

By email to:

beaconfen@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

[REDACTED]
Infrastructure Manager
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln LN1 1YL

nsips@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Date: 16 July 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

Application by Beacon Fen Energy Park Limited for an Order granting Development Consent for the Beacon Fen Energy Park Project

I refer to your letter dated 2 July 2026 addressed to all interested parties. Thank you for providing Lincolnshire County Council the opportunity to comment on the responses received in respect of the Secretary of States (SoS) information request dated 12 June 2026.

The Council notes the Applicant's responses to questions on mitigation for skylark and bats. In relation to mitigation provided for skylark, the Applicant has stated that PV exclusion zones areas identified in 6.4.4 Figure 1.4 Indicative Site Layout Plan (Revision 1) [REP2-028] *"...will be managed to support a greater density of skylark than at present..."*. The Council also notes the Applicant's updates to the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan which state that *"Within the open buffer areas adjacent to ditches and in the wildflower meadows the habitats will be improved for ground nesting birds, including skylark,..."*. Whilst the Council welcomes these commitments and recognises the potential value of these areas for foraging birds, the exclusion zones identified in REP2-028 and buffer areas adjacent to ditches are considered unlikely to be of sufficient scale or openness to accommodate skylark's ecological requirements for extensive open habitat and unobstructed sightlines in order to successfully nest. The latest research strongly suggests that skylark actively avoid panel arrays for breeding purposes, along with any boundary feature >3m, using these grassland areas instead for foraging. The extent of this avoidance behaviour is 50-85m from boundary features >3m meaning the vast majority of the development site will become unsuitable for breeding skylark."

The Council maintains its position that each development should ensure that it provides adequate mitigation for its own impacts on ground nesting birds to avoid the potential for cumulative impacts as far as possible. A significant negative effect could occur if this and other developments result in the loss or degradation of habitat which impacts the long-term viability of ground nesting bird populations within the county.

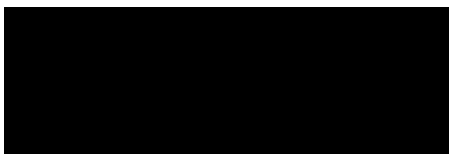
With the above in mind, the Council maintains its position stated during the examination that there is insufficient mitigation provision for ground nesting farmland birds, in particular skylark. ES Chapter 7 Ecology (Revision 4)[REP8-013] predicts a “permanent very low adverse impact” on skylark (REP8-013, 7.6.61). The Council therefore remains concerned about the potential for cumulative impacts on ground nesting bird species, particularly skylark, arising from the number of similar developments across the County.

The Council also notes Natural England’s response to the SoS’s request for information in relation to the suitability of the mitigation and avoidance measures proposed for bats and whether the Applicant will require a Protected Species licence for the proposed works. The Council defers to Natural England on the requirement for a Protected Species licence for bats but agrees with Natural England’s recommendation that bat surveys should be updated prior to construction of the scheme to ensure that the proposed mitigation measures remain appropriate and will be effective.

The Council also maintains its position stated during the examination that, given the current uncertainties surrounding the impacts of large-scale solar developments on bat populations, it is important that a robust programme of post construction bat monitoring is secured. The Council considers that the requirement for such a programme is proportionate and would help to address existing knowledge gaps and ensure that any unforeseen adverse effects are identified allowing them to be mitigated appropriately. It would also contribute to the wider evidence base needed to inform mitigation approaches for similar developments both within Lincolnshire and nationally. The Applicant has not yet committed to the establishment of such a programme.

Until the above matters are satisfactorily addressed, The Council remains of the opinion that the SoS cannot be confident that the ecological impacts of the Proposed Development have been fully mitigated.

Yours faithfully,



Head of Planning