detail on avoidance and mitigation measures and a lack of detail on the necessary post-consent management and monitoring.

Throughout the DCO application, we have been well engaged with the applicant and made our concerns relating to bats clear. The applicant has understood these concerns and worked with us proactively to address them. By October 2025 we were satisfied that the approach was going to be appropriate, as detailed in our letter [AS-045], but a few final pieces of information were needed on the exact locations of buffers, the rationale behind these choices, and detailed data analysis.

The final Bat Technical Note and Updated ES Appendix 9.4: Bat Surveys were shared with NE on the 22nd October. After review of these documents and a subsequent meeting on the 6th November to discuss the SoCG, NE agreed all of our points and concerns had been sufficiently addressed. Further detail can be found in the agreed statement of common ground submitted on the 10th November 2025.

Provided the measures within the oLEMP and oCEMP are carried out, we have no further formal concerns. We welcome future engagement on the location of the 'Tier B' buffers and outputs from the monitoring strategy.

The consideration of impacts of solar farms on bats is a novel issue. The initial bat surveys uncovered much greater numbers of rare Annex II bat populations than expected and there is little guidance regarding appropriate survey effort for a solar development. The applicant responded well to these survey findings and worked with NE to agree the further survey required.

We have worked to balance the best available evidence, the precautionary principle and proportionality in the knowledge that this is one of the first schemes to attempt to avoid and mitigate these impacts.

Botley West has produced a novel and innovative mitigation strategy which we advise is likely to avoid or mitigate any potential impacts to bats. Additionally, this approach will provide a substantial range of additional benefits for the natural environment, improving the ecological connectivity of the landscape, providing food and refuge for bird species, and providing new habitat for invertebrates and beetles.

Furthermore, we welcome the work to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain, and in particular we wish to commend the strategy for the River Evenlode corridor. The proposed habitat improvements here are truly ambitious and will deliver benefits to water quality as well as a host of species and wider biodiversity. This part of the scheme's targeted environmental enhancements align well with the recently published Oxfordshire local nature recovery strategy.

If you have any further questions please contact the case officer at

██████████@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully,

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Senior Officer

Thames Solent Area Team