
FENWICK SOLAR FARM

**Fenwick Solar Farm
EN010152**

Pink-Footed Goose Technical Note

Document Reference: EN010152/APP/8.40

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure)
Regulations 2009

August 2025
Revision Number: 00

Revision History

Revision Number	Date	Details
00	August 2025	Deadline 5

Prepared for:
Fenwick Solar Project Limited

Prepared by:
AECOM Limited

© 2025 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited (“AECOM”) for sole use of our client (the “Client”) in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Third Party Data.....	2
2.1	Use of Third-Party Data	2
2.2	Burnet Heritage Trust Data	2
2.3	Burnet Heritage Trust Data in the Context of Data Collected by the Applicant	4
3.	No Significant Effects Report	6
3.2	Areas within the Order limits	6
3.3	Areas outside the Order limits.....	6

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 As requested by Natural England in their Responses to the ExA's Second Written Questions at Deadline 4 **[REP4-042]**, the Applicant has assessed in further detail the data referenced by the Burnet Heritage Trust in their submission at Deadline 1 **[REP1-054]** and re-stated at Deadline 3 **[REP3-035]** and Deadline 4 **[REP4-043]**. As such, this note sets out:
- a. The details of data specifically mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust in previous submissions, including the methods for collecting such data; and
 - b. Whether these data alter the conclusions of the No Significant Effects Report **[REP2-038]**.
- 1.1.2 This note should be read alongside the responses already provided by the Applicant on Pink-footed Goose and data presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust at Deadline 2 **[REP2-058]** and Deadline 4 **[REP4-038]**.
- 1.1.3 The Applicant responded at Deadline 4 **[REP4-038]** stating that *"the Applicant considers the observations presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust to support the conclusions presented in the NSER **[REP2-038]** and the findings of the Applicant's surveys, these being that Pink-footed Goose occur widely across the agricultural landscape surrounding the Humber Estuary, utilising suitable habitat as it becomes available in any given year, including (on occasion) the fields within the Order limits and immediate surrounds. However, as noted by the Burnet Heritage Trust, there are significant seasonal movements and occurrence of birds across the wider area beyond the Order limits. Whilst these populations (and individuals) are undoubtedly those that occur on the Humber Estuary (as well as at other locations around the Humber and indeed other areas of the UK), the Order limits themselves are not functionally important in sustaining the population of Pink-footed Goose associated with the Humber Estuary (i.e. they do not regularly and consistently support Pink-footed Goose)."*
- 1.1.4 The Applicant would like to re-iterate that they acknowledge there is a wealth of existing data on bird occurrence in the Study Area and where relevant, this is referenced in the desk study results and has been used to inform the baseline characterisation presented in **Volume III, Appendix 8-7 Breeding Bird Report [APP-152, APP-153]**, **Appendix 8-8: Non-Breeding Bird Report [APP-154]** and **Volume I Chapter 8: Ecology [REP4-010]**. For example, Section 4.1 of **Volume III, Appendix 8-8: Non-Breeding Bird Report [APP-154]** references bird records from publicly available online resources, such as eBird, at sites including Topham Wetlands/Topham Ferry Flashes and Norton Common. These records have been reviewed and provide context when considering the identification of relevant features in the Study Area.

2. Third Party Data

2.1 Use of Third-Party Data

- 2.1.1 The aim of using desk study data is to provide background information that can assist with determining the scope of detailed surveys to be undertaken and provide further context to the findings of these detailed surveys. Information obtained from third parties during a desk study is dependent upon individuals and organisations having made and submitted records for the area of interest. With all third-party data, including that submitted to eBird and websites such as Doncaster Birding, unless the species or number of individuals is unlikely to occur in the region, the assumption is that the record submitted is accurate, and the reliability of observers or the data is not interrogated further.
- 2.1.2 These data should not be seen as a comprehensive or systematic survey of the Order limits, but rather represent observations provided by volunteers/casual observers on an *ad hoc* basis when they have been visiting adjacent sites, e.g. Topham Ferry Flashes. Therefore, whilst these data do provide useful contextual information, they do not replicate the systematic surveys, which follow industry standard methods and are approved by relevant stakeholders such as Natural England, undertaken by the Applicant of the Order limits.
- 2.1.3 It should be noted that due to copyright and user agreements/terms of use these data are not repeated in full, but are summarised as appropriate. As far as the Applicant is aware, these data do not appear in databases held by the Doncaster Local Records Centre and so were not available for obtaining as part of the Applicant's original data request to that organisation.

