



AtkinsRéalis



Rosefield Solar Farm (EN010158)

**Rosefield Solar Farm – Buckinghamshire Council's
comments on the Applicant's Response to the
Examining Authority's First Written Questions**

Buckinghamshire Council

May 2026

This document sets out Buckinghamshire Council's comments on the Applicant's responses to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions (ExQ1), having regard to the material submitted by the Applicant and the Council's Local Impact Report and subsequent submissions.

The responses are provided to assist the Examining Authority in progressing the Examination by clarifying the Council's position on specific matters and identifying where further information, amendment or justification is required. In doing so, the Council has sought to engage constructively on technical matters and to provide proportionate commentary to support the Examination process.

Where no comment is provided in response to a particular question, the Council's position remains as set out in its previous submissions, including its Local Impact Report, Written Representation and earlier deadline submissions. The absence of comment should not be taken as agreement with the Applicant's response.

Comments are provided only where the Council considers that there is new or additional material arising from the Applicant's response, or where further clarification or emphasis is required to assist the Examining Authority.

Where matters were addressed during Issue Specific Hearings 1 and 2 (ISH1 and ISH2), the Council relies on the evidence given orally and as recorded within its post hearing written submissions. Those submissions should be read alongside this document where relevant.

Unless expressly stated, the content of this document does not represent a change to the Council's overarching position on the Proposed Development. Where agreement is identified on particular technical matters, this should not be taken to indicate that the Council's overall concerns regarding the scheme have been resolved

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
Q1.4.7	<p>Site selection – objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How were the objectives for the site selection process as set out at paragraph 4.1.3 of the Site Selection Report [REP1-016] established? 2. Were they subject to consultation? 3. To what extent do they encapsulate the full extent of relevant policy requirements? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As set out in Section 7.4 of the Statement of Need [EN010158/APP/5.6] [APP-036] the objectives for site selection are based on the guidance set out by NPS EN-1 and NPS EN-3 (2023). The Applicant notes that NPS EN-3 (2023) (paragraph 3.2.4) sets out that <i>“it is for industry to propose new energy infrastructure projects that they assess to be viable within the strategic framework set by government”</i>, recognising that an individual developer’s approach to screening is sensitive to local variability and the individual approach of the developer. 2. For the reasons set out above, it was not considered necessary or appropriate for the objectives to be subject to consultation. However, in Consultation Report Appendices A-1 to A-4 [EN010158/APP/5.2] [APP-021], the Applicant provided a 'why here?' section within the Phase One Consultation Booklet. This section explained why the Applicant had selected the Site and consultees were invited to provide comments on the early plans and proposals via the Phase One Consultation Questionnaire. Comments made by consultees on the suitability of the location of the proposals were considered by the Applicant in developing the Stage 2 Design. 3. The Applicant considers that the site selection objectives written in to paragraph 4.1.3 of the Site Selection Report (Appendix 1 to the Planning Statement [EN010158/APP/5.7.3] [REP1-016]) reflect the extent of relevant site selection policy requirements as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“contribute to meeting the UK’s urgent need for low carbon energy generation”</i> NPS EN-1 (2023) Paragraphs 3.3.58 and 3.3.63; - <i>“be in close proximity to an available grid connection or part of the transmission network in which capacity exists”</i> NPS EN-1 (2023) Section 4.11 and NPS EN-3 (2023) Paragraphs 2.10.21 to 2.10.26 and Paragraph 2.10.60; - <i>“avoid impacts on sensitive landscapes and environmental features as far as practicable”</i> NPS EN-1 (2023) Paragraphs 5.10.7 to 5.10.9, Paragraph 5.10.12 and Paragraph 5.8.36 and NPS EN-3 (2023) Paragraphs 2.10.18 to 2.10.20 and Paragraphs 2.10.27 to 2.10.34 and Paragraphs 2.10.40 to 2.10.48; - <i>“be readily accessible from existing strategic road network to facilitate; construction access”</i> NPS EN-3 (2023) Paragraphs 2.10.35 to 	<p>The Council notes that the objectives were not the subject of consultation. The Council considers that this may have contributed to a number of flaws in relation to the Scheme that are not identified by the Applicant (e.g. the issues raised in respect of TCS Biosciences/Preston Farms and the landscape effects of the Scheme).</p> <p>The Council notes the submissions at ISH1 in relation to the Applicant originally seeking a Scheme size between 250MW and 500MW (see para 4.1.3 of the Planning Statement [REP1-017]). Given the Scheme is well above that lower bound, that approach to assessment is clearly relevant to avoidance as part of the mitigation hierarchy as the Council has emphasised elsewhere in its submissions.</p>

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		<p>2.10.39; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “be delivered on land which could be acquired voluntarily thereby avoiding the need for large scale compulsory acquisition” NPS EN-1 (2023) Paragraph 4.3.9. <p>Furthermore, the following key attributes were drawn from NPS EN-3 (2023) paragraphs 2.10.18 to 2.10.48 to drive the initial screening process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence and availability of sufficient land to deliver to the project to meet the scale set out in the scheme’s aims; • The availability of a suitably placed point of connection to the NETS and/or the local distribution network; and • Solar irradiation levels which support the potential for the development to produce an energy yield which is both useful and economic. <p>Paragraph 7.4.5 of the Statement of Need [EN010158/APP/5.6] [APP-036] sets out that environmental attributes described in NPS EN-3 (2023) Paragraphs 2.10.27 to 2.10.48 and the potential for environmental impacts as described in NPS EN-3 (2023) Paragraphs 2.10.73 to 2.10.126 were also applied to the screening process where applicable.</p>	

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Q1.4.9	<p>Site selection – Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land</p> <p>The Site Selection report [REP1-016] identifies that the south-western extent of the area of search demonstrated a larger presence of grade 4 non-BMV land. What consideration was given to further utilising land within the south-western extent of the area of search to reduce the use of BMV land?</p>	<p>Figure 3 of the Site Selection Report (Appendix 1 to the Planning Statement [EN010158/APP/5.7.3] [REP1-016]) sets out that much of the grade 4 non-BMV land to the south-western extent of the Search Area is outside of the 10km radius. ES Volume 4, Appendix 12.1: Agricultural Land Classification Report [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] and ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] set out that 94.42% of the Site is non-BMV and 4.07% is non-agricultural land, therefore there was considered to be no need to extend into the grade 4 land to the south-west.</p> <p>As recognised in Paragraph 2.10.29 of NPS EN-3 (2023), <i>“land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location”</i> and <i>“Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of “Best and Most Versatile” agricultural land where possible”</i>. The Proposed Development’s Order Limits is concluded to have a BMV take of 1.51% which, in the wider context of solar NSIPs, is exceptionally low.</p>	<p>While Buckinghamshire Council would prefer the use of poorer quality land in preference to higher quality land and would therefore recommend siting the development on Grade 4 land as opposed to the Grade 2 land, it acknowledges that the majority of the site is non-BMV. Furthermore, the newly released Predictive ALC map (April 2026), which supersedes the Provisional ALC map, records a much smaller extent of Grade 4 land in the area as compared with the provisional data limiting opportunities to avoid better quality land locally.</p>
Q1.4.10	<p>Site selection – consolidation with other projects</p> <p>Did the applicant engage with the promoters of other nearby energy generation and storage projects to consider the scope for consolidation of infrastructure with a view to reducing overall land take and effects? If not, why not?</p>	<p>The Applicant recognises that there are several other developments in construction or planned within the local area and these have been considered in the development of the design. Such other developments in the local area do not make the location unsuitable for the Proposed Development. An assessment of cumulative effects has been undertaken and is detailed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]. This considers other developments within the 10km Zone of Influence from the Proposed Development that fall within the short list, including HS2, East West Rail, Grendon Prison, East Claydon Greener Grid Park, East Claydon BESS, Tuckey Farm, Fox Covert, Padbury Brook and Longbreach Solar Farm.</p> <p>The Applicant has been in discussions with the developers of the East Claydon BESS to identify elements of the respective proposals which could be consolidated. While each project has its own bespoke requirements and timelines for construction and connection we will continue to engage with East Claydon Storage to identify appropriate areas to reduce overall land take and coordinate activities to reduce associated effects.</p>	<p>The Applicant refers to the cumulative effects assessment as evidence that other developments have been considered. However, the identification and assessment of cumulative effects is not the same as actively exploring opportunities to reduce those effects through coordinated design.</p> <p>The purpose of consolidation is to minimise land take and effects by co-locating or rationalising infrastructure. The Applicant’s response does not demonstrate that this was considered or this exercise was undertaken.</p>

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7. Biodiversity and Ecology			
Q1.7.2	<p>General - CSAG deadline 1 submission</p> <p>Provide a comprehensive response to the submission by CSAG on ecological matters ([REP1-127] Part 2 – Ecology (CSAG-02) - CRITIQUE OF ECOLOGICAL COMPONENTS OF EIA and the supporting letter from Dominic Woodfield dated 3 December 2024 - PDF pages 53 – 58 of [REP1-128]). It would be helpful to the ExA if you could respond in a table format which replicates and responds to the points identified by CSAG.</p> <p>Provide the completed Biodiversity Net Gain metric in Excel form as requested by CSAG [REP1-127]. For expediency this should also be provided directly to CSAG to review at the earliest opportunity and at deadline 2 to the examination.</p>	<p>The Applicant has responded to the questions raised by the Claydon Solar Action Group (CSAG) in Applicant's Response to Written Representations [EN010158/APP/8.12] ref 3.1.2, to 3.1.20 and 3.1.29 to 3.1.37.</p> <p>With regards the specific comments raised by Dominic Woodfield, the Applicant notes that the letter was dated 2024 and therefore provides commentary on an earlier version of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Regardless, a response to each of the points raised in this letter are set out in Appendix 2: Response to CSAG Biodiversity Appendix within the Applicant's Response to Written Representations [EN010158/APP/8.12].</p> <p>The Biodiversity Net Gain Metric was provided direct to CSAG in Excel spreadsheet form on 14 April 2026.</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council would welcome the opportunity to review the biodiversity metric.</p>
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Q1.7.5	<p>NPS EN-1</p> <p>NPS EN-1 paragraph 5.4.45 states that the Secretary of State (SoS) will need to consider whether the statutory nature conservation body has granted or refused, or intends to grant or refuse, any relevant licences, including protected species mitigation licences. The ExA notes in the Schedule of Other Consents and Licences [REP1-014] that protected species licences would be applied for prior to the commencement of construction. However, why have letters of no impediment for protected species licences not been sought in order to provide reassurance for the SoS that the relevant licences would be offered if applied for?</p>	<p>The Applicant considers that the only protected species licence that will be required is for great crested newt (GCN). The full assessment with regards GCN is outlined in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]. Where required, mitigation measures are detailed and secured by the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (Outline CEMP) [EN010158/APP/7.2.3], Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3] and Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] which are robust and sufficient to offset the impacts of the Proposed Development. The assessment outlines that the Proposed Development would make use of either the local District Level GCN licence or Natural England licence option. Within the Applicant's Response to Relevant Representations [EN010158/APP/8.3] [PDA-006], it is noted that Natural England's Wildlife Licensing team have engaged with the Applicant to discuss potential impacts to GCN and agreed the survey approach, the mitigation approach and the compensation approaches in principle. In addition, the Applicant has also engaged with NatureSpace regarding the use of the local District Level GCN licence, and NatureSpace have also confirmed that the Proposed Development would be eligible to apply for this licencing option.</p> <p>A protected species mitigation licence cannot be obtained on a precautionary basis, and there are (as yet) no grounds on which a bat licence would be required so a letter of no impediment is not required. The Applicant believes it is unlikely that a licence with regards roosting bats would be required due to the fact that the majority of tree resource including woodland retained is unaffected. It is unlikely that one would be encountered within the small number of trees (approx. 16) that may require removal, several of which have no or limited suitability to support roosting bats. See also the Applicant's response to Q1.7.12.</p> <p>The Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] secures a commitment to surveying trees to be removed before felling and, in the unlikely event that a roost is found, a licence would be sought from Natural England in the normal way. This approach has been accepted on other NSIPs, such as Springwell and Byers Gill both DCO and consented.</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council would like to raise the point that tree removal may require a protected species license if the trees are confirmed to be used by roosting bats. Whether bats are roosting within trees to be removed is not known at this stage.</p> <p>Bat monitoring would require a license from Natural England, and monitoring forms part of the proposed mitigation strategy. It would be advisable to have Natural England's view on this as they have already raised concerns regarding any additional monitoring of this population.</p>

