

Date: 03 June 2025
Our ref: 512420
Your ref: EN010149



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

T 0300 060 3900

The Planning Inspectorate

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Jonathan Manning

NSIP Reference Name / Code: Springwell Solar Farm - EN010149
Interested Party reference: WSF-EIA015

Title: Natural England's Written Representations

Examining Authority's submission deadline: 02 June 2025

Natural England (NE) 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.

Natural England's full detailed comments on this application can be found in our Relevant Representations (RR-291), which were 'front-loaded' to ease engagement through examination. As a result, the contents of this letter are intended to summarise any updates to our advice, without repetition of the advice already provided. Where no update is provided, it should be assumed our advice remains as stated in our Relevant Representations.

Ongoing engagement between NE & the Applicant:

The applicant has engaged with NE since submission of our Relevant Representations, and the Applicant's draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) should be submitted to your authority at Deadline 1 (D1). This Statement of Common Ground clearly sets out both where NE and the Applicant have agreed matters, and where matters remain under discussion. NE will continue to work with the applicant to update the SoCG throughout examination.

In addition to the SoCG, **NE have attached to this response a Risk and Issues Spreadsheet**. This document has been written by NE, and sets out each item raised within our Relevant Representations, with updated comments detailing engagement with the applicant to date, including an updated RAG (red, amber or green) rating.

It is our intention that the Risk and Issues Log can continue to be updated and submitted to your authority at relevant deadlines, to maintain a clear record of issues tracking throughout examination.

Summary of Updated Advice:

Please see below a brief summary of our updated advice:

In our Relevant Representations, NE did not raise any 'Red' fundamental concerns, but did identify four outstanding 'Amber' items. The following provides a summary of progress with regards to these Amber

items. Further detail can be found within the Risk & Issues Log attached, and the Applicant's draft SoCG.

NE12 – Querying the categorisation of temporary land uses within ES Table 11.12.

Applicant's updates since RR: The Applicant has provided further clarity regarding Table 11.12 within their draft SoCG (Ref 2.17).

NE's updated advice: This item remains Amber. There remains uncertainty around the amount of BMV land that will be temporarily impacted by construction compounds and access tracks, however, NE will review the updated oSMP to be submitted by the applicant at D1.

NE14 – Querying the permanent loss of 77.1ha of Best and Most Versatile Land for Green Infrastructure.

Applicant's updates since RR: The Applicant has provided further information regarding the permanent loss of 77ha of BMV land as a result of Green Infrastructure in their draft SoCG (Ref 12.19).

NE's updated advice: This item remains Amber. NE welcome the further clarity provided, and acknowledge that a 'worst case scenario' has been assessed in the ES. Nonetheless, additional detail on the loss of BMV to 'Landscape Structural Planting' has been requested.

NE16 – Querying the approach to handling of soils in wet conditions.

Applicant's updates since RR: The Applicant has stated in their draft SoCG (Ref 12.21) that the oSMP will be updated to provide further information regarding soil handling. The updated oSMP will be submitted at D1 to reflect this.

NE's updated advice: This item remains Amber. However, NE will review changes to the oSMP to be submitted by the applicant at D1.

NE17 – Querying the agricultural land restoration commitment & methods.

Applicant's updates since RR: The Applicant has provided further information regarding agricultural land reinstatement within the draft SoCG (Ref 2.22). This includes clarifying that a commitment to restore land to its original ALC grade will be included in an update to the oSMP, to be submitted at D1.

NE's updated advice: This item remains Amber. However, NE welcome the further information provided & will review the updated oSMP submitted by the applicant at D1.

For any further advice on this consultation please contact the case officer [REDACTED] and copy to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Sustainable Development Senior Officer