2.2 Burnet Heritage Trust Data

- 2.2.1 This note considers the data presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust at Deadline 1 **[REP1-054]** and re-stated at Deadline 3 **[REP3-035]** and Deadline 4 **[REP4-043]**, namely that *"up to 770 birds were present for two weeks in the survey area (just outside the DCO area) between 2nd and 15th October 2024, ranging from Topham to Southfield Reservoir (data available from www.doncasterbirding.co.uk)"* and *"At least 300 were observed dropping onto the DCO area from Topham on 14th October 2024 (www.ebird.org/Checklist/S19891715), with a total of 3500+ flying over (either continuing or potentially landing)."*
- 2.2.2 In addition, the Burnet Heritage Trust also state that *"a significant proportion of these birds' roost around Humberhead Levels NNR and the Humber Estuary SPA & RAMSAR, suggesting an important contribution to the functionally linked populations. Maximum roosting totals on include 6,000 on Thorne Moors NNR (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S121158258>), 12,000 on Hatfield Moors NNR (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S121442283>) and 24,000 Read's Island RSPB within the Humber Estuary SPA & RAMSAR site (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S198652369>)."*
- 2.2.3 The Applicant has reviewed the source data on both the eBird platform and Doncaster Birding website and provides the following commentary on the data submitted by the Burnet Heritage Trust.

Observations within the Order limits

- 2.2.4 The only observation from the data referenced by the Burnet Heritage Trust that is potentially associated with the Order limits is as follows:
- a. Topham Ferry Flashes 14 October 2024- recorded both on the eBird platform and Doncaster Birding website (by the same observer) and referenced by the Burnet Heritage Trust **[REP1-054]**, with the comment associated with the observation on eBird referring to. an impressive movement of birds westwards between 08:50 to 10:30 in multiply skeins (flocks) with at least 300 observed dropping onto proposed Fenwick Solar Farm lands, as viewed from Topham.
- 2.2.5 No further details are provided on what the 300 individuals were doing or the duration of their stay, nor are there any photos of the birds, so presumably once the birds had landed, they were no longer visible to the observer and given that the observation was not part of a systematic survey, the observer did not linger to determine this. Therefore, it is not possible to determine where within the Order limits the birds landed, e.g., whether it was areas proposed for solar arrays or non-developed areas of habitat creation and enhancement. Subsequent checklists for Topham Ferry Flashes on eBird do not mention similar numbers of Pink-footed Goose being recorded and so no further evidence exists that birds continued to be present within the Order limits beyond the brief observation on 14 October 2024 and that the observation presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust was any more than a brief occurrence, with birds quickly moving on.
- 2.2.6 The ‘*total of 3500+ flying over (either continuing or potentially landing)*’ mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust, are described in the original observation (as taken from the comment on eBird) as part of ‘*an impressive movement westwards*’ and not of any birds landing within the Order limits.

Observations outside the Order limits

- 2.2.7 As set out in section 2.2.1 the Burnet Heritage Trust make reference to ‘*up to 770 birds were present for two weeks in the survey area (just outside the DCO area) between 2nd and 15th October 2024, ranging from Topham to Southfield Reservoir (data available from www.doncasterbirding.co.uk)*’.
- 2.2.8 The applicant has reviewed the data sources mentioned above and summarises the observations from outside the Order limits as follows.
- 2.2.9 Records of Pink-footed Goose shown on Doncaster Birding for the period between 2 October 2024 and 15 October 2024, relevant to the Went Valley, include:
- a. 10 birds in the Sykehouse – Topham Ferry Flashes area (location and activity unknown) on 5 October 2024,
 - b. 60 birds at Southfield Reservoir (activity unknown) on 7 October 2024,
 - c. and a movement of birds through the Went Valley on 10 October 2024 with the following noted (described as per the entry on the website):
 - i. 3,150 west over Sykehouse – Topham Ferry Flashes (same record as that discussed in section 2.2.6).

- ii. 27, including 1 down with Greylag Goose flock at Southfield Reservoir, 771 south of Went Ings beyond barrier and 335 further west towards Sykehouse.
 - iii. Sykehouse – west of Eskholme – 250 in stubble, possibly part of the 771 seen from Southfield Reservoir.
- 2.2.10 Whilst it is difficult to determine the exact location of these sightings the village of Sykehouse is approximately 1km to the east of the Order limits; Went Ings at least 2.5km north-east of the Order limits; and Southfield Reservoir at least 3km north-east of the Order limits. At this distance there would be no disturbance from any phase of the Scheme to the large flocks reported above.
- 2.2.11 In addition, the roost sites mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust at Thorne Moors National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Hatfield Moors NNR (collectively the Humberhead Peatlands NNR) and Read's Island RSPB reserve are all over 8km from the Order limits. There are no impact pathways arising from the Scheme that would potentially affect roosting Pink-footed Goose at that distance.
- 2.2.12 Data presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust demonstrate that Pink-footed Goose occur widely across the region, as shown by the large flocks recorded outside the Order limits and that patterns of occurrence including roost site usage, such as that shown for Thorne and Hatfield Moors, are dynamic, with the expanding population utilising the wider agricultural landscape depending on annual cropping patterns and availability of food resources, such as cereal stubbles.
- 2.2.13 The specific data mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust only recorded a single observation of 300 birds occurring somewhere within the Order limits as part of a wider autumn movement through the Went Valley, i.e., 3,500+ flying over westwards, coinciding with the birds arrival in the UK. Data from that period (see Section 2.2.9) shows the occurrence of larger flocks of birds (or the same flock or part thereof) at various locations beyond 1km away from the Order limits. Although a flock of 300 individuals would equate to 1.1% of the current Humber Estuary population (based on 5 year peak mean WeBS count data for 2019/20-2023/24¹), there is no evidence that these birds were doing any more than briefly dropping into the fields as part of a wider movement along the Went corridor by the species on that date, i.e. there was no regular or sustained usage of the Order limits during that period or indeed throughout the remainder of the winter period.
- 2.2.14 Therefore, whilst Pink-footed Goose are clearly present in the Doncaster area with notable roosts occurring at Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the birds utilise a wide area for foraging, with larger flocks occurring to the west of the Order limits (beyond 1km) and closer to the roost sites on the Humberhead Levels and Humber Estuary.

2.3 Burnet Heritage Trust Data in the Context of Data Collected by the Applicant

- 2.3.1 As set out in **Volume III, Appendix 8-8: Non-Breeding Bird Report [APP-154]** and the **No Significant Effects Report [REP2-038]**, the Applicant

¹ Five-year peak mean (2019/20-2023/24) of 27,329 individuals.

recorded Pink-footed Goose during detailed surveys of the Order limits and wider survey area over the course of two winter periods between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Observations within the Order limits

- 2.3.2 Only two flocks of Pink-footed Goose were recorded on the ground foraging within the Order limits, on single dates in October 2023. A flock of 28 individuals was observed in a pasture field in the northeast of the Order limits and another flock of 39 birds (totalling a peak monthly count of 67 individuals) were observed to be foraging in an arable field in the south of the Order limits. The single observation presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust of Pink-footed Goose somewhere within the Order limits does not demonstrate any increase in the Order limits suitability for the species. This is particularly noticeable when considered in the context of observations recorded by the applicant in their surveys and mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust outside of the Order limits.
- 2.3.3 The Order limits contain both arable and pasture fields, habitats which are prevalent throughout the region. However, the limited brief occurrences of Pink-footed Goose within the Order limits, along with other environmental conditions, such as mature hedgerows/trees, pockets of woodland and residential properties, as well as distance from roost sites, suggests that the land within the Order limits is of lower suitability for the species than areas outside the Order limits where larger numbers and higher usage have been recorded.