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		<p>In addition, due to the preconstruction survey and other safeguards in the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3] and Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] it is considered unlikely that a licence with regards to raptor species or badgers protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 would be required.</p> <p>With the above in mind, the Applicant considers the Secretary of State should be satisfied that the Applicant has engaged proactively and to a satisfactory level, at this time, to conclude the Applicant's endeavours are in compliance with NPS EN-1 (2023) Paragraph 5.4.45.</p>	
Q1.7.7	<p>Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council suggests [REP1-112] that the potentially significant effects identified on Bechstein's bats appear to contravene goal 1 of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 that the proposed development would result in fragmentation of an existing established ecological network, which goes against government's national policies and strategies for nature recovery.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree with these statements? If not, why not? 2. If the effects on Bechstein's bats were determined to be significant (rather than potentially significant) do you consider that this would result in conflict with the aims of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 or Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Applicant disagrees with the statement that the Proposed Development would result in fragmentation of an existing established ecological network (particularly in relation to bats, but also other species). Fragmentation could only occur where bats are unable to access areas that are part of their Core Sustenance Zone (CSZ) sufficiently to isolate different parts of the population. This is considered unlikely as a result of the Proposed Development given the proposed mitigation measures have sought to ensure connectivity is maintained within the Order Limits and also to link to habitats in the wider landscape. The Applicant has proposed buffer zones to maintain connectivity, and specifically to minimise the risk of displacement to commuting bats. Commuting routes are protected by wide buffers that are wider than the distance over which the echolocation calls of Bechstein's bats are likely to operate, supporting the hypothesis that these buffers should be adequate/effective. The buffer zones are augmented by an additional 5m between the security fence that would not be intensively managed but sown to meadow and (where achievable) lightly grazed. The retained/augmented connectivity will ensure that Bechstein's bats (and other species) have access to an enhanced invertebrate resource across the wider landscape within the CSZ of Bechstein's bats. 2. Firstly, the Applicant has not identified a significant effect but a potentially significant effect, so the question is hypothetical. But regardless of actual significance the Applicant does not consider conflict would arise with either the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 or Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. This is because despite a detrimental displacement effect of solar farms that has been suggested for some bat species, the studies are short-term and the evidence limited; there are no longitudinal (i.e. before/after) studies of effects on well-designed well-managed established solar farms. Nonetheless, the assessment of 'potentially significant' has been applied on a precautionary basis because the mechanism by which any such effect might manifest is uncertain. However, given the mitigation in place, even if foraging bats are displaced, all of the woodland resource foraging and roosting resource is maintained, and connectivity between these parcels is maintained, and alternate foraging areas without panels will be created. Therefore, it is hard to conceive of an effect that would result in significant detriment sufficient to conflict with strategies for nature recovery. In addition to the above a detailed review of the literature pertaining to bats and solar will be submitted at deadline 2 adding further justification to the Applicants position. 	<p>Ecological connectivity is not binary in that habitat patches are not either connected or not connected. Landscape ecology is complex, and connectivity is better described as a scale ranging from well connected to poorly connected.</p> <p>Fragmentation also refers to a reduction in connectivity (not just a complete barrier to movement), which in this scenario would be defined as fewer bats using key commuting routes, parts of their home range, or parts of the wider Core Sustenance Zones.</p> <p>There is no definitive buffer width at which a linear feature provides absolute connectivity; wider features are more likely to be used by greater numbers of species (or individuals), and narrower corridors of vegetation are less likely to be used.</p> <p>The security fence itself is likely to be a barrier for bats, preventing access to the stated 5m of grassland between the fence and panels. Bats would likely fly alongside the fence, or, if they were to fly over, would be high and less likely to use the adjacent area for foraging. At worst, a poorly designed fence could result in bats (and birds) colliding with the fence causing mortality.</p> <p>Without sufficient knowledge of what feature(s) of solar schemes leads to the reported displacement of bats, it is difficult to be assured that proposed buffers are likely to be completely effective.</p> <p>This landscape is also being impacted by HS2, The Greatmore Energy from Waste scheme, and East West Rail. HS2 has directly severed key commuting routes used by bats in this landscape and directly removed sections of ancient woodland. HS2 has undertaken significant mitigation and is undertaking monitoring but the monitoring is not yet at a stage to have knowledge of the degree of impact that HS2 has already had. The cumulation of these impacts, with further displacement from areas of the bats home range and foraging areas due to solar panel placement, gaps in hedgerows, noise or lighting could have a significant detrimental effect on the bat populations here.</p> <p>The population is known to be vulnerable; it is genetically isolated and at the edge of its natural range. Increased energy expenditure at an individual level (for example, from having to fly further from a roost to a foraging location or source of water) could lead to a decline in the population.</p>

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			<p>The applicants' ecological lead has been engaging in discussions with Natural England on these points. Further meetings have been proposed with the council partaking in these discussions to address the concerns raised.</p>
Q1.7.8	<p>Presentation of likely effects and mitigation in ES Chapter 7 (Biodiversity)</p> <p>The ExA identifies the following points in ES Chapter 7 [REP1-036] which it requests are updated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ES has not clearly set out the secondary mitigation measures where they are proposed. For example, in various sections, the ES states “The outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3] details and secures measures to mitigate and manage operational related effects on habitats to prevent pollution.” This does not identify which mitigation measures specifically proposed in the Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (oOEMP) [REP1-080] address the impacts identified. Update the ES to be more specific. 2. Where residual effects are identified, the ES does not specify what the significance of effect is – the effects should not be reported as just either ‘significant’ or ‘not significant’, but should be reported as, for example, negligible/ minor adverse/ moderate adverse/ major adverse, as well as whether the effect would be significant or not significant. Review and update the ES for both adverse and beneficial effects. This will assist the ExA to report the residual effects and offer appropriate weight to them in the planning balance. 3. The assessment of residual effects appears to include additional mitigation measures in addition to those identified in the secondary mitigation measures. Update the assessment to include all mitigation measures. 4. The conclusions on various ‘not significant’ effects are somewhat unclear. For example, paragraph 7.10.91 states that “There is not anticipated to be an adverse effect on cereal and non-cereal crops during operation (including maintenance), which is considered to be not significant” – the ExA queries whether this means that there an effect which is not significant, in which case it should be confirmed if this would be a negligible or minor 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For clarity the Applicant will update the ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] so that it is completely clear that where an embedded or additional mitigation measure is identified where exactly in the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3], Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3] Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] or Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] the measure is secured. This update will be provided at Deadline 3. 2. The biodiversity impact assessment has been carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidance (https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/) which requires a clear statement as to whether an impact is significant or not and at what geographical scale. This is standard accepted practice in Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). Whilst some EIAs include a ‘translation’ between CIEEM-derived assessment categories and terms used by other disciplines, in our view this is contrary to the aims of the CIEEM methodology which is ecology-specific and therefore more relevant/appropriate. 3. Within ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] the <i>additional mitigation</i> measures are secondary to the <i>embedded mitigation</i> measures. The assessment of residual effects on ecological receptors has taken into account both the <i>embedded mitigation</i> measures and <i>additional mitigation measures</i> both of which were used to form the assessment undertaken to identify any residual impacts that could occur, with mitigation measures relied upon set out within ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]. This approach has been deemed acceptable for the consented Springwell and Byers Gill NSIP solar schemes. 4. For the avoidance of doubt, the Applicant does not consider there would be any adverse effects on arable crops during the operational phase, nor for the other receptors where this has been stated within ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]. But as outlined above in point 2, the biodiversity impact assessment has been carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidance and to introduce terms such as negligible or minor adverse would render the impact assessment contrary to CIEEM guidelines. 5. As outlined in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] paragraph 7.10.146, effects arising from decommissioning are likely to be similar to those that arise during the construction phase. Impacts arising from decommissioning would be appropriately mitigated for in line with the Outline DEMP 	<p>It is correct that the CIEEM guidelines state that categorising significant effects should only be undertaken where specifically required to provide consistency across disciplines. The guidance advises that if a matrix approach is used, it should be made clear about the level of subjective evaluation that has been used.</p> <p>The definitions of significant impact vs significant harm have not been clearly provided in the specific context of the Bechstien’s bat population in this location. It remains unclear to Buckinghamshire Council how a significant impact, even to the local population, would not result in significant harm given the importance of this population at a national level. The Council maintains its position in the LIR.</p> <p>6. Buckinghamshire council do not agree with the applicant's response. The CIEEM guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessments defines:</p> <p><i>Mitigation - Negative effects should be avoided or minimised through mitigation measures, either through the design of the project or subsequent measures that can be guaranteed – for example, through a condition or planning obligation.</i></p> <p><i>Compensation - Where there are significant residual negative ecological effects despite the mitigation proposed, these should be offset by appropriate compensatory measures.</i></p> <p><i>Enhancement - Seek to provide net benefits for biodiversity over and above requirements for avoidance, mitigation or compensation.</i></p> <p>In the example of the panel placement on bat foraging habitat in parcels B6 to B8 and B10 to B11, this area between the three ancient woodlands has been identified as being of particular value for commuting and foraging bats. Mitigation would be to protect and buffer this existing habitat in this location, mitigating the impact on commuting routes between these three woodlands. Instead, alternative foraging habitat has been proposed within the Core Sustenance Zone but in a location which doesn’t offer the same connectivity between the Sheepphouse Wood, Decoypond Wood and Shrubs Wood when considering how the bats are likely to use the landscape.</p> <p>Enhancements are defined as over and above measures required for mitigation or compensation. It is incorrect to state that the provision of cattle grazed</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
	<p>adverse effect, or there would no adverse effects at all? Review all of the document and update similar statements for clarity.</p> <p>5. In terms of reporting effects during decommissioning, would any effects identified during construction also apply to the decommissioning phase?</p> <p>6. The ExA note your response to Action Point 3 from compulsory acquisition hearing 1 [REP1-107]. However, the ExA seeks additional clarification in the ES regarding the extent of ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancements proposed – these are 3 distinct elements of the ES assessment which need to be understood and whilst the ExA accepts that the same parcel of land can provide more than one function, the ExA must have confidence that adequate mitigation or compensation is provided where effects have been identified. Enhancements should also be identified where they could be achieved.</p>	<p>[EN010158/APP/7.4.3].</p> <p>6. For this Proposed Development the Applicant does not consider biodiversity compensation measures are required. Where an effect on an ecological receptor has been identified specific mitigation measures have been identified. This is clearly set out in Table 7.7 within the ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] which identifies the mitigation measures embedded into the design, whilst additional mitigation measures are identified in Section 7.9. Finally, it is accepted that some enhancement will accrue as a result of the mitigation measures proposed, for example provision of cattle grazed grassland for foraging bats and ground nesting birds will likely result in a more diverse flora, a net biodiversity enhancement or benefit. All of the biodiversity enhancement accruing from the embedded and additional mitigation measures proposed have been captured within the ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.17: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] [REP1-060], whilst mitigation measures are secured by the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3], Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3], Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] and Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3]. Also note the response to point 1 above where the Applicant will make it clear for each mitigation measure identified in the ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] where these measures are secured in the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3], Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3], Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] or Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3].</p>	<p>grassland, which is specific compensation for an impact on bats and ground nesting birds, is also ‘enhancement’.</p> <p>In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain, Government guidance (What you can count towards a development’s biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK) is clear that mitigation or compensation measures for protected species or designated sites can only contribute towards demonstrating ‘no net loss’ but not towards the 10% net gain. The applicant has not made clear whether the biodiversity value of mitigation and compensation areas has been used within their calculation of net gains over an above no net loss.</p>
Q1.7.9	<p>Surveys of ground nesting birds</p> <p>Provide further justification for not surveying the cable corridor route, given its potential to support ground-nesting bird species, and outline how the ecological assessment remains robust and adequate in the absence of dedicated survey data for the cable corridor route. Clarify any assumptions made, evidence used to rule out potential impacts, and whether any additional survey, avoidance, or mitigation measures are required to address any gaps.</p>	<p>It is correct that only panel areas have been subject to breeding bird survey but, as outlined in ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.4: Breeding Bird Survey Report (2022) (Confidential) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-090] and ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.12: Breeding Bird Survey Report (2024) (Confidential) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-098], a significant area has been subject to breeding bird survey over two years. As the Cable Corridors and other areas support identical habitat to areas that have been subject to breeding bird surveys, this gives confidence that the likely usage of these areas by breeding birds can be predicted and the Applicant has considered the same usage by birds as areas proposed for solar PV panels. Survey of the Cable Corridors would therefore not change the conclusions reached in the ecological assessment. In any case, due to the temporary nature of the cabling works, no significant effects are envisaged as land would be returned to agricultural use and could continue to be utilised by breeding birds as currently. In addition, it should be noted that Natural England are in agreement with the biodiversity survey efforts and conclusions of the assessment for protected species (excluding bats) (see Draft Statement of Common Ground with Natural England [EN010158/APP/5.14] [REP1-025]). The Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3] and Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] secure commitments to undertaking cabling works outside of the breeding bird season or, failing this, subjecting these areas to nesting bird checks undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure legislative compliance regards nesting birds and to ensure no harm would occur to nesting birds, including ground nesting species. Finally the Applicant’s Response to Relevant Representations [EN010158/APP/8.3] [PDA-006], RR-020 page 288 outlines the suite of mitigation measures designed to benefit ground-nesting birds. These measures</p>	<p>The Council agrees with the principles the Applicant has established regarding nesting bird assessments. The approach taken to assess the holding capacity for these species is based on robust scientific research with a precautionary level assigned to the habitat status. It is important that all the compensatory grassland proposed for ground nesting birds is suitable for them to use.</p> <p>Key to this will be a robust CEMP that establishes the methods adopted during the temporary works to avoid impacting species while nesting and thus comply with the legislation protecting them.</p>

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		<p>would be secured by the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] along with a monitoring programme.</p>	
Q1.7.10	<p>Surveys of Bechstein’s bats Provide a view on Natural England’s position regarding the survey work for Bechstein’s bats [RR-203, AS-038, REP1-124] – to what extent do you agree or disagree with this and why?</p>	<p>The Applicant has undertaken consultation with Natural England to agree the Zone of Influence (ZOI), survey study area extent and types of surveys required to inform the assessment for bats..</p> <p>During a meeting (11 March 2025), Natural England officers agreed that additional survey effort for bats would not be useful and that the Applicants data in combination with The Bernwood Population of Bechstein’s Bats - A Non-Technical Summary of the Evidence report (Natural England, 2024) and additional information from HS2 (see Draft Statement of Common Ground with Natural England [EN010158/APP/5.14] [REP1-025]) is sufficient to inform the baseline.</p> <p>The Applicant would highlight that this area of the UK (and this population of Bechstein’s bats) is one of the most studied, with almost continuous survey undertaken for HS2 stretching back years - from 2010 - and expected to continue for many more years to come (at least until 2039, potentially 2050).</p> <p>The Applicant acknowledges that the information provided in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.10: Bat Activity Survey Report (2024) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-096] alone would not be sufficient to inform a robust assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on foraging, commuting and roosting bats; however, this is only one document that has been used to inform the ES assessment and evaluation, as indicated above. This has enabled the Applicant to establish a robust baseline on which the ES assessment has been undertaken. The assessment has also been undertaken in accordance with the Bat Mitigation Guidelines¹ (lead-authored by the Technical Specialist advising the Applicant on bats). The Applicant’s Technical Specialist is also the named ecologist on the HS2 licence for the Bernwood area, so has in-depth understanding of the use of this area by Bechstein’s bats and other species.</p>	<p>The Council accepted Natural England’s recommendation that further surveys would, in themselves, risk harm to the Bechstein’s population due to their intrusive nature.</p> <p>The Council accept that it has sufficient information to conclude that this population of Bechstein’s bats is of national significance, comprising 1.4% of the national population and being at the edge of their known range.</p> <p>The Council has highlighted that the impacts from the other existing schemes in the area (HS2, Greatmoor Engery from Waste site and EWR) are not yet known as monitoring is ongoing. A precautionary approach should therefore be taken regarding the baseline as the recent disturbance form other schemes may have or may soon lead to changes to the identified home range, key commuting routes and core sustenance zone.</p>
Q1.7.12	<p>Mitigation hierarchy - Bechstein’s bat roosts ES Chapter 7 [REP1-036] states that 3 trees with suitability to support maternity roosts would be removed to facilitate the proposed development. Why can’t these trees be avoided?</p>	<p>Given the known importance of the tree roost resource, the Applicant has worked to ensure that the design of the Proposed Development minimises potential tree loss. The predicted tree loss of three trees with <i>potential</i> to support maternity roosts is a worse-case scenario. Should an important tree roost be identified, such tree loss may be avoidable through micro-siting at construction stage (this would require balancing all relevant constraints, including those posed by other protected species as detailed within the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3]).</p> <p>Note that Potential Roost Features (PRFs) are categorised as PRF-I (only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats) or PRF-M (suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony). However, this is a <i>structural</i> assessment that does not take into account location or context.</p> <p>Here, trees considered to pose a <i>risk</i> of supporting more important roosts on a <i>structural</i> basis only, i.e. those supporting PRF-M are all located to the north-east of Runts Wood. These are within the 3km CSZ of Bechstein’s bats, but outside of their recorded home range (Natural England, 2024²); the risk of finding a maternity roost of Bechstein’s bats in a tree to be removed is therefore low.</p>	<p>The applicant’s response fails to explain why it has not been possible to redesign the scheme to avoid the removal of these 3 trees.</p>

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		<p>The Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3] and the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] secure a commitment to pre-construction surveys of all trees to be removed. In the unlikely event that a maternity roost is identified and loss of the tree cannot be avoided through micro-siting (other than a Bechstein's bat or barbastelle roost where the intention would be to retain the roost as detailed within the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3]); the supporting tree would be left <i>in situ</i> until a licence from Natural England is secured with appropriate compensation to mitigate for the loss of roost agreed.</p>	
Q1.7.13	<p>Effects on Bechstein's bats ES Chapter 7 [REP1-036] describes effects on Bechstein's bats as being 'potentially significant', but that this would not equate to 'substantial harm'. Confirm the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whilst the ExA acknowledges the presented knowledge gaps regarding the effects of solar farms on Bechstein's bats as set out in ES Chapter 7, in accordance with paragraph 2.10.155 of NPS EN-3, environmental effects should be presented on a worst-case scenario basis. Update your assessment to provide a definitive conclusion on the significance of effects for Bechstein's bats or provide further justification for the inclusion of 'potentially'. 2. Provide a more detailed explanation of the point that a significant effect would not result in substantial harm. Are you able to provide an example of a precedent for a similar example which has been accepted by the SoS? 3. If the ExA or SoS were to determine that the effects on Bechstein's bats would equate to substantial harm, do you consider that benefits derived from the proposed development would outweigh such harm – justify your answer. 4. Natural England identifies [RR-203, AS-038] the ecological value of field parcels B6, B7 and B8 and Buckinghamshire Council expresses concerns around field parcels B10, B11, D28 and D29 [RR-026, REP1-112]. The ExA notes that you propose compensation measures to address the ecological value loss of these field parcels. Explain how you have applied the mitigation hierarchy to these areas and why avoidance measures are not considered appropriate to mitigate potential effects? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Applicant proposes to retain the assessment as 'potentially significant' to reflect the uncertainty inherent in the current evidence base. While a detrimental effect of solar farms has been suggested for some bat species, the studies are largely short-term and the evidence limited; there are no longitudinal (i.e. before/after) studies of effects on well-designed, well-managed, established solar farms. Thus, the assessment of 'potentially significant' has been applied on a precautionary basis because the mechanism by which any negative effect might arise, and in which circumstances, is uncertain. Indeed, since the ES was published, at least one study (Szoldatits et al., 20253) has found increased bat activity at ecovoltaic⁴ solar sites (though not for all species in all seasons, and the study was undertaken in the US not in the UK). A critical review of relevant recent academic papers has been undertaken and is provided at Appendix 2 of this document. This review highlights the limitations to the methods used in each paper and other reasons for uncertainty. 2. It is worth noting that 'significance' for ecological receptors is determined at different geographic scales (from 'site' upwards) and not all levels of significance therefore equate to 'significant harm' to the conservation status of the species. As set out in Paragraph 7.10.133 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3], there would be no 'significant harm' (either alone or cumulatively). This is because the impacts, predicted on a precautionary basis only, are unlikely to result in an effect at a sufficient scale to adversely change the current conservation status of the species in the longer term. The Proposed Development design and mitigation has focused on protecting and enhancing the foraging and commuting habitat for Bechstein's bats such that, even if bats are discouraged (to a limited extent) from foraging by the placing of solar PV modules via a mechanism that is not currently understood, the mitigation proposed provides alternate areas for foraging of a better quality/ linked by substantial flightlines along hedgerows and woodlands that are protected with appropriate buffers wide enough to exceed the echolocation range of Bechstein's bat. In the Applicant's view, and as presented through the Planning Statement [EN010158/APP/5.7.3] [REP1-016], Paragraphs 5.4.42 and 5.4.43 of NPS EN-1 (2023) establish the policy compliance threshold which is that concluding whether or not 'significant harm' is to arise on biodiversity interest is the basis from which policy compliance ought to be drawn. The Proposed Development demonstrates compliance with these policy tests by concluding no 'significant harm' and this provides the favourable basis from which the Secretary of State is to consider the worst-case effects, in accordance with Paragraph 2.10.155 	<p>As of 2022 Bechstein's bat is not in Favorable Conservation Status (FCS)¹. Favorable conservation status is the situation when the species can be regarded as thriving in England and can be expected to thrive sustainably in the future.</p> <p>The Applicant has differentiated between a significant effect as defined within CIEEM's guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment and significant harm to the conservation status of the national population of Bechstein's bats.</p> <p>The Applicant has failed to quantitatively define the threshold for significant harm in relation to the current conservation status of Bechstein's bats</p> <p>We would reason that, where a population is not currently at FCS, any action which undermines the objective of achieving FCS should be considered significant harm.</p> <p>This land was being considered as a potential Site of Special Scientific Interest and is identified within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy has having opportunities for recovering species and habitats.</p> <p>The Applicant has discussed the importance of the home range and core sustenance zones for the bats. It has been highlighted how cattle grazed grassland (along with woodland) is of importance for foraging. Following the mitigation hierarchy, all grazed pasture within the home range would be avoided. Yet panels are proposed on pasture within the area identified as the home range.</p> <p>Compensation for lost foraging habitat has been proposed in the form of new pasture but without quantification of the impact that this change of location of foraging resource will have on the bats.</p> <p>Similarly, compensation is proposed for sections of lost hedgerow, but the landscape scale impact of the hedgerow removal has not been presented in combination with the areas subject to noise or lighting disturbance and in consideration of where bats are likely to be commuting to/from (for example routes to ponds for drinking water or to foraging habitats).</p> <p>The population in Bernwood is geographically and genetically isolated and</p>

¹ Natural England (2023) Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for Bechstein's bat

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		<p>of NPS EN-3 (2023). ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] and ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] both confirm that identified potentially significant effects do not amount to 'significant harm'. For the reasons outlined above, even if bats are discouraged from foraging (to a limited extent) by the placing of solar PV modules in some areas (which the Applicant believes is unlikely), it is concluded that level of displacement would not result in significant harm, given their current status of the land on which panels would stand (arable), and its lower value to bats.</p> <p>With regard to precedent, firstly, in according to CIEEM guidelines (as noted above), 'significance' is assigned at different geographic scales, not all of which would equate to 'significant harm'. There are also precedents on similar projects, but for other disciplines, that have been accepted by the Secretary of State. On the Cottom Solar Farm Project decision, the Secretary of State accepted that heritage impacts on Thorpe constituted less than substantial harm despite the effect being considered as moderate adverse and significant in EIA terms. The Applicant and Historic England agreed that the resulting effect would amount to less than substantial harm, assessed as moderate adverse and significant in EIA terms, a conclusion which the Examining Authority agreed with. The Secretary of State accepted this assessment and concluded that the harm was outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. The Applicant believes this is also the case here.</p> <p>In answering this question, the Applicant considers that the intention of the ExA by referring to "substantial harm" was to mean "significant harm" in accordance with Paragraphs 5.4.42 and 5.4.43 of NPS EN-1 (2023). The Applicant also considers that the correct policy test in this context would be equating to a significant harm to the conservation status of Bechstein's bats in accordance with ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3].</p> <p>3. The Applicant's position is yes - were the ExA or SoS to determine that the effects on Bechstein's bats equated to significant harm, the Applicant is confident that such revision would not tilt the balance against the grant of consent. This view is concluded on review of NPS EN-1 (2023), specifically Paragraph 5.4.43, which states that "if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (for example through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then the Secretary of State will give significant weight to any residual harm". In this theoretical case, the significant weighting afforded to this negative effect is recognised but the Applicant notes that the ExA and ultimately the SoS would need to weigh this increased negative weighting against the overwhelming support that is afforded to the Proposed Development's Critical National Priority nature, for which there is an established urgent need, for which "substantial" weight must be afforded. Furthermore, the planning policy afforded to the Proposed Development by virtue of it being of a Critical National Priority is not disapplied under the exceptions listed under Paragraph 4.2.15 of NPS EN-1 (2023) should significant harm be concluded (as none of those exceptions apply). This is further clarified in Paragraph 3.3.63 of NPS EN-1 (2023) which</p>	<p>shows higher levels of inbreeding and lower genetic diversity compared to other UK populations. Therefore, there is a risk of this population becoming extinct through increased pressures. This is categorically reported in the NE Report NECR558.</p>

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		<p>states that “subject to any legal requirements, the urgent need for CNP Infrastructure to achieving our energy objectives, together with the national security, economic, commercial, and net zero benefits, will in general outweigh any other residual impacts not capable of being addressed by application of the mitigation hierarchy. Government strongly supports the delivery of CNP Infrastructure and it should be progressed as quickly as possible” (our emphasis). Were the ExA or SoS minded to conclude significant harm, the Applicant is confident of its exhaustive application of the mitigation hierarchy. As noted in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] the significant effect has been identified as the impact of solar farms on bat species are not well understood at present, with limited research available on which to build a common consensus. This means there is not a clear point at which any reduction in function, beyond what has been captured in the Proposed Development’s design, would remove such a potentially significant effect. The Applicant concludes that the Proposed Development would remain compliant with Paragraph 3.3.63 of NPS EN-1 (2023) and so the SoS should be minded to grant consent.</p> <p>4. Table 7.5 within the ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] indicates how the mitigation hierarchy has been applied; principally by avoiding all woodland habitat and the majority of hedgerows and individual trees, with substantial buffers to these retained features.</p> <p>Setbacks from hedgerows specifically within Fields B6, B7, B8 and B10 that link Shrubs Wood, Sheephouse Wood and Decoypond Wood have been increased to 15m (with the additional 5m from security fence to Solar PV panels (this means that gaps between panels in these adjacent fields is 40m, i.e. 20m either side of these hedgerows). This approach was adopted following consultation with Natural England, recognising that these hedgerows provide key routes for commuting and foraging bats. 30m offset from Shrubs Wood, Sheephouse Wood and Decoypond Wood are proposed for the same reasons.</p> <p>An offset at least 30m from existing woodland and hedgerows located along the boundaries of Field D29 and in part of Field D28 is also proposed, as it is recognised these fields provide a key link between Finemere Wood and Runts Wood. Within the Fields B6, B7, B8 and B10 buffers, a mosaic of grassland and scrub is proposed, along with strengthening the existing hedgerows to provide a wide corridor link between these woodlands. Within the Field D29 and D28 buffers, additional woodland planting is proposed to strengthen the corridor between Finemere Wood and Runts Wood. These measures are proposed to help reduce potential displacement effects from Solar PV development to foraging and commuting bats and ensure the connectivity between these woodlands is maintained, secured via the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3].</p> <p>It is worth noting here that, for most fields under current management, the invertebrate biomass will be relatively low due to standard agricultural practices, offering limited value to foraging bats. The grassland habitat proposed for the siting of Solar PV modules would be replaced by more than twice as much grassland, of greater value.</p>	

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
Q1.7.15	<p>Ground nesting birds – effects</p> <p>Given the extent of habitat loss within the proposed solar array area and the sensitivity of species such as skylark, provide the evidence base and justification that supports the conclusion of a long-term beneficial effect on ground nesting birds at a local level identified in ES Chapter 7 [REP1-036].</p>	<p>The Applicant has based the mitigation requirement on the number of birds observed. As presented in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] Paragraphs 4.5.22 to 4.5.25, it is estimated that there were 67 skylark territories (used as a proxy for all ground-nesting species as they were the most abundant species and sufficient quantum of mitigation for skylark would likely accommodate other species requirements as well) across the area subject to breeding bird survey (473ha) at an average density of 0.14 territories per ha. The actual area where ground nesting birds will be displaced by solar PV modules is only 279 ha and it is estimated that this area supports 39 breeding pairs (0.14 x 279). Therefore, mitigation is based on the requirement to mitigate for 39 breeding pairs. It is considered that, with appropriate management, the carrying capacity of the areas set aside for ground-nesting bird mitigation (95ha) would support a greater carrying capacity of nesting pairs than the current arable farmland. Areas such as the Cable Corridor will only be subject to short-term temporary effects before being returned to arable farmland and, as such, birds could continue to use the arable farmland as nesting habitat as they currently do. Finally, as indicated in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3], provision of ground-nesting habitat is only one of a suite of measures designed to benefit nesting birds, others of which include increasing the availability of insect prey during the summer months as well as provision of a source of winter seed. Evidence presented by the RSPB5 has shown that solar schemes designed with biodiversity in mind can support a greater diversity of breeding birds than a typical arable and modified grassland landscape. In addition, a very recent paper6 has shown that ground-nesting corn bunting are foraging under panels including commuting to forage within the solar park from adjacent habitat. So, although corn bunting is not present within the Proposed Development’s Order Limits, it does suggest that the wider suite of measures in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] will be effective at providing a foraging resource for ground-nesting birds in the vicinity, increasing the carrying capacity locally</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council recommends that the 95ha of grassland suitable for use by ground nesting birds is shown on a plan to avoid confusion with other mitigation areas.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
Q1.7.17	<p>Proposed grassland</p> <p>In your response to the relevant representations [PDA-006], you refer to the provision of 93 hectares of open grassland. However, the Commitments Register [REP1-076] states that there would be the “Creation of 95 ha of species-rich neutral grassland” (commitment 67):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm which amount of grassland is correct and to what extent the proposed grazing land would provide mitigation, how much would provide compensation and what proportion would provide enhancements for each species it is intended to support. 2. The ExA note that the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [REP1-086] refers to grazing by cattle or sheep ‘if possible’. The ExA queries how grazing would be controlled during operation to ensure that any benefits derived from it (such as those as set out in the Bat Technical Study [REP1-105]) would take place – for example, would there need to be a minimum number of cattle or sheep grazed across an area across a year for a minimum amount of time to deliver the associated benefits and how would this be controlled? 3. Explain to what extent you rely on the benefits from grazed areas of grassland. If grazing of grassland during operation of the proposed development cannot be controlled, then to what extent can any benefits from grazing be offered weight? 4. The ExA also notes that the oLEMP [REP1-086] states that “The neutral grassland will be managed either through grazing or a hay cut late in the summer after ground nesting birds have fledged.” Would there be the same level of mitigation/ compensation/ enhancements provided if the grassland is used for hay-making, rather than cattle grazing? If not, provide justification for your approach in the context of the above questions. <p>(also see questions Q1.4.2 and Q1.18.4)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 95ha is the correct area of grassland, 93 ha was a typographical error. The 95ha of grassland is being provided as both mitigation for loss of open-ground foraging for bat species and open-ground nesting habitat for ground nesting birds. As bats and birds use foraging habitats at different times (diurnal/nocturnal, so different invertebrate resource), the Applicant is confident that 95ha is available for both species groups. This represents a doubling of the grassland area currently available within the Order Limits used by these species, and an improvement in its quality, leading to a higher invertebrate biomass and subsequent foraging resource. As stated in response to Q.1.7.8, The ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] has clearly articulated the difference between mitigation and enhancement measures with enhancement measures being largely confined to measures within the fields containing solar panels. 2. It is the Applicant’s intention to manage grassland through grazing in the first instance (although this management method cannot be confirmed yet at this stage in case of uncontrollable reasons such as biosecurity risks including TB outbreaks or other diseases that affect cattle or sheep), and initial discussions have already taken place with regards tenants who may be willing to provide either sheep or cattle grazing. The exact final grazing regime including proposed livestock stocking densities would be detailed and secured by the detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan but is likely to be low numbers of sheep under Solar PV modules moved regularly and low numbers of cattle again moved regularly on grassland areas without Solar PV modules. 3. The Applicant recognises that there are some benefits from grazing particularly for foraging bat species. The Applicant is not relying on grazing to deliver effective mitigation but, as indicated under Point 2, discussions have taken place. The Applicant is in agreement that open non-woodland habitats are important for Bechstein’s bats, but it should be noted the results of faecal DNA analysis have so far shown that the majority of Bechstein’s bats invertebrate prey species are associated with woodland habitats (69.4% - 74%), as expected given Bechstein’s bats strong association with woodland habitat8.. Hence, as outlined within the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3], the Applicant has identified areas for the creation of grassland without Solar PV modules linked by commuting corridors comprising wide buffers around hedgerows and woodland to enable bats to move around the landscape and find open areas to forage. The mitigation has been designed on a landscape-scale ensuring that commuting is protected and foraging is improved compared to the current situation. It should also be noted that large parts of the Order Limits, such as the Cable Corridors will be returned to arable farmland following short term temporary disruption (with mitigation measures provided within the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3] to offset these temporary impacts) and will also be available for bats to use for foraging as they do currently. It is considered that, in the absence of grazing, habitat creation both under Solar PV modules and within dedicated mitigation areas (95ha) will provide suitable foraging for both bats and ground-nesting birds, as the alternative to grassland management via grazing would be through a cutting regime designed to maximise flora diversity and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No comment 2 If this is the Applicant’s intention, Buckinghamshire Council ask that the wording is strengthened to require a commitment to manage the grassland via low intensity cattle grazing. A force major clause could be added to account for uncontrollable events such as TB outbreaks. There should be a distinction between reasons genuinely out of the Applicants' control (such as diseases) verses a lack of effort or commitment to finding a grazier.

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
		<p>subsequently invertebrate biomass. Therefore, whilst some weight should be attached to the securing of grazing, the Applicant considers mitigation would still be effective in the absence of grazing in case circumstances beyond the Applicant's control mean that grazing is not possible and a cutting regime is used instead.</p> <p>4. As indicated in Point 3, whilst low-intensity grazing with low numbers of stock has some advantages with regards foraging bats, and may benefit breeding birds slightly, for ground-nesting birds, there is no material difference between a late summer hay cut and low intensity cattle grazing. The habitat creation measures detailed in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] would provide an increase in insect availability with or without grazing. For bats, there is some evidence that bats can benefit from the presence of cattle (even where non-organic), but data from HS2 for at least one grazed field (Rosefield Field B7) does not show extensive use (from HS2 2018 data made available to Natural England; P. Reason, pers. comm.).</p>	

ExQ1	Question to:	Question:	Buckinghamshire Council Response
Q1.7.18	<p>Proposed grassland</p> <p>The oLEMP [REP1-086] includes calculations to deliver approximately 95 hectares of grassland intended to provide open nesting habitat for ground-nesting birds, as compensation for habitat lost due to the placement of the solar photovoltaic modules. The calculation appears to consider only the footprint of the solar photovoltaic modules when assessing habitat loss.</p> <p>Explain:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. why the assessment of habitat loss has been restricted solely to the area occupied by the solar photovoltaic modules 2. whether other infrastructure—such as access roads, cable routes, inverter/ transformer stations, fencing, substations, construction compounds, and areas subject to shading or disturbance—have been considered in calculating the extent of habitat loss for ground-nesting birds 3. and, if these elements were excluded, how the calculation can be considered robust given the potential for additional habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance, or displacement arising from these features <p>Provide justification, supporting evidence, and any recalculated figures if other infrastructure components materially affect the assessment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The calculation has been amended to include all permanent habitat loss (e.g. to accommodate Substation and BESS, access routes), as well as the area of Solar PV modules, see the answer to point 3 for more details. As well as the 279ha allocated to Solar PV development, there is an additional estimated 35.72ha of land that will be permanently lost (314.72ha in total) As presented in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] paragraphs 5.5.22 to 4.5.25, it is estimated that there were 67 skylark territories (used as a proxy for all ground-nesting species) across the area subject to breeding bird survey (473ha) but the actual area where ground-nesting birds will be displaced by Solar PV modules is only 279ha and it is estimated that this area supports 39 breeding pairs. Therefore, mitigation is based on the requirement to mitigate for 39 breeding pairs. Using the same average density of territories per ha as was used for the original estimate (0.14) x 314.72 equates to 44 territories that would need to be compensated for due to habitat loss or modification, see also point 3 below. 2. Other habitat loss associated with permanent infrastructure (e.g. Substation and BESS, access routes) has been added to the calculation of overall permanent habitat loss (314.72ha in total). 3. Even when considering other permanent habitat loss, it is still considered that the 95ha of mitigation will deliver sufficient area and the estimate of the quantum of mitigation is robust. It is considered that, with appropriate management, the carrying capacity of the areas set aside for ground-nesting bird mitigation (95ha) would support a greater carrying capacity of nesting pairs than the current arable farmland at an average 0.14 territories per ha. (Donald 20049) suggests up to 0.56 skylark territories per ha for set aside (grassland creation essentially) so 95ha of mitigation could potentially accommodate 169 skylark territories (95 divided by 0.57). So, the 95ha of mitigation is oversized to accommodate more than just the displacement from the Solar PV development and also account for any existing baseline population. The Applicant has considered that temporary impacts such as Cable Corridors will not require dedicated mitigation as only a small part of each field is affected and these areas will be returned to agriculture following construction and could then be used by ground-nesting birds as currently. <p>Finally, as indicated in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] provision of ground-nesting habitat is only one of a suite of measures designed to benefit nesting birds which include increasing the availability of insect prey during the summer months as well as provision of a source of winter seed; these measures will also help to increase the carrying capacity of ground-nesting birds in the local environment. Evidence presented by the RSPB10 has shown that solar schemes designed with biodiversity in mind can support a greater diversity of breeding birds than a typical arable and modified grassland landscape. In addition, a very recent paper has shown that ground-nesting corn bunting are foraging under panels including commuting to forage within the solar park from adjacent habitat. So, although corn bunting is not present within the Proposed Developments Order Limits, this does suggest that the wider suite of measures</p>	<p>The Council would suggest a plan is provided showing where the 95ha of open grassland, suitable for ground nesting birds, is located to avoid confusion with other areas of grassland proposed within buffers or other areas unsuitable for ground nesting birds.</p>

ExQ1	Question to:	Question:	Buckinghamshire Council Response
		<p>in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] will be effective at providing a foraging resource for ground-nesting birds in the vicinity increasing the carrying capacity locally reducing potential for residual effects.</p>	
Q1.7.20	<p>Mitigation - hedgerow buffers</p> <p>Natural England recommends [REP1-124] that hedgerow buffer mitigation for bat commuting routes and foraging areas is created based on measuring from the edge of existing hedgerows in line with the precautionary principle, so that the mitigation buffer is wholly additional to the feature itself. Natural England advises that the existing material ecological baseline is maintained, and that the buffer expands upon this, otherwise there would be diminishing returns with the size of the buffers. However, the ExA notes that you have measured the buffer distance from the central point of hedgerow rather than the edge of the receptor. Whilst the ExA acknowledges that the outer extent of the habitat may fluctuate over time due to management practices, a precautionary worst-case scenario should be applied when defining and measuring buffer distances for mitigation purposes. Explain therefore, how a worst-case scenario has been accounted for when applying an approach that measures the buffer from the central point of the affected receptor rather than from its precautionary outer edge?</p>	<p>A response has previously been provided within the Applicant's Response to Relevant Representations [EN010158/APP/8.3] [PDA-006] and secured within the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.4]. In making their request, Natural England has not taken into account that there is an additional 5m from the security fence to the first set of Solar PV modules. Measurements for hedgerow buffers are taken from hedgerow centrelines with the measurement being offset either side from centre line of hedgerows within the Order Limits. This is the most consistent and accurate way to measure buffers (as well as being realistic/achievable on-site). The 'worst-case scenario' is not applicable here, as there is no outer/upper limit for a hedgerow width; an outgrown hedgerow would simply become an area of impenetrable scrub. However, there is an additional 5m between the security fence and first row of Solar PV modules, which will be managed (as will the rest of the field supporting Solar PV modules) to benefit biodiversity and that 5m distance is greater than the maximum likely width of an unmanaged hedgerow. Management to benefit biodiversity means sown to grassland and (where achievable) lightly grazed. The proposed buffer zones are considered adequate to maintain connectivity (given they exceed the echolocation detection range of short- to mid-range echolocating bats (including Bechstein's bats) specifically to minimise the risk of displacement. The Applicant considers this to be a more important measurement as opposed to a measurement from the outer edge of a hedge.</p>	<p>The Council note that the security fence would be a barrier to bats to access the 5m of grassland between the panels and the fence.</p> <p>The Council agree with Natural England and also recommend that buffers should be from the edge of the existing feature as a mitigation measure to protect the feature itself. Otherwise where existing features are wide, the buffers as measured from the centre may not offer any actual protection to the feature.</p>
Q1.7.23	<p>Monitoring</p> <p>ES Chapter 7 confirms [REP1-036] confirms that management and monitoring of mitigation habitats would be required for a period of 30 years. Why is this not proposed for the lifetime of the proposed development?</p>	<p>Yes, ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] paragraph 7.9.46 states: Appropriate management and monitoring of mitigation habitats would be required for a period of 30 years (as required by the Environment Act 2021 [Ref. 7-4]) to ensure successful establishment and condition. The habitat management and monitoring regime is detailed in and secured by the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6]. This includes management of ecological mitigation areas, hedgerows, grassland, field margins, watercourses and treatments under Solar PV modules, but then paragraph 7.9.47 continues: As the operational life of the Proposed Development is 40 years, the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6] will be reviewed during the 30 year period to ensure the management prescriptions are still appropriate. Therefore, the intention is to carry out appropriate habitat management of mitigation habitats for the full 40-year operational life but giving the Applicant the opportunity to review the management prescriptions after 30 years.</p>	<p>It is recommended that monitoring is required for the lifetime of the development.</p>

7.1 Arboricultural impacts			
<p>Q1.7.1</p>	<p>Survey data</p> <p>Ground-derived data and drone survey data have been used to establish the arboricultural baseline [APP-099]. Provide a brief methodology note explaining how the 2 datasets were captured, processed, and integrated, and how you have assured positional and attribute accuracy in line with relevant technical guidance. In particular, outline the accuracy tolerances, any limitations, and how conflicts or gaps between the datasets were resolved.</p>	<p>Drone-derived topographic data was captured using a UAV platform following a structured survey process. Ground Control Points (GCPs) were first established across the Site using GPS-RTK equipment, arranged on an approximate grid to ensure high positional accuracy. These GCPs were physically marked and recorded to provide precise reference points. Aerial data was then collected through planned UAV flights at approximately 120m altitude, achieving a ground sampling resolution of approximately 6cm per pixel. All imagery was georeferenced using onboard GPS, recording latitude, longitude, and elevation. Post-processing involved: • Alignment of images using GPS data and identification of tie points between overlapping photographs; • Georeferencing using GCPs, allowing each pixel to be accurately positioned in real-world coordinates; • Generation of a dense 3D point cloud from overlapping imagery; • Production of outputs including an orthomosaic (2D) and Digital Elevation Model (DEM).</p> <p>The resulting dataset achieves an accuracy of approximately ±6 cm in plan (X,Y) and ±9 cm in elevation (Z). It is noted that drone photogrammetry produces a surface model, meaning areas obscured by vegetation (e.g. tree canopies) represent the top of vegetation rather than true ground levels. By using a high density of ground control points, the drone survey delivers survey-grade mapping for the Proposed Development, this provides a far finer data resolution (around 3cm/pixel) than a typical ground topographical survey (often 5–10m between points), the drone survey offers a robust and reliable baseline for the arboricultural assessment. The arboricultural baseline was established through the integration of drone-derived topographical data and a ground-based arboricultural survey. A detailed tree survey was undertaken on foot by a qualified arboricultural consultant, in accordance with BS 5837:2012 and applying Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) principles. This included the collection of tree-specific data such as species, height, stem diameter, crown spread, condition, age class, and categorisation. The drone-derived dataset was used as a base mapping layer within a CAD software. Tree positions and features were verified and refined on site during the ground survey with the aid of a GPS Trimble device, with the arboricultural consultant aligning recorded features to the base plan using identifiable physical references. All arboricultural attributes were derived from site observations, with drone data used solely to support spatial accuracy and coverage. Ground-based measurements were undertaken using standard arboricultural tools and estimation techniques consistent with BS 5837:2012. Root Protection Areas (RPAs) were calculated using measured stem diameters in accordance with the Standard. In some areas, dense vegetation, or restricted access limited direct measurement; in such cases, professional judgement and visual estimation were applied. Drone data does not provide detailed structural or physiological condition, stem diameters or crown dimensions which is reliant on ground-based assessment. Whilst drone data provides a useful representation of canopy extent, it does not always accurately capture the true spread or asymmetry of individual tree crowns, particularly where trees are influenced by competition, prevailing winds, or management (e.g. hedgerow trees). Accordingly, crown spread measurements were taken on site during the ground-based survey, typically in four cardinal directions, in accordance with BS 5837:2012. All arboricultural features were ground-truthed, ensuring no reliance on aerial data alone. Where discrepancies arose between datasets (e.g. canopy extent or feature classification), these were resolved in favour of site-based observations. Any gaps in data were addressed through site verification and professional interpretation, ensuring a complete and coherent dataset.</p>	<p>The Applicant’s clarification is welcomed and is helpful, particularly the confirmation that aerial/drone data supported mapping and spatial referencing, with arboricultural data verified through ground-based survey. The Council does not object to the use of drone data but seeks to understand how any areas of restricted access or limited visibility were addressed in practice.</p> <p>The Council also notes that, elsewhere in its submissions, the Applicant has explained that arboricultural sensitivity should be considered on a feature-specific basis. In that context, it would be helpful to identify where these constraints occurred, which features were affected, and whether these locations coincide with retained trees, woodland edges, hedgerows, veteran trees or proposed works areas. This would provide reassurance that any survey limitations do not affect the most sensitive arboricultural features.</p>

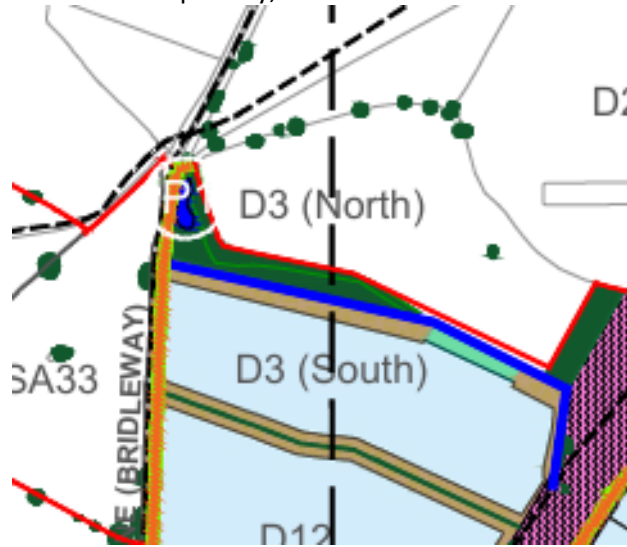
Q1.7.2	<p>Survey methodology</p> <p>Paragraph 4.24 of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment [APP-099] states that there are numerous large woodlands recorded. However, only ancient semi-natural woodland is noted in the data tables in the assessment. Explain the methodology used to classify woodland, including the classification criteria applied to distinguish woodland parcels from tree groups.</p>	<p>Trees have been recorded as individuals (prefix T) or as groups (prefix G) within the survey data tables. BS 5837:2012 defines a group as: “trees that form cohesive arboricultural features either aerodynamically (e.g. shelter), visually (e.g. avenues or screens) or culturally including for biodiversity (e.g. woodlands, parkland or wood pasture)”. The field survey followed these definitions, with groups identified based on cohesive function and structure observed on site and supported by descriptive notes within the survey data tables outlining their composition and characteristics. The term woodland has been applied more broadly within the tree data table to describe tree-dominated habitats with a continuous or near-continuous canopy, typically of a larger scale (generally exceeding approximately 5,000m² and 20m in width), and exhibiting characteristics distinct from linear or fragmented tree features such as hedgerows or belts. It should also be noted that the tree data tables include general observations describing the character of group features, and where appropriate, woodland characteristics are explicitly referenced. For example, Group G70 is described as a “woodland belt”, demonstrating that woodland-type features are recognised within the survey, even where classified as groups for the purposes of BS 5837. In addition, to inform the design of the Proposed Development and the application of offset distances, external datasets were utilised, including the National Forest Inventory (2021). This provided a consistent spatial reference for identifying woodland extents across the Site and its surroundings, supporting the application of appropriate buffers alongside the site-based arboricultural survey. Accordingly, whilst paragraph 4.24 refers to numerous large woodland features within and adjacent to the Site, only those woodlands with specific designation (e.g. Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland) are explicitly highlighted due to their elevated value and policy importance. All woodland features identified within the survey have been assigned a group (G) prefix in accordance with BS 5837:2012, reflecting their arboricultural function as cohesive tree features. However, their woodland characteristics are clearly described within the data tables to provide context, ensuring that their structure and significance are appropriately understood. This approach represents a consistent and proportionate application of BS 5837 terminology, supported by site-based professional judgement and supplementary datasets, and does not affect the identification of constraints or the assessment of impacts.</p>	<p>The Applicant’s response is noted. The Council’s concern is not terminology itself, but with ensuring that features functioning as woodland systems are clearly identified and assessed as such, so that buffering and consideration of woodland edge effects and indirect impacts can be followed with confidence. The Council would therefore welcome more clarity, whether by note, schedule or plan annotation, as to which surveyed features are being treated as woodland parcels and how that has informed the assessment.</p>
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7.2 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Q1.7.3	<p>Biodiversity units</p> <p>1. Is it the applicant’s intension to sell any of the biodiversity net gain units which it intends to create in the order limits, if development consent were granted? If so, how many of the biodiversity units would likely be offered for sale?</p> <p>2. If some of the biodiversity units were sold, would this reduce the weight to be offered to the benefits of net biodiversity gain of the Proposed Development in the planning balance and why?</p> <p>3. What is the likelihood that the proposal would substantially overprovide biodiversity net gain in comparison to that which is set out in requirement 7 of the dDCO [REP1-008] and if so, would these units likely be sold? Justify your answers.</p>	<p>1. As per Requirement 7(2) of the Draft DCO [EN010158/APP/3.1.4] the Applicant has committed to deliver a minimum of 40% biodiversity net gain for area-based habitat units, 17% biodiversity net gain for hedgerow units and 10% net gain for watercourse units for all of the authorised development during operation. The methods for doing so are secured through the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3]. These biodiversity net gain units would be delivered within the Order Limits and none of the units contributing to these values would be sold.</p> <p>2. It is therefore considered that the value of these biodiversity net gain units should be considered in the weight offered to the associated benefits. It is also noted that while the Environment Act 2021 mandates a statutory requirement for developments to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG, Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) (including the Proposed Development) are currently exempt from BNG requirements. Despite this and BNG only being required for DCO applications submitted on or after 2 November 2026, the Applicant is still committing to deliver substantially above 10% BNG.</p> <p>3. The biodiversity net gain proposals within the Application are pragmatic, deliverable and secured through the Draft DCO [EN010158/APP/3.1.4] and Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3]. While it is unlikely that proposals would substantially overprovide biodiversity net gain when compared to what is set out in requirement 7, it is too early for this to be this to be determined</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council would welcome being provided with the biodiversity metric to review.</p>
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		and would be dependent on numerous external factors prior to implementation of the proposals.	
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ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
10. Cultural heritage			
Q1.10.1	<p>National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-1 Paragraph 5.9.13 of NPS EN-1 encourages applicants to consider opportunities to enhance access to, or interpretation, understanding and appreciation of, the heritage assets affected by the proposed development. Paragraph 9.11.1 of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 9 (Cultural Heritage) [APP-052] states that interpretation boards for Claydon House and Claydon Registered Park and Garden on the proposed permissive path to Knowl Hill to are secured by the Streets, Rights of Way and Access Plans [REP1-006] and the Outline Rights of Way and Access Strategy [REP1-090]. However, it is not clear how these documents secure interpretation boards. Answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide clarification of how the interpretation boards enhancement would be secured. 2. Elaborate on the initiatives to improve the access and visitor experience at Claydon House as referenced at paragraph 9.11.1 and how they are secured. 3. Has similar consideration been given or other consideration for enhancements been given for other heritage assets affected by the proposed development? If not, why not? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpretation boards are outlined within the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] which will provide the mechanism to secure agreement of the locations, content and materials and appearance of any interpretation boards. The Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] is secured through Requirement 7 of the Draft DCO [EN010158/APP/3.1.4]. 2. The Applicant intends to make a financial contribution to the National Trust to support their own access and visitor experience initiatives. As these measures are not required to mitigate the effects of the Proposed Development it is not necessary to secure them through the DCO. 3. The Draft Archaeological Management Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.10.2] [REP1-094] includes provisions for community engagement which will provide opportunities to enhance access to and understanding and appreciation of the archaeological resource of the Order Limits. The Applicant is open to discussions with Buckinghamshire Council to expand the community engagement to include built heritage and historic landscape. The Applicant is also open to discussions with Buckinghamshire Council regarding potential additional interpretation boards at appropriate locations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Requirement 7 specifically mentions the LEMP. The OLEMP 3.3.15 states: "Implementation of interpretation boards at appropriate junctions of PRoW within the Order Limits, which will allow for opportunities to better understand the Proposed Development, local history and ecology and the benefits of renewable energy." 2) The Council assumes that the financial contribution has some mitigatory/compensatory intention. It cannot be unrelated to the development proposals. It is assumed that solar farm features/activities on the approaches to Claydon House, especially during construction, may harm/diminish the visitor access experience and may even deter visitors, with a potential risk of income reduction, which may in turn reduce the funds available for maintenance that preserves the various Claydon House buildings' special interest. If this is a risk, the financial contribution would help address the risk. 3) For built heritage, interpretation to explain the wider landscape of Claydon House and the most significant listed buildings/the history of the villages would be welcome. The Council would welcome discussion on this.

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
Q1.10.5	<p>Assessment assumptions</p> <p>Paragraphs 9.6.4 and 9.6.5 of ES Chapter 9 [APP-052] state that it is assumed that hedgerows required for cultural heritage mitigation would achieve a minimum height of 3.5 metres (m) by year 10 of operation and that this is secured in the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [REP1-086]. However, the oLEMP refers to a target height of 3-3.5m for hedgerows. Confirm if any amendments are necessary to either the oLEMP or the assessment assumptions of cultural heritage to ensure consistency and that proposed cultural heritage mitigation would be adequately secured in the oLEMP.</p>	<p>The target heights in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] provide a range as not all hedgerows will be required to reach 3.5m to provide the required mitigation. ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] paragraphs 9.6.4 and 9.6.5 incorrectly stated a minimum height of 3.5m and should read a minimum height of 3m by year 10. ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] has been updated at Deadline 2 for clarification. Despite this amendment, the assessment conclusions remain unchanged. All relevant cultural heritage mitigation in terms of mitigation planting is secured within the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3].</p>	<p>The up to 0.5 m difference is unlikely to have a significant change to the impacts of the proposal as identified by the council. The Council's assessment of impacts is not altered. The Council considers that the solar farm features would still cause the level of harm identified in the LIR. If some impacts would be slightly more severe than anticipated, the level of harm would not be elevated further up the scale of less than substantial harm.</p>
Q1.10.6	<p>Embedded mitigation</p> <p>Table 9.8 of ES Chapter 9 [APP-052] includes the following embedded mitigation "15m width belt of structural native woodland planting along northern boundary of Field D3 (South)". Appendix 2 of the oLEMP [REP1-086] appears to show only partial planting on the northern boundary, with proposed tree belt screening. Should the oLEMP be updated to accord with the mitigation set out in table 9.8? If not, why not?</p>	<p>The planting proposed along the northern boundary of Field D3 (South) is to infill a gap in the vegetation that is present along the boundary. Further planting along the northern boundary is not required as the existing planting is considered to already provide sufficient screening.</p>	<p>The proposed section of planting is welcomed as without it there would be views from the rear of the grade II listed 23 Orchard Way and Quamby in Botolph Claydon. The planting should extend slightly further than is highlighted in sky blue on the relevant plan (Appendix 2C) in EN010158/APP/7.6.2, where the north field boundary meets the corners of the existing tree screens, as the western existing tree screen especially, is at its narrowest-see below:</p> 

Q1.10.7	<p>Upper floors of Claydon House</p> <p>Provide confirmation of when the additional photomontages and visualisations from the upper floors of Claydon House as indicated in the Statement of Common Ground with the National Trust [REP1-028] and Historic England [REP1-027] will be submitted for consideration in the examination. Will this be accompanied by an updated cultural heritage assessment [APP-052]? The ExA is keen to stress the urgent need for this information to be provided as soon as possible in order to ensure adequate examination time for its consideration and review of any potential related mitigation.</p>	<p>Two additional photomontages have been submitted at Deadline 2, which form part of ES Volume 4, Appendix 10.6: LVIA Visualisations [EN010158/APP/6.4]. These have been shared with Historic England, National Trust and Buckinghamshire Council through ongoing consultation. Historic England and National Trust agree that the harm to the significance of Claydon House will be at the lower end of less than substantial harm and this agreement is set out in the Statement of Common Ground with National Trust [EN010158/APP/5.17.2] and Draft Statement of Common Ground with Historic England [EN010158/APP/5.16] [REP1 027] submitted at Deadline 2. ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] has been updated to refer to these visualisations, but the conclusions previously reported are not affected by this update.</p>	<p>The Council agrees that views from the house would cause harm at the lower end of less than substantial harm. However, the wider landscape (former parkland and the relationships with its former satellite farms and approaches) would still be affected, with further cumulative effects on these historic relationships from cumulative infrastructure projects. Overall, the harm to the wider setting of Claydon House, its Park and its buildings would be less than substantial harm in the middle of the scale.</p>
Q1.10.8	<p>Additional mitigation – Pond Farmhouse</p> <p>Table 9.15 of ES Chapter 9 [APP-052] identifies “Controls on hours of work, and on noise and dust.” as additional mitigation during the operation phase for changes to the setting of Grade II Pond Farmhouse. Are controls on hours of work, and on noise and dust proposed as additional mitigation for the operation phase or is this an error? If this is an error, does this have any implications for the ES and is any alternative additional mitigation proposed to reduce the magnitude of effect?</p>	<p>Reference to additional mitigation for Pond Farmhouse through controls on hours of work and on noise and dust in relation to operational phase effects was included in Table 9.15 in error, ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] has been updated at Deadline 2. Controls on hours of work and on noise and dust apply during the construction and decommissioning phases for Pond Farmhouse as they do for other designated heritage assets. No further mitigation for Pond Farmhouse is proposed for the operational phase beyond the embedded mitigation, the magnitude of impact did not include consideration of these controls during operation and as reported within the ES.</p>	<p>The Council still considers that there would be harm at the upper end of the scale of less than substantial harm to Pond House</p>
Q1.10.9	<p>Assessment of likely effects (with additional mitigation)</p> <p>There are numerous examples in section 9.10 of ES Chapter 9 [APP-052] where conclusions drawn by the applicant regarding the significance of effects are not adequately justified. In particular, where table 9.7 (criteria for assessing the significance of effect) indicates that one of 2 conclusions could be drawn from the specified degree of importance and magnitude (e.g. slight or moderate), there is insufficient explanation given as to why the chosen conclusion is drawn. Whilst the ExA acknowledges the applicant’s position that professional judgment</p>	<p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] has been updated at Deadline 2 to include additional justification for the selection of significance of effect where Table 9.7 allows for multiple options. Section 9.10 has been reviewed for consistency with the assessment criteria.</p> <p>Paragraph 9.10.45 regarding physical impacts to the area of Iron Age and Romano-British activity in Parcel 3 (HA1/MBC45205) relates to the effects following the additional mitigation secured by the Draft Archaeological Management Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.10.2] [REP1 094]. The archaeological excavation proposed for these remains will serve to mitigate for the physical impact, and therefore reduce the residual effect, this is in line with standard industry practice.</p>	<p>The Council does not always agree with the choice of option in Table 9.7. For grade I listed Claydon House, for instance the Applicant’s choice of slight adverse, rather than moderate is because “the distance between the Listed Building and the Proposed Development will lessen the effect as construction activity will be filtered through existing vegetation in views from outside the house on the western terrace and will be oblique to views from the upper floors.” The Council’s assessment is that Claydon House’s contributory setting consists of much more than these views (relationships with the wider, non-designated parkland and satellite farms, the character of the approaches, as stated in the Council’s previous submissions).</p>

	<p>can be applied, this is not fully supported by evidence and explained in section 9.10. For example, paragraph 9.10.59 regarding changes to the setting of Middle Claydon Conservation Area identifies high importance and minor magnitude but concludes slight adverse effects. Table 9.7 indicates that a conclusion of slight or moderate could be drawn in such instances with moderate effects being significant.</p> <p>Furthermore, there are examples where the conclusion of the significance of effects contradicts the criteria in table 9.7 entirely without an adequate explanation. For example, paragraph 9.10.45 regarding physical impacts to area of Iron-Age to Romano-British settlement activity in Parcel 3 (HA1/MBC45205) during construction concludes slight adverse effects, when medium importance and moderate magnitude is identified. Table 9.7 would suggest that the conclusion should be moderate effects which is significant in line with paragraph 9.6.18.</p> <p>Undertake a full review of section 9.10 and provide further justification for the conclusions drawn where they deviate from table 9.7 or where table 9.7 indicates that one of 2 conclusions on the significance of effects could be identified.</p>		
Q1.10.10	<p>Assessment of settings Buckinghamshire Council's Local Impact Report [REP1-112] and the Claydons Solar Action Group written representation [REP1-127] identify concerns regarding the applicant's approach to considering the contribution of settings to the significance of heritage assets and</p>	<p>Each specific issue raised has been addressed within the Applicant's Response to Written Representations EN010158/APP/8.12 and Applicant's Response to Buckinghamshire Council's Local Impact Report EN010158/APP/8.11]. The Applicant's approach to assessing setting has been in line with Historic England guidance. It has considered the significance of the heritage assets, how setting contributes to this significance (noting that this contribution can be positive, negative or neutral), and has considered how the Proposed Development may affect this contribution.</p>	<p>The Council feels that that the identification of significance and the contribution of setting to significance presented in Archaeological DBA and Setting Assessment. ES, Volume 4 Appendix 9.1EN10158/APP/6.4, Annex D, Detailed Setting Assessment (Revision 2 Deadline 2, April 2026) has missed some important elements. The architecture, architectural design intentions, location and orientation of some of the heritage assets (and thus the exact way in which they were meant to be seen historically and their current presence) have not been sufficiently identified/presented in these cases. This has led to assessment that has missed elements of the impact of the proposals and in some cases understated the harm.</p>

	<p>subsequent conclusions. Provide further justification for the overall approach taken alongside addressing each specific issues raised by the interested parties.</p>		<p>One example of this is grade II* listed Botolph House: In Archaeological DBA and Setting Assessment. ES, Volume 4 Appendix 9.1EN10158/APP/6.4, Annex D, Detailed Setting Assessment (Revision 2 Deadline 2, April 2026), Section 2.3, Botolph House, the Applicant describes the significance as “Its symmetrical design gives it aesthetic value and it forms an attractive building within East Claydon.” The description of the contribution of setting to its significance is that it is “a key building within Botolph Claydon, set within a small garden west of Botyl Road which forms the approach into the village from the north. The stables are located to the southwest of the house and together they are accessed via a drive which curves around the rear. The gardens provide an appropriate context to appreciate the architectural interest of the house. Views from the house over the surrounding fields are filtered by mature trees and make a small contribution to the significance of the building as part of the rural settlement.”</p> <p>Here the applicant missed elements of the nature of the architecture and how it was meant to be seen and interact with its surroundings, as well as elements of how setting contributes to its significance. Botolph House’s 1712 date is before the informal house became fashionable;. Symmetry and advertising the status of its owner across the valley to the east would have been important elements of its design intent. The front and rear elevations would have been designed to be visible and project the status and good taste of the owner for a considerable distance. It is therefore set relatively far east in its plot, to dominate the road and the valley beyond, as well as being visible from across the valley to its east (given the aesthetic of the time the screening and trees opposite would probably have been added later). In 1712 the first floor would likely have been the principal floor and some of these views out survive across the valley in a gap in the trees that probably affords views of fields E21, E21, E23 and possibly parts of E20. This gap is the best surviving element of its original setting to its front, along with its dominance of the road.</p> <p>See Council response to REP2-085, Line 4.17 for a more full analysis of Botolph House.</p>
<p>Q1.10.11</p>	<p>Botolph Claydon Conservation Area The applicant’s response [PDA-006] to the Claydons Solar Action Group’s relevant representation [RR-049] regarding effects on the Botolph Claydon Conservation Area states that changes to the design of the proposed development “have ensured that the Proposed Development is no longer visible from the Conservation Area and that the Conservation Area would continue to be experienced within a largely agricultural setting on the approaches from the west and north.</p>	<p>Botolph Claydon Conservation Area is shown overlain on the ZTV on Figures 9.3z and 9.3aa of ES Volume 3, Figure 9.3a-v: Designated Heritage Assets within 5 km of the Order Limits overlain with ZTV [EN010158/APP/6.3.2] [AS-030]). Although theoretical visibility of Parcel 1 is predicted from the south and east of Botolph Claydon (as shown on Figure 10.9b of ES Volume 3, Figure 10.9b: Solar PV Modules Parcel 1 – Detailed Screening [EN010158/APP/6.3] [APP-069]), at a range of approximately 2km to the nearest Solar PV modules in Parcel 1, the effect on significance of the Conservation Area is considered to be negligible. Likewise, although Parcel 3 also shows theoretic visibility from Botolph Claydon, the physical separation from the Conservation Area (c.1.2km to the Construction Compounds), and from the approach to the Conservation Area from the north means that the effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be negligible. Viewpoint 9 (ES Volume 4, Appendix 10.6: LVIA Visualisations [EN010158/APP/6.4.3] shows that in views east and south from Botolph Claydon the Proposed Development will be predominantly screened by vegetation and landform. Key topographic landmarks in these views (such as Grange Hill, Quainton Hill and the settlements of Oving and North Marston) would retain their prominence. The distance to the nearest Solar PV modules (approximately 220m to the east</p>	<p>Although there would be little to no visibility from Parcel 1, there remain long views from higher ground and on approaches across the valleys to the southeast and east of Botoph Claydon and East Claydon, towards the two villages over/across/past Parcel 2 and Parcel 3. These form an important part of the contributory setting of Botolph Claydon Conservation Area and East Claydon village, which is being considered as a conservation area. The villages sit on a prominent ridge and have relationships with the prominent villages and high ground to the east and south east. There are also views into the valley from along its main arterial roads, some buildings and spaces looking out. For this reason we consider the harm to be at least at the middle of less than substantial harm</p>

	<p>The changes to the approach to the Conservation Area from the south have been assessed within the detailed setting assessment”.</p> <p>However, figure 10.9 of ES Chapter 10 (Landscape and Visual) [AS-031] appears to indicate that the proposed development would be partially visible from Parcel 1 (to the west) as well as Parcel 3 (to the north-east) even with detailed screening. Provide further commentary on the visibility of the proposed development from the Botolph Claydon Conservation Area and confirm any implications for the assessment.</p>	<p>and south within Parcel 2) and the topography means that the immediate surroundings of the Conservation Area will remain agricultural in character. The Applicant recognises that the change to the agricultural character of the wider surroundings, including on footpath approaches to the Conservation Area from the south (on Footpath ECL/8/1, Bernwood Jubilee Way), will result in harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. The Applicant judges that this harm would be at the lower end of the scale of less than substantial.</p>	
Q1.10.13	<p>Pond Farmhouse</p> <p>The ExA observed on its unaccompanied site inspection [EV1-001] that the setback between the proposed solar PV arrays and the listed building is reduced at the north-eastern corner of Field B4 as identified at appendix 1 of the oLEMP [REP1-086]. How was the extent of the setback determined and why does it narrow at the north-eastern corner of field B4? Could the north-eastern corner of Field B4 with the PV arrays be set further back from the farmhouse to provide additional embedded mitigation? If not, why not?</p>	<p>The setbacks from Pond Farmhouse have taken account of the principal views out from the farmhouse to the south, and less so to the west due to existing vegetation, as well as views of the farmhouse from the north. To the south, the offset is approx. 280m and extends to the first field boundary/edge of Shrub’s Wood. To the west the offset is 50m from the Order Limits as existing vegetation west of Pond Farmhouse provides screening. Solar PV development has been excluded from Field B5 to the north and northwest of Pond Farmhouse to preserve views of the farmhouse from Calvert Road. A strip along the west side of B13 has also been excluded to reduce the effect on the approach to the farmhouse from Calvert Road, and existing hedgerows along Calvert Road and east of the access road provided screening of Field B13 from the road. The Applicant considers that the proposed mitigation is suitable and that further mitigation or removal of Solar PV module is not necessary.</p>	<p>The Council disagrees. The setting would be largely compromised by solar PV arrays on both sides, severing its links with Claydon House and the wider historic landscape. Screening planting would also add to its isolation from its historic land, harming its significance. The character of the setting would be changed. Its contributory setting only partly relates to views out of the heritage asset, and we assess harm to be at the high end of less than substantial harm.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
11. Cumulative effects			
Q1.11.1	<p>Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 17 (Cumulative effects) - assessment methodology</p> <p>Provide more information on the 'Tier 3' projects which were scoped out of the stage 1 cumulative effects assessment [REP1-044] and reasons why.</p>	<p>Paragraph 17.4.22 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] highlights that Tier 3 projects were scoped out given they do not have sufficient environmental assessment information freely and publicly available to inform the inter-project cumulative effects assessment, nor a high-level qualitative assessment. This includes projects on the Planning Inspectorate's Programme of Projects where an EIA Scoping Report has not been submitted, projects that have been identified in the relevant Development Plan(s) (and emerging Development Plans), and projects identified in other plans and programmes (as appropriate) which set the framework for future development consents/approvals, where such development is reasonably likely to come forward. The exception to this is the high-level appraisal of the National Grid East Claydon Substation. As there was insufficient environmental assessment information freely and publicly available for National Grid East Claydon Substation, assumptions were applied using similar applications, National Grid's factsheet on substation construction, and engagement with National Grid in order to complete a high level appraisal of the inter-project cumulative effects of the Proposed Development with the proposed extension to the National Grid East Claydon Substation.</p>	<p>The Council considers that a proportionate precautionary approach should have been applied. Even where detailed information is not available, it would be reasonable to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the nature and likely scale of development; and • provide a high-level qualitative indication of potential cumulative effects. <p>This approach has been applied selectively (for the National Grid substation) and should have been applied more widely.</p>
Q1.11.4	<p>ES Chapter 17 (Cumulative effects) - assessment methodology</p> <p>Explain why project ID number 4 from Appendix 17.1 Long list of Other Approved or Existing Developments [REP1-072] was not taken forward for assessment.</p>	<p>This application forms part of the HS2 Hybrid Bill which is detailed as ID5 within ES Volume 4, Appendix 17.1: Long List of Other Approved and or Existing Developments [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] [REP1-072] and assessed within ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]. It is noted in the column 'Progress to stage 2?' in ES Volume 4, Appendix 17.1: Long List of Other Approved and or Existing Developments [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] [REP1-072] for project ID5 that this other existing and/or approved development was assessed under the HS2 Hybrid Bill (ID5). For completeness, this was included in the long and short list and has been assessed as under the overarching 'HS2 Hybrid Bill'.</p>	<p>Whilst reference is made to the overarching HS2 Hybrid Bill, it is not demonstrated how the specific effects of ID5 are captured within that assessment. In the absence of this clarity, it cannot be assumed that any localised cumulative effects have been properly been taken into account.</p>
Q1.11.22	<p>ES Chapter 17 (Cumulative effects) – inter-project effects with other development</p> <p>The ExA is unclear regarding the significance of the inter-project cumulative effects with other developments on soils from ES Chapter 17 [REP1-044] – are there significant effects, and if so, would they be major or moderate? Set out which other projects would contribute to significant effect and for which phases of the proposed development this would relate to.</p>	<p>As per Paragraph 17.7.33 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]: "A medium sensitivity for both soil resilience and agricultural land quality and a high magnitude means there is a moderate or large adverse significant effect from cumulative developments within the 1km ZoI." And as per Paragraph 17.7.34 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3]: "there will be a significant effect on agricultural quality due to the loss of land however this loss will not occur on BMV, the loss will be of worse performing agricultural land and therefore keeping the best performing land within agricultural production." However, it is not standard practice to assign a level of significant effect to inter-project cumulative effects. Please see the Applicant's response to Q1.11.5 above. Additionally, food security has been assessed with the chapter, and no significant effects have been reported.</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council accepts this response.</p>
Q1.11.27	<p>Appendix 17.3: Cumulative Visualisations</p> <p>How did you determine which viewpoints to provide visualisations of the cumulative effects for Appendix 17.3 Cumulative Visualisations [APP-136]? The ExA notes that significant inter-project cumulative effects were identified at North Buckinghamshire Way and The Midshires Way in relation to Viewpoints 21, 22, 25, 27 and 29 [REP1-074], however, none of these viewpoints were selected to provide a cumulative visualisation,</p>	<p>The viewpoints were selected in agreement with Buckinghamshire Council. The increase in inter project cumulative effects for users of North Buckinghamshire Way and The Midshires Way was as a result of the addition of the Littleton Manor Farm wind turbine affecting views to the south of Quainton Hill, hence viewpoints 21, 22, 25, 27 and 29 are not relevant to these views. Littleton Manor Farm was added to the ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] after the visualisations had been prepared; hence it was not incorporated into views.</p>	<p>While it is noted the order of production of documents and viewpoints that have been shared, it is requested that a visualisation that contains Littleton Manor Farm wind turbine within its view be created.</p>

	why is that the case?		
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ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
13.	Health and wellbeing		
Q1.13.3	<p>Health Effects Report</p> <p>Explain how the conclusions in annex A of the Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [REP1-056] consider the worst-case scenario in terms of receptor sensitivity.</p>	<p>The sensitivity of populations and sub-populations to changes in health and wellbeing is informed by the following factors, in-line with ISEP (formerly IEMA) guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of prevailing socio-economic deprivation; • Reliance of and changes to / alternatives to shared resources (by the population and the Project); • Health inequalities within the population (and sub-populations); • The prevailing outlook of the community (i.e. levels of anxiety, uncertainty or ambivalence about the Proposed Development); • Limitations on the population / sub-population from undertaking daily activities; • The levels of dependency on care and support for populations; • Prevailing health status; and • The ability for people to adapt to change. <p>In most cases, at a population scale, given prevailing low levels of deprivation, limited health inequalities and generally good prevailing health status, the population is considered to be less sensitive – however the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [EN010158/APP/6.4.3] at Annex A does note that populations are anxious about the Proposed Development, and in some cases have limited ability to adapt to change resulting in sensitivity at the population scale being considered at least ‘medium’ and in some cases ‘high’ (for example relating to populations affected by determinants of health such as changes to the economic use of land, and the experience of the natural environment). This approach is therefore considered to represent a ‘worst case’ in terms of sensitivity at a population scale. Notwithstanding this, the sensitivity of sub-populations to change may be higher – this is implicit in the consideration of baseline and pathways/determinants of health, and this has been made more explicit through updates to the Health Effects Report submitted at Deadline 2, based on feedback from Written Representations (see Q1.13.5).</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council notes the Applicant’s response to the Examining Authority’s question on how the conclusions in Annex A of the Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [REP1-056] consider the worst-case scenario in terms of receptor sensitivity. The Council agrees in principle that the sensitivity factors listed by the Applicant (including deprivation, health inequalities, reliance on shared resources, community outlook/anxiety, activity limitations, dependency, prevailing health status and ability to adapt) are consistent with the general sensitivity framing that Annex A seeks to apply and are more aligned with ISEP guidance than previous iterations of the assessment.</p> <p>The Council also notes that the Applicant positions the Deadline 2 update [REP2-051] as making sub-population sensitivity more explicit (including older people and those facing access/geographic factors), drawing in part on contextual material provided through Written Representations (including GP-registered population context for the 3W Health practice) and acknowledging limitations in such evidence. However, Buckinghamshire Council considers that the Applicant’s answer only partially addresses the Examining Authority’s question. While the Applicant asserts that elevating sensitivity to at least “medium” (and in some cases “high”) at a population scale due to anxiety and limited adaptability represents a “worst-case” approach, the Council does not consider that this, of itself, demonstrates how the Annex A conclusions have been reached on a worst-case sensitivity basis. This is particularly evident where Annex A identifies wellbeing-relevant effects that are spatially specific and capable of being experienced disproportionately by certain receptors and sub-populations. In the Council’s view, the Deadline 2 sensitivity additions to [REP2-051] remain largely narrative and do not yet provide a consistently traceable audit trail showing how “worst-case” sensitivity is carried through into discrete receptor definition (including place-based, higher-exposure receptors) and determinant-specific conclusions, nor how this then informs any targeted mitigation/monitoring for those most affected.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council has already provided detailed comment on Annex A for ExA Written Questions [REP1-090] Q1.13.1, which was based on the previous iteration of the document [REP1-056]. Following review of the Applicant’s changes in [REP2-051]; the Council’s position remains that the Deadline 2 update only partially responds to one strand of concern (explicit discussion of sensitivity for certain sub-populations) and that other matters raised as deficient by BC at Deadline 2 [REP2-090 and REP2-090] remain outstanding; the Council’s position on those matters is unchanged.</p>
Q1.13.4	<p>Health Effects Report</p> <p>Explain whether the effects identified in annex A of the Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement</p>	<p>The ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [EN010158/APP/6.4.3] and Health Effects Report (at Annex A) do not draw conclusions on the potential significance of health and wellbeing effects on individuals. Guidance produced by ISEP (formerly IEMA) sets out that “EIA analysis at the level of individuals would likely mean</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council broadly agrees with the Applicant’s core position that Annex A does not (and, in general, should not) draw conclusions on the significance of health and wellbeing effects at the level of identified individuals. This is consistent with IEMA/ISEP guidance, which explicitly states that EIA analysis at the level of individuals would tend to render all projects</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
	<p>[REP1-056] on individual receptors (such as residential properties) consider if the inhabitants could be vulnerable members of the community with higher receptor sensitivities. If they do not, why does the assessment not consider this?</p>	<p>that all determinants of health conclusions, positive or negative, would be significant on all projects because of the effects to some particularly sensitive individuals. This would be contrary to supporting decision-makers in identifying the material issues. Assessment of EIA significance at the level of individuals is not proportionate.” However, it should be noted that the assessment of effects on some individual receptors – such as residential receptors – including within noise and air quality assessments has sought to inform the population and sub-population scale analysis of health effects. While it cannot be reported that specific residential receptors (for example) are inhabited by more sensitive or vulnerable sub-populations (as this would likely change over time and be disclosive to report in any case), the assessments consider the potential for such sub-populations to be affected. Additionally, mitigation has been designed to be flexible and responsive to address effects on individual receptors as well as general or population-scale receptors.</p>	<p>“significant” due to the existence of particularly sensitive individuals, and that this would not be proportionate or helpful to decision-makers.</p> <p>The Council also considers the Applicant is right to distinguish this from the use of “individual receptors” such as dwellings in the underlying technical assessments. The IEMA/ISEP guidance is clear that EIA should take a population health approach, but still consider the distribution of effects and the potential for differential or disproportionate effects on relevant sub-populations (for example by older age, health status, social disadvantage, and access/geographic factors). In that regard, Appendix 5.5 / Annex A identifies categories of more sensitive sub-populations and recognises that sensitivity is not uniform across the population.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council accepts the Applicant’s point that it may be inappropriate and potentially disclosive for an Environmental Statement to state whether named residential properties are occupied by vulnerable individuals at a given time, and acknowledges the Applicant’s explanation that occupancy and vulnerability characteristics can change over time. However, the Council considers that the Examining Authority’s question is also about whether Annex A’s conclusions take account of the possibility that vulnerable people may be present at the receptors used as exposure points (e.g. residential receptors), without identifying any individual. In the Council’s view, the Applicant’s response would be more complete if Annex A more clearly signposted that residential receptor-based inputs (e.g. in noise and air quality) are interpreted using a conservative assumption that some dwellings may include higher-sensitivity sub-populations (such as older people, people with poor health, or people spending more time at home), consistent with the guidance emphasis on sub-population sensitivity and inequality considerations.</p> <p>The Council further notes the Applicant’s statement that mitigation is designed to be “flexible and responsive” for individual receptors. The Council agrees this is appropriate in principle, but reiterates its earlier position that Annex A would benefit from clearer signposting showing how sensitivity considerations (including higher-sensitivity sub-populations) are carried through into determinant-specific conclusions and, where relevant, targeted mitigation and monitoring arrangements.</p>
Q1.13.5	<p>Health determinants</p> <p>Does the information contained in the documents entitled “LOCAL DETERMINANTS AFFECTING HEALTH OF LOCAL POPULATION FROM PROPOSED ROSEFIELD SOLAR FARM” and the “PRACTICE POPULATION HEALTH REPORT” from Claydons Solar Action Group [REP1-128] impact the findings of the Health Effects Report [REP1-056]? If so, update the report accordingly, or if not, explain how this information is accounted for and assessed in the report.</p>	<p>The anecdotal information contained within the documents produced by Claydons Solar Action Group [REP1-128] has been helpful in providing additional context for the portion of the population assessed that is registered with a GP at the 3W Health practice. In summary, the two documents referred to conclude that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The villages affected include an ageing demographic, with higher levels of chronic disease, mobility limitations, and reliance on local GP and community services; Such populations – and populations in rural areas more generally – are more sensitive to changes in access to local primary care, as they may rely on private transport (including provided by friends and family) to access healthcare and community services; Older sub-populations are more likely to experience barriers to access for public healthcare and social isolation, higher rates of dependency and disability, and higher prevalence of some major disease / health conditions, including respiratory disease. The Health Effects Report (Annex A to ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [EN010158/APP/6.4.3]) draws conclusions based on a consideration of the baseline using national statistics and public health data at a ward level. In most 	<p>Buckinghamshire Council acknowledges that the Claydon’s Solar Action Group (CSAG) documents [REP1-127, REP1-129] provide more granular, place-based contextual information on local health determinants, particularly in relation to an ageing rural population, the prevalence of chronic disease and respiratory conditions, reliance on local primary care, and the sensitivity of populations facing access/geographic constraints. The CSAG “Practice Population Health Report” profiles a rural GP practice catchment of approximately 15,000–17,500 patients, indicates a relatively high proportion of older people (around 23% aged 65+), a notable burden of multimorbidity and frailty, and includes practice-level prevalence estimates for conditions relevant to environmental stressor pathways (including respiratory disease cohorts and cardiometabolic conditions). The accompanying “Local Determinants” note further emphasises rural transport dependence, barriers to access to healthcare, and the potential for compounded disruption arising from Rosefield in combination with other major infrastructure works (including HS2 and East West Rail), with potential implications for timely access to primary and urgent care for the most vulnerable cohorts.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council also agrees with the Applicant’s position that this CSAG material has been useful context and that the Health Effects Report has been updated at Deadline 2 [REP2-051] to provide a more explicit conclusion on the sensitivity of relevant sub-populations (including older people and those facing access/geographic factors). The Council’s position</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
		<p>cases, self reported health, health outcome metrics, metrics for risk factors and wider determinants are reported to be better than the national average. At a ward scale, the population does not have a particularly sensitive age profile, and there is no reported community in severe deprivation at the granularity available. However, it is noted that in some cases public data is disclosive and limited at a community level. The Health Effects Report has been updated accordingly and submitted at Deadline 2 to account for this helpful information and provide a more explicit conclusion in respect of the sensitivity of relevant sub-populations (older people, and people facing access or geographic factors) to change.</p>	<p>remains that it is appropriate in principle for a health assessment to take reasonable account of stakeholder-provided evidence where it assists in describing potential vulnerability and sensitivity characteristics, provided that the status and limitations of such evidence are clearly stated and the evidence is used proportionately. In that respect, the Council notes that the CSAG information is inherently more localised and indicative than national datasets, and therefore should be treated as supplementary context, with appropriate triangulation against recognised sources where it is relied upon to inform significance conclusions.</p> <p>On the question of whether the CSAG information impacts the Health Effects Report findings, Buckinghamshire Council considers that it should have a material bearing on how sensitivity is characterised for certain determinants and pathways, particularly for older and access-limited sub-populations and for pathways where disruption to access, reliance on local services, and chronic disease prevalence are relevant sensitivity factors. The CSAG documents strengthen the case that sensitivity is not uniform and that there are plausible differential/disproportionate effects for high-need rural cohorts who are more dependent on reliable road access and continuity of local primary care, and who may therefore be less able to adapt to the types of disruption described.</p> <p>Consistent with Buckinghamshire Council’s comments on the Health Effects Report [REP2-051], as set out elsewhere in this response, the Council considers that the way this CSAG material has been incorporated to date appears to remain largely narrative, and would benefit from clearer signposting demonstrating how the additional context is carried through into: (i) pathway-specific conclusions, (ii) any place-based identification of higher-exposure groups/locations, and (iii) targeted mitigation and monitoring where relevant (including in relation to access to healthcare and cumulative disruption considerations). The Council therefore considers that, while the Applicant is right to treat the CSAG information as contextual and to caveat it appropriately, the Health Effects Report would be strengthened by a further targeted iteration that more transparently shows how this information influences the sensitivity assumptions used and any resulting conclusions on significance and / or mitigations for the most affected sub-populations.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
14. Land and groundwater			
Q1.14.2	<p>Update to the Outline Drainage Strategy</p> <p>In your responses to the relevant representations [PDA-006] you stated that section 6.4.2 of the Outline Drainage Strategy [REP1-096] would be updated at deadline 1 to replace 'restricted' to 'prevented' in line with ref. 217 of the Commitments Register to respond to comments from the EA. However, this does not appear to have been actioned. Update the document accordingly or explain why you no longer intend to make this amendment.</p>	<p>The Applicant has updated this wording within the updated Outline Drainage Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.11.3] submitted at Deadline 2.</p>	<p>The Outline Drainage Strategy has been updated at Deadline 2 as requested.</p>
Q1.14.3	<p>Update to the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP)</p> <p>In your responses to the relevant representations [PDA-006] you stated that the oCEMP [REP1-078] would be amended at deadline 1 to note that disposal of surplus material (if necessary) could be a waste operation, to respond to comments from the EA. However, this does not appear to have been actioned.</p> <p>Update the document accordingly or explain why you no longer intend to make this amendment.</p>	<p>Table 3.6 of the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3] was updated at Deadline 1 to include the following in response to the EA's comment Issue ID: EA21: • Ordered materials shall be adequately managed to avoid spoilage or overordering and surplus materials shall be minimised: provide a suitable and sufficiently sized materials storage compound that is lockable and provides an above-ground covered area, protected from wind and rain. Encourage the reuse of cut-offs and arrange for suppliers to take back unused surplus materials and packaging. • Storage compounds will be located away from any identified water features. • Surplus materials are to be reused onsite where possible. All reuse and recycling to be carried out in accordance with the terms of a valid waste exemption or voluntary codes of practice/protocols. • Excavated material surplus shall be minimised so far as practicable; details of all inert material reuse onsite including composition and disposal location must be mapped and records retained. Refer to CL:AIRE DoW:CoP, which is outlined in Appendix 1 (Outline SWMP) Section 3.5, of this document. The EA has confirmed that it is satisfied with the updates made in relation to its comment as detailed in Draft Statement of Common Ground with Environment Agency [EN010158/APP/5.15.2], under Ref. 6.5.</p>	<p>The Outline CEMP was updated at Deadline 1 as requested and has been agreed with the EA in the Draft Statement of Common Ground.</p>
Q1.14.4	<p>Update to the Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (oOEMP)</p> <p>In your responses to the relevant representations [PDA-006] you stated that the oOEMP [REP1-080] would be amended at deadline 1 to indicate that designated concrete washout areas should be sealed to prevent loss of fluid to ground or water, to respond to comments from the EA. However, this does not appear to have been actioned. Update the document accordingly or explain why you no longer intend to make this amendment.</p>	<p>Although it was stated that the Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3] was to be updated, this was an error. The Applicant subsequently identified that there would not be a need for activities that would require the use of concrete during the operational phase of the Proposed Development and therefore a designated concrete washout area would not be required. The Applicant did update the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3] and Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] at Deadline 1 with this commitment as it would be relevant during both the construction and decommissioning phases. The EA has confirmed that it is satisfied with the updates made in relation to its comment in Issue ID: EA21 as detailed in Draft Statement of Common Ground with Environment Agency [EN010158/APP/5.15.2], under Ref. 6.5.</p>	<p>The Outline CEMP and DEMP were updated at Deadline 1 in relation to how concrete and water quality will be managed (EA21) and further updates to the Outline CEMP have been made for Deadline 2 as requested by EA32. It is agreed that this item is not relevant to the operational phase of the development as set out by the applicant.</p>
Q1.14.6	<p>Environmental permits</p> <p>National Policy Statement EN-1 paragraph 4.12.8 states that wherever possible, applicants should submit applications for environmental permits and other necessary consents at the same time as applying to the Secretary of State for development consent. The Schedule of Other Consents and Licences [REP1-014] states that only a limited number of environmental permits are likely to be required, and suggests that they would be applied for after development consent was granted. Could these permits be applied for now – if not why not, and if so, why have they not yet been applied for?</p>	<p>It is recognised that several environmental permits and other consents (as listed in the Table of REP1-014) may be required for the Proposed Development. The Applicant is unable to submit applications for these permits and consents at this stage of the development due to the lack of information and detail known at this stage of the Proposed Development to inform the application process. The approach to applying for permits and consents post-DCO award and following detailed design is standard for NSIP projects. The BESS not been designed in detail for the purposes of the DCO Application and will be designed in line with the parameters set out in the Draft DCO [EN010158/APP/3.1.4] and relevant guidance and legislation applicable at the time of detailed design. Firewater containment, storage capacