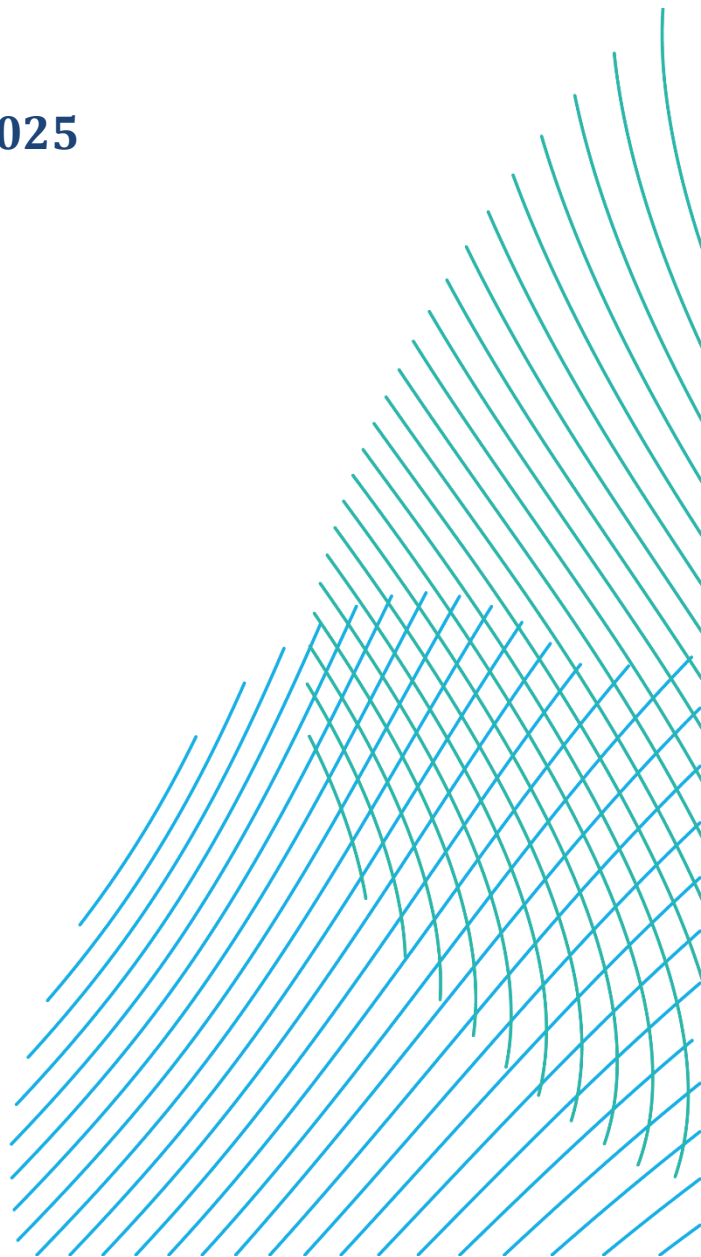




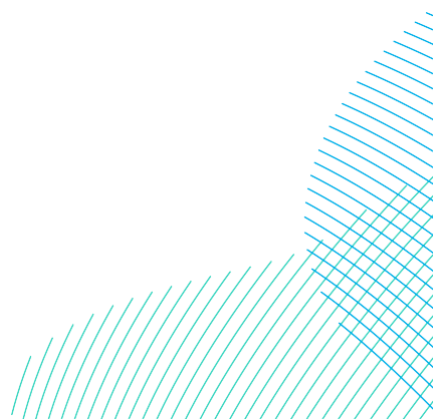
# Statement of Common Ground with Natural England (draft)

August 2025



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to support the Examination of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application (the 'DCO Application') for Peartree Hill Solar Farm (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2 The DCO Application is for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) for the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array electricity generating facility, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure which would allow for the generation and export of electricity.
- 1.1.3 The SoCG is a 'live' document that has been prepared collaboratively by the Applicant and the Consultee (Natural England).
- 1.1.4 The SoCG has been prepared in accordance with the Guidance for examination of DCO applications which was published in 2024 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.1.5 This Guidance comments that:  
*"A statement of common ground is a written statement prepared jointly by the applicant and another party or parties, setting out any matters on which they agree, or indeed disagree. A SoCG helps to ensure that the evidence at examination focuses on the material differences between the main parties and therefore makes best use of the lines of questioning pursued by the Examining Authority".*
- 1.1.6 The aim of this SoCG is to therefore provide a clear position of the progress and agreement made or not yet made between the Applicant and Natural England on matters relating to the Proposed Development. Where matters are yet to be agreed, the parties will continue to proactively work to reach agreement.
- 1.1.7 The SoCG will be updated as more information becomes available and as a result of ongoing discussions between the Applicant and Natural England.

## 1.2 Parties to this Statement of Common Ground

- 1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared by (1) the Applicant and (2) Natural England .

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Act 2008: Examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (April 2024)

1.2.2 Collectively, the Applicant and Natural England are referred to as 'the parties'.

## 1.3 Terminology

1.3.1 Section 3 of this document sets out the relevant matters raised through discussion between the parties. It provides a summary of the position of each party and identifies the status of discussions on each matter:

- "Agreed" indicates where the issue has been resolved between the parties and is not anticipated to be subject to further discussions;
- "Under discussion" indicates where a matter remains in active dialogue between the parties and a final position has not yet been reached;
- "Not Agreed" indicates where the parties have established a final position that they cannot resolve the matter and will remain a point of difference.

## 2 Record of Engagement

### 2.1 Summary of consultation and engagement

- 2.1.1 The parties have been engaged in consultation and engagement throughout the development of the Proposed Development. **Table 1** shows a summary of the meetings and correspondence that has taken place between the Applicant and Natural England in relation to the Proposed Development. This is limited to engagement which is materially relevant to the contents of this SoCG and does not seek to include every correspondence between the parties (e.g. that which was primarily administrative).

**Table 1: Record of Engagement since February 2024**

Date	Purpose of engagement	Description
<b>February – March 2024</b>	To seek advice regarding the approach to bird surveys	Email correspondence to discuss existing bird survey data, surveys completed to date, and proposed future surveys.
<b>March – April 2024</b>	To consult on a draft version of the wintering bird survey report	Email correspondence to discuss a draft version of the wintering bird survey report (subsequently developed into the submitted <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.4: Wintering Bird Survey Report [APP-108]</b> ).
<b>15 July 2024</b>	To seek advice in relation to Habitats Regulations Assessment work.	Online meeting to discuss the methodology for assessment work and potential mitigation and enhancement measures in relation to European site qualifying species and functionally linked land.
<b>July – September 2024</b>	To consult on a draft version of the Agricultural Land Classification Report.	Email correspondence to discuss a draft version of the Agricultural Land Classification Report (subsequently developed into the submitted <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 10.2: Agricultural Land Classification Report [APP-127]</b> ) and potential impacts on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.
<b>November 2024 – January 2025</b>	To provide an update on the project, to outline how Natural England's statutory consultation comments had been addressed in the relevant DCO Application	Email correspondence to consult on the following documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy (for consultation purposes only - contents were subsequently incorporated into the submitted <b>Outline Landscape and</b></li> </ul>

Date	Purpose of engagement	Description
	documentation and to reach agreement on any outstanding issues prior to submission.	<p><b>Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP) [APP-156]</b>;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A draft version of the Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment (later developed into the submitted <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [APP-145]</b>); and</li> <li>• A draft version of the Outline Soil Management Plan covering the grid connection cable route (later incorporated into the submitted <b>Outline Soil Management Plan (Outline SMP) [APP-159]</b>).</li> </ul>
<b>14 January 2025</b>	To consult on the Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy and the draft version of the Habitats Regulations Assessment – Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment.	Online meeting to discuss Natural England's comments on the Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy and the draft version of the Habitats Regulations Assessment – Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment (shared on 25 November 2024).
<b>3 February 2025</b>	To provide comments in relation to glint and glare.	Email from Natural England providing points for consideration in relation to glint and glare.
<b>March – April 2025</b>	To clarify points in relation to the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [APP-156].	Email correspondence to address Natural England's queries on the submitted <b>Outline LEMP [APP-156]</b> in relation to the 'bird days' calculation and the amount of mitigation land proposed for European site qualifying bird species.
<b>21 May 2025</b>	Kick-off progress meeting for the Pre-examination/ Examination period.	Online meetings to discuss Natural England's relevant representation responses and how the Applicant proposes to address them.
<b>21 July 2025</b>	To share the grid connection bird survey report.	Email from the Applicant to share the <b>Grid Connection Bird Survey Report [EN010157/APP/8.4]</b> .
<b>July 2025</b>	To set out the Applicant's proposed responses to some matters in Natural	Email correspondence to share an updated draft version of the submitted <b>Outline LEMP [APP-156]</b> and the submitted <b>Habitats Regulations</b>

Date	Purpose of engagement	Description
	England's relevant representation.	<b>Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [APP-145].</b>

## 3 Current Position

- 3.1.1 The table below provides a summary of the current position of the Applicant and Natural England in relation to specific matters that have been under discussion to date.
- 3.1.2 Where a matter is not represented in the table, it should be assumed that it is either: (i) agreed between the parties and has not been the subject of detailed discussion; or (ii) not relevant to the discussion between the parties.
- 3.1.3 As noted above, this is a 'live' document and there are some aspects that are still under discussion between the parties. The intention is to provide a final position in subsequent versions of the SoCG, addressing and identifying where changes have been made and where agreement has been reached between the parties.



**Table 2: Current position of the Applicant and Natural England in relation to specific matters that have been under discussion to date**

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
International designated sites - surveys				
NE01	Bird surveys – general <i>Biodiversity</i>	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1e), Natural England considers that the survey effort for the Site (excluding the grid connection cable route, the data for which had not been reviewed by Natural England at the time of the comment) is acceptable to inform the assessment of impacts from loss of functionally linked land due to factors such as the number of surveys undertaken and the results obtained.	The Applicant welcomes this response. See <b>ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2 Revision 2]</b> , <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.4: Wintering Bird Survey Report [APP-108]</b> , <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.5: Ornithological Survey Report [APP-109]</b> , and <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.9: Passage Bird Survey Report [APP-113]</b> for details.	Agreed
NE02	Bird surveys – grid connection cable route <i>Biodiversity</i>	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1e), Natural England welcomes that passage/ wintering bird surveys have been undertaken on the grid connection cable route and will provide detailed comments once the survey report is provided. Natural England welcomes that in the absence of targeted bird survey data of the grid connection cable route, a precautionary approach has been taken, with the associated land assessed as being functionally linked.  <u>Update 8 August 2025:</u>	The Applicant welcomes this response. Since this comment, the <b>Grid Connection Bird Survey Report [EN010157/APP/8.4]</b> , which is submitted at Deadline 1, has been shared with Natural England.  The <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to incorporate the new data and is submitted at Deadline 1, although the overall conclusions in the Habitat Regulations Assessment are unchanged given that a precautionary approach had already been adopted.	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		Natural England welcomes the incorporation of the new data in the updated HRA at Deadline 1. Natural England will review the information and provide comments at Deadline 2.		
International designated sites – mitigation areas				
NE03	Core mitigation areas and the implementation of a buffer  <i>Biodiversity</i>	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1a), Natural England advises that all core mitigation areas should be surrounded by a buffer of 150m, within which the land use is secured for a purpose which will not affect the integrity of the mitigation area. However, Natural England agreed in principle at a meeting on 19 June 2025 that the presence of screening (e.g. hedgerows) between proposed mitigation areas and areas of solar PV modules would negate the need for a 150m buffer from the solar PV modules from a visual impact perspective, assuming hedgerows are high enough to screen panels and other works. Natural England requested that if a 150m buffer is not included within the proposals, further assessment of the suitability of areas closer to the panels (e.g. some species rely on open vistas to forage), and the amount of 'core habitat' available, should be provided. The 'core	<p>The 'bird days' calculation to gauge the quantum of mitigation for bird species associated with International Designated Sites has been updated to take account of data from the <b>Grid Connection Cable Route Bird Survey Report [EN010157/APP/8.4]</b>, which is submitted at Deadline 1. The <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> has been updated to incorporate the amended 'bird days' calculations as well as to provide further assessment of the suitability and the potential carrying capacity of each mitigation area to deliver mitigation for the intended species.</p> <p>The Applicant will continue to engage with Natural England on this topic.</p> <p>The updated <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> is submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p>habitat' should be of sufficient size and ecological suitability to deliver the required mitigation for the birds displaced by the development.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u>  Natural England welcomes that further information will be provided in the Outline LEMP at Deadline 1. Natural England advises that justification should also be included in the HRA, where relevant to the conclusions of the assessment. Natural England will review the information and provide comments at Deadline 2.</p>		
NE04	<p>Permissive paths and the proposed mitigation areas</p> <p><i>Biodiversity</i></p>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1b), Natural England noted that Figure 3.4 Indicative Environmental Masterplan [APP-058] detailed proposed permissive walking routes around mitigation areas 9 and 11 and advised that the impact of these paths on the functionality of the proposed mitigation areas should be assessed in the HRA. Natural England also requested clarification on whether the proposed footpaths will be separated from the mitigation areas by fencing to prevent dogs from entering the mitigation areas.</p>	<p>The Applicant is investigating ways to address this issue, such as the re-routing of the proposed permissive paths around mitigation areas 9 and 11, the use of signage in appropriate locations instructing dog walkers to keep their dogs on a lead and/ or additional fencing. The Applicant will continue to engage with Natural England on this topic.</p> <p>The <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> and <b>ES Volume 3, Figure 3.4: Indicative Environmental Masterplan [APP-058]</b> will be updated to reflect any changes as</p>	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England will continue to engage with the Applicant on this topic.</p>	necessary and submitted at subsequent deadlines.	
NE05	<p>Hydrology of the proposed mitigation areas</p> <p><i>Hydrology and Flood Risk</i></p>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1c), Natural England welcomed the proposed creation of scrapes but advises that the existing drainage regime should be considered to determine the ability of the proposed fields to hold sufficient water. In the absence of hydrological studies or assessment prior to construction, a precautionary approach is needed. If hydrological studies are not completed at this stage, Natural England advises that the HRA should include a detailed assessment of the potential alternative approaches to mitigation. This should include an assessment of whether the absence of scrapes would reduce the carrying capacity/ suitability of the area for the relevant bird species and therefore determine whether a larger area of mitigation would be required under the alternative scenarios.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes that further information will be provided in the Outline</p>	<p>The <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> has been updated to include further information regarding the viability of the proposed scrapes based on known information on the current hydrological statuses and permeability of soils in Mitigation Areas 11 (Field E6), 13 (Fields E13/E14) and 9 (Field D18). An initial review indicates that Mitigation Areas 11 and 13 are suitable locations to create scrapes successfully. Further assessment has been provided in the updated <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> of the suitability and the potential carrying capacity of each mitigation area to deliver mitigation for the intended species and to set out that pre-construction hydrological studies are proposed to determine the exact locations of the scrapes within the mitigation areas.</p> <p>The <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to include cross-references to relevant sections of the <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b>.</p>	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		LEMP and HRA at Deadline 1. Natural England will review the information and provide comments at Deadline 2.	The updated documents are submitted at Deadline 1.	
NE06	Management of the proposed mitigation areas  <i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1d), Natural England advised that the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear objectives.</li> <li>• Targets for each objective, including SPA bird use targets and habitat targets,</li> <li>• Details of required management and monitoring (including who is responsible and when it will take place).</li> <li>• Details of limits of acceptable change.</li> <li>• Details of remedial actions, where appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes that further information will be provided in the Outline LEMP at Deadline 1. Natural England advises that justification should also be included in the HRA, where relevant to the conclusions of the assessment. Natural</p>	<p>The <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> sets out the broad framework for the monitoring strategy to be carried out during the operational phase of the Proposed Development. It has been updated to include indicative management and monitoring procedures, and targets for success criteria and potential remedial actions. The monitoring strategy has taken on board the points raised by Natural England, and the final management and monitoring protocol in the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan will be agreed in consultation with Natural England at the detailed design stage.</p> <p>The updated <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> is submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		England will review the information and provide comments at Deadline 2.		
NE07	'Bird days' calculation methodology  <i>Biodiversity</i>	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE1f), Natural England requested that the lapwing and golden plover 'bird days' requirements be considered separately when calculating the amount of mitigation in hectares required for wintering bird species, in order to ensure that the mitigation is sufficiently large enough to deliver for the combined number of both species recorded.  <u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Based on the information provided, Natural England agrees that this point is now resolved.	The Applicant agreed to this request. See the <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> for details. It should be noted that calculations regarding lapwing and golden plover have been redone to take account of the data in the <b>Grid Connection Cable Route Bird Survey Report [EN010157/APP/8.4]</b> , which is submitted at Deadline 1. The <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> has been updated accordingly and is submitted at Deadline 1.	Agreed
International designated sites – potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to functionally linked land				
NE08	Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to functionally linked land for relevant qualifying bird features of the listed SPA/	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE2a), Natural England suggested that further assessment should be provided in the HRA regarding the predicted location of 'noisy' works in the context of bird survey results, to identify whether disturbing noise levels from the development will reach land utilised by birds in significant numbers. However, in a meeting on 19 June 2025, Natural	The Applicant welcomes this response. Within Fields E4, E5 and E15, E17 and D17 (adjacent to the Humber Estuary designated sites Mitigation Areas 9, 11 and 13), the Applicant will avoid completing the most disturbing (e.g. piling, installing access tracks, laying cables, etc.) during winter (October to March). Only less disturbing activities (e.g. commissioning works, including panel installation) would take place in these fields during winter, if necessary. Should this not be	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
	Ramsar sites during construction  <i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>England agreed in principle with the Applicant's proposed approach to mitigating noise and visual disturbance to functionally linked land as long as potential impacts are assessed in the HRA. Natural England also agreed that additional noise modelling would not be necessary should it be possible to avoid potential impacts through timing of work.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes that further information will be provided in the updated HRA at Deadline 1. Natural England will review the information and provide comments at Deadline 2.</p>	<p>possible, acoustic fencing would be installed for the construction period to provide a noise and visual barrier, complementing hedgerow screening already in place.</p> <p>The <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to Inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> and the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (Outline CEMP) [EN010157/APP/7.2 Revision 2]</b> have been updated accordingly to secure these commitments and are submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	
International designated sites – potential disturbance to lamprey				
NE09	Potential disturbance impacts to lamprey  <i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE3), Natural England agreed that there would not be adverse effects on the integrity of the Humber Estuary SAC/ Ramsar resulting from vibration/ noise disturbance impact to lamprey resulting from HDD or electromagnetic field impacts once proposed mitigation is taken into account (i.e. HDD pits would be positioned a minimum of 50m from the River Hull; HDD under the River Hull would be at a minimum depth of 7m;</p>	<p>The Applicant welcomes this response. The <b>Outline CEMP [EN010157/APP/7.2 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to secure the measures relating to distance of HDD pits from Main Rivers, depth of HDD under the River Hull and insulation of cabling under the River Hull, and is submitted at Deadline 1.</p> <p>While the Applicant cannot commit to restrictions on timing of the HDD works under the River Hull at this stage, given that construction phasing has not been finalised, it will adhere to these timings</p>	Agreed

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p>cabling under the River Hull would include an insulating layer made of XLPE, also known as cross-linked polyethylene, or similar; and the preferred timing of the HDD work would be spring/ summer, i.e. April to September, to avoid the peak lamprey migration period).</p> <p>In a meeting on 19 June 2025, Natural England agreed that there were not likely to be adverse effects in the unlikely event that works need to be undertaken outside of the spring/ summer period (assuming all other mitigation is adhered to) but requested that both scenarios be considered in the HRA.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved, subject to inclusion of the required measures in the outline CEMP.</p>	<p>where possible. In the unlikely event that it is not possible to avoid the lamprey migration period, no adverse effects are anticipated, given that the HDD under the River Hull would be at a minimum depth of 7m, short-term (estimated to take a maximum of 24 hours), and that fish without a swim bladder (such as lamprey) have the lowest sensitivity to noise/ vibration. See the updated <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b>, which is submitted at Deadline 1, for details.</p>	
International designated sites – potential water quality impacts				
NE10	Potential abstraction impacts resulting from HDD	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE4), Natural England notes that the sHRA [APP-145] states that 'water supply impacts may arise due to abstraction' as a result of HDD. However, no further	The Applicant agrees to this request. The <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform the Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to confirm that the water for	Agreed



Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
	<i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>details are provided in the sHRA [APP-145] regarding where the water required for HDD will be sourced. Natural England advises that the source of the water for HDD should be clarified. If water is to be sourced from a local watercourse, the potential impacts to the Humber Estuary designated sites should be assessed in the HRA.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved, subject to the measures being suitably secured.</p>	<p>HDD will be brought to site and to remove mention of abstraction. No water will be abstracted from the River Hull or a tributary of the Humber Estuary for the HDD. Wastewater from the HDD wastewater (including bentonite) will be incarcerated within the launch pit and transported to a specialised local facility for disposal.</p> <p>The updated <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform the Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> is submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	
NE11	HDD (bentonite breakout)  <i>Construction</i>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE5), Natural England noted that a general bentonite breakout management plan was provided in the <b>Outline CEMP [APP-153]</b>, which includes generic countermeasures, and that further details regarding HDD breakout will be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan. However, Natural England advises that the Outline CEMP should provide sufficient site-specific detail on the required mitigation measures for bentonite breakout to inform conclusions in the HRA.</p>	<p>The Applicant is unable to provide further details of bentonite breakout management activities at this stage as they cannot be finalised until a Principal Contractor is appointed and site-specific methodologies are agreed upon.</p> <p>As set out in the <b>Outline CEMP [EN010157/APP/7.2 Revision 2]</b>, further details regarding HDD bentonite breakout will be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan, once the Principal Contractor has been appointed.</p>	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u>  Natural England notes the Applicant's position that final details of bentonite breakout management activities cannot be provided at this stage before a Principal Contractor is appointed. However, we advise that it should be possible to provide further details at the application stage to inform the HRA, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing the options of what the procedures could be (i.e. Rochdale envelope type approach)</li> <li>• assessing is the worst-case scenario to show whether AEoI can be ruled out</li> <li>• confirming that the general HDD practices included in the outline CEMP will be secured, as a minimum</li> <li>• clarifying how the approach will be decided post-consent.</li> </ul>		
NE12	Cleaning of solar PV modules	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE6a), Natural England advises that clarity should be provided regarding the cleaning substances to be used in the cleaning of solar PV modules, with	The Applicant agrees to this request. The <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to confirm that the solar PV	Agreed

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
	<i>Water Resources</i>	<p>impacts to water quality assessed in the HRA if appropriate. Natural England advises that a methodology which does not impact water quality should be used. The agreed approach to panel cleaning should be secured via the OEMP.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved, subject to inclusion of the required measures in the outline OEMP.</p>	<p>modules will be cleaned using deionised water only and therefore there would be no impacts on water quality as a result of cleaning the solar PV modules. The <b>Outline OEMP [EN010157/APP/7.3 Revision 2]</b> has also been updated to clarify details of solar PV module cleaning.</p> <p>The updated documents are submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	
NE13	<p>Fire suppression/ protocol</p> <p><i>Water Resources</i></p>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE6b), Natural England requests details of the proposed automatic clean agent fire suppression system, with impacts to water quality assessed in the HRA if appropriate. Natural England advises that the firefighting protocol for the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) should be specified, with an explanation of the methodology by which a fire within a BESS container will be extinguished set out. Where possible, firefighting facilities should use methods which do not impact on water quality. If non-water-based solutions need to be employed, the</p>	<p>The Applicant agrees to this request. The <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan [EN010157/APP/7.6 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to provide details on the automatic clean agent (aerosol or gas) fire suppression system that would be used in the event of a battery fire. The use of a non-water-based system reduces the need for large volumes of on-site water and reduces the risk of contamination of adjacent habitats from firewater. Water would only be used to cool areas adjacent to a BESS to prevent fire spread, rather than being used to attempt to directly fight a fire within the BESS. The <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to Inform the Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b> has been</p>	Agreed

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p>measures to avoid contamination to watercourses should be provided.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved, subject to inclusion of the required information in the relevant documents.</p>	<p>updated to include an assessment of potential likely significant effects from the fire suppression system.</p> <p>The <b>Outline Battery Safety Management Plan [EN010157/APP/7.6 Revision 2]</b> also identifies the key standards, guidelines, and principles the Applicant will adhere to during the detailed design and operation of the BESS.</p> <p>The updated documents are submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	
National designated sites				
NE14	<p>Humber Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</p> <p><i>Biodiversity</i></p>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE7), Natural England advised that due to potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the Humber Estuary SSSI, the site should be scoped into the assessment of likely effects as a separate feature.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved. Natural England will review the information once received.</p>	<p>The Applicant agrees to this request. The Humber Estuary SSSI has been considered in the updated <b>ES Volume 2 Chapter 7 Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2 Revision 2]</b> as a separate ecological receptor. As agreed with Natural England, where the reasons for the SSSI designation correspond to qualifying features of the Humber Estuary European sites, the assessment includes cross-references to the <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b>. Those features not included on the citations for the European sites are assessed in <b>ES Volume 2</b></p>	Agreed

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p><b>Chapter 7 Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2 Revision 2].</b></p> <p>The updated documents are submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	
Protected species				
NE15	<p>Water vole and otter</p> <p><i>Biodiversity</i></p>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE8a), Natural England advises that for the smallest, least impactful works surveys should be undertaken within the footprint of the works take place, including temporary work areas plus 100m upstream and downstream in line with the Water Vole Mitigation Handbook guidance.</p> <p>Natural England advises that otter surveys should cover 'all suitable habitat within 200m of the proposed works', in line with NatureScot guidelines.</p> <p>Natural England advises that any deviation from these guidelines should be clearly outlined.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this</p>	<p>The Applicant agrees to this request. <b>ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010157/APP/6.2 Revision 2]</b> and the <b>Outline CEMP [EN010157/APP/7.2 Revision 2]</b> have been updated to commit to undertaking water vole surveys 100m upstream and downstream of proposed culverts and watercourse crossing points which affect watercourses assessed as 'suitable but poor to optimal suitability' within <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.7: Water Vole and Otter Habitat Suitability Report [APP-111]</b>. Pre-construction otter surveys of suitable habitat will be undertaken within 200m of the proposed works.</p> <p>The updated documents are submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	Agreed

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		point is now resolved, subject to inclusion of the required measures in the outline CEMP.		
NE16	Badger <i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE8b), Natural England notes that where reasonably practicable, construction work will not take place within 30m from a main badger sett. Natural England advises that although some activities can be undertaken within 30m (work with hand tools for example), a hard 30m limit should be imposed for works with heavy machinery, horizontal drilling and heavy plant vehicles.</p> <p>We note that mammal gates are potentially proposed, and we would welcome clarification on how it will be determined if they are required.</p> <p>All measures highlighted should be secured in the CEMP.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and will continue discussions with the applicant. Natural England would welcome clarification on which construction activities may be</p>	<p>As secured within the <b>Outline CEMP [EN010157/APP/7.2 Revision 2]</b>, appropriate badger mitigation will be determined by the results of the pre-construction badger surveys and will be detailed within the Construction Environmental Management Plan. This will include ensuring that, where reasonably practicable, construction work will not take place within 30m from an active badger sett identified during the pre-construction surveys without appropriate mitigation. Mitigation may involve the exclusion of setts under a Natural England licence if assessed as necessary.</p> <p>The pre-construction badger survey will determine if badger gates are required and the Construction Environmental Management Plan will provide specific information.</p> <p>The updated <b>Outline CEMP [EN010157/APP/7.2 Revision 2]</b> is submitted at Deadline 1.</p>	Under discussion

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		permitted under the 'where reasonably practicable' exemption. Natural England advise that there should be a hard 30 m limit for piling and other intrusive groundworks.		
NE17	Breeding birds <i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE8d), Natural England advises that terms such as 'well short' are ambiguous and that actual targets, and the levels below which remedial measures are needed in relation to breeding birds, should be defined in the Outline LEMP.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved.</p>	The Applicant agrees to this request. The <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> has been updated to include clear objectives, defined targets, details of limits of acceptable change and details of remedial actions in relation to breeding birds, where appropriate, and is submitted at Deadline 1.	Agreed
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)				
NE18	BNG – general <i>Biodiversity</i>	In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE9), Natural England is satisfied with the Applicant's assessment of BNG. Natural England welcomes that the whole application site within the Order Limits has been included in the BNG assessment, all gains are on-site, and gains will be monitored and managed for the operational life of the Proposed Development. Natural England also	The Applicant welcomes this response. The headline figures for BNG, based on the Indicative Environmental Masterplan contained within <b>Appendix D</b> of the <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b> , are 62.36% for area habitats, 46.48% for hedgerow habitats and 12.50% of watercourse habitats. See <b>ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.10: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment [APP-114]</b> for more details.	Agreed

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p>welcomes that a precautionary approach has been taken regarding watercourses (i.e. assuming 'good' condition for baseline calculations where river condition assessments were not available). Natural England recommends that recommends that biodiversity net gain of at least 10% BNG across all biodiversity unit types is secured via the LEMP.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England agrees that this point is resolved.</p>		
Soils and Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)				
NE19	<p>Grid connection cable route ALC and soil surveys</p> <p><i>Agricultural Land</i></p>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE10), Natural England requests that a detailed ALC and soil survey of the grid connection cable route be undertaken and the results provided prior to consent in order to inform decision making and to inform the soil resource and management plan. The results from a detailed ALC survey would provide soils data to inform a soil management plan for the whole Site regardless of whether the use is permanent or temporary in nature.</p>	<p>A detailed ALC and soil survey has not been undertaken of the grid connection cable route at this stage. However, the <b>Outline SMP [EN010157/APP/7.8 Revision 2]</b> covers the full Order Limits, including the grid connection cable route. As set out in the <b>Outline SMP [EN010157/APP/7.8 Revision 2]</b>, it is proposed that detailed soil/land quality surveys of the grid connection cable route will be undertaken pre-construction, once the design and land needed for excavation is confirmed, thus avoiding unnecessarily surveying the entire width of the proposed grid connection cable route corridor.</p>	Not agreed



Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		<p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u>  Natural England do not consider it best practice to defer a detailed ALC and soil survey of the grid connection cable corridor until after final design and land-take confirmation. Natural England recommends a bespoke soil-investigation programme agreed at an early stage, proportionate to the site's scale and complexity. Agreeing a truncated survey now and postponing comprehensive sampling risks under-estimating local soil variability, agricultural sensitivity and reinstatement challenges and it undermines the integrity of the eventual Soil Management Plan.</p> <p>Waiting until later to define survey extents and depths prevents soil data from informing route-optimum design, reinstatement commitments or cumulative impact assessments. Natural England therefore recommends that the applicant should submit a detailed, targeted ALC and soil survey methodology for the entire grid-connection corridor upfront, with sampling intensity, horizon-depth</p>	<p>The <b>Outline SMP [EN010157/APP/7.8 Revision 2]</b> describes the survey work that will be carried out prior to drafting the Soil Management Plan, and the consultation process that will be in-built prior to finalising the Soil Management Plan before works commence.</p> <p>This is aligned with the approach taken on the recently consented East Yorkshire Solar Farm (EN010143), where Natural England accepted the approach of undertaking soil and ALC surveys of the cable corridor "once the final route has been determined"<sup>2</sup>.</p>	

<sup>2</sup> <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010143/EN010143-000692-Natural%20England.pdf>

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
		verification and mapping protocols tailored to the route's particular land uses. This early agreement will secure robust, project-specific soil inputs and avoid protracted consultations once design is fixed.		
NE20	Soil handling <i>Construction</i>	<p>In their relevant representation <b>[RR-012]</b> (NE11), Natural England advises that soil handling be confined to the drier summer period (April through September) to minimise risk of soil damage. Soil handling should normally be avoided during October to March inclusive, irrespective of soil moisture conditions, because it will generally not be possible to establish green cover over winter to help dry out soils and protect them from erosion. This would minimise the need to recondition soils, which requires additional space and time. This is particularly important for land to be restored to agricultural use.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved.</p>	<p>The <b>Outline SMP [EN010157/APP/7.8 Revision 2]</b> has been updated to state April through October as the drier summer period to which soil handling will, so far as possible, principally be confined (it previously incorrectly stated November through April). Soil handling cannot be restricted to only April to September due to programme constraints; however, as stated in the <b>Outline SMP [EN010157/APP/7.8 Revision 2]</b>, should site work during the winter period be unavoidable, the more resilient SHU A soils will be prioritised for working on during this period. Additionally, site inspections of the soil condition prior to vehicle movements across the Site will be required, particularly during wet weather conditions.</p> <p>The updated <b>Outline SMP [EN010157/APP/7.8 Revision 2]</b> is submitted at Deadline 2.</p>	Agreed
Other				

Ref	Topic	Natural England's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
NE21	Glint and glare (general)  <i>Glint and Glare</i>	<p>In an email dated 3 February 2025, Natural England advised that post-consent monitoring should include consideration of the potential disruption to flight pathways of qualifying bird species as a result of glint and glare, in order to help inform future assessments. Although Natural England accepts that there is no established methodology for monitoring to study the effects of glint and glare on birds and is not aware of any examples of such monitoring that has previously been undertaken, it suggests that observing bird behaviour around the panels may be appropriate.</p> <p><u>Update 8 August 2025:</u> Natural England welcomes the updated information provided and agrees that this point is now resolved.</p>	<p>The Applicant agreed to this request. Post-consent monitoring of the potential disruption to flight pathways of qualifying bird species due to glint and glare (to help inform future assessments) forms part of the monitoring strategy outlined within the <b>Outline LEMP [EN010157/APP/7.5 Revision 3]</b>.</p> <p>It should be noted that the effect on the integrity of the populations of the qualifying species of Hornsea Mere SPA or Humber Estuary SPA/ Ramsar sites in relation to disruption of flight paths as a result of glint and glare has been assessed as part of the <b>Habitats Regulations Assessment - Information to inform Appropriate Assessment [EN010157/APP/5.3 Revision 2]</b>, which concludes no adverse effects.</p>	Agreed

## 4 Signatures

4.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground is agreed upon:

On behalf of Natural England:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

On behalf of the Applicant:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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