Observations outside the Order limits

- 2.3.5 A count of 360 individuals was recorded on a single occasion in a field outside of the Order limits north of the River Went in November 2023. This flock flew east and beyond the limits of the Survey Area a short while after being recorded. Several flocks of Pink-footed Goose (including one of up to 600 individuals) were observed overflying but not setting down in the Survey Area. Along with observations mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust and discussed in sections 2.2.7-2.2.9, this suggests that land beyond the Order limits is of greater suitability for Pink-footed Goose, reflected by observations of higher usage.
- 2.3.6 In summary, the pattern of occurrence recorded during surveys undertaken by the Applicant reflects the data presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust in Section 2.2. This being that the occurrence of Pink-footed Goose during October and November is a regular event across this region, presumably associated with birds arriving on the Humber from their breeding grounds, but even when there are significant movements of birds through the region, there is no sustained or regular usage of the Order limits during this period or at any later stage during the winter, i.e. the land within the Order limits is of low suitability for the species, and areas of higher foraging suitability occur beyond the Order limits, as supported by the observations provided by the Burnet Heritage Trust.

3. No Significant Effects Report

- 3.1.1 The Applicant concludes that the data presented by the Burnet Heritage Trust and considered alongside data collected by the Applicant demonstrate that the fields within the Order limits are of low suitability for Pink-footed Goose and not functionally linked to the Humber Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site.

3.2 Areas within the Order limits

- 3.2.1 The arable fields within the Order limits do not provide an important resource for Pink-footed Goose and are therefore not important to maintaining the integrity of the population of Pink-footed Goose, nor would it adversely affect the conservation status of the species if these fields were no longer available (e.g. in the scenario that without the Order limits there would be a significant reduction in the Pink-footed Goose foraging resource, which may have a significant effect on the sustainability of the population). As such, the conclusion that the fields within the Order limits are not of importance to maintaining the population of wintering Pink-footed Goose associated with the Humber Estuary SPA (i.e. they are not supporting regular usage by important numbers of individuals and that the Order limits are not functionally linked) remains correct.
- 3.2.2 The conclusion presented in sections 6.3.15 and 8.6.2 of the **No Significant Effects Report [REP2-038]** remains unchanged: *“Overall, there will be no LSEs of the Scheme on the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar regarding the loss of functionally-linked habitat for pink-footed goose in the operation and maintenance phase. This impact pathway is screened out from AA.”* and *“Overall, it is concluded that the habitats within the Order limits are not functionally-linked to the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar and there is no potential for the Scheme to result in LSEs regarding this impact pathway.”*

3.3 Areas outside the Order limits

- 3.3.1 The distance of the Pink-footed Goose flocks occurring outside the Order limits mentioned by the Burnet Heritage Trust and discussed in sections 2.2.7-2.2.14 of this note are well beyond the 200m distance considered in sections 6.2.1 – 6.2.4 of the **No Significant Effects Report [REP2-038]** in relation to disturbance of the species occurring outside the Order limits, as per the records from the applicant's surveys.
- 3.3.2 As such as the conclusion presented in sections 6.2.4 and 8.2.2 of the **No Significant Effects Report [REP2-038]** remains unchanged: *“Overall, LSEs of the Scheme on the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar regarding noise and visual disturbance to pink-footed goose in functionally linked habitats can be excluded. This impact pathway is screened out from AA.”* and *“Infrequent observations of low numbers of pink-footed goose, qualifying species of the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar, were recorded within the bird survey buffer zone surrounding the Order limits. Given this, arable fields and pasture adjoining the Scheme are not considered to be functionally-linked to the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar and no material visual and noise disturbance on pink-footed goose will occur which could give rise to an LSE.”*



BUILD | OWN | OPERATE | MAINTAIN

BOOM-POWER.CO.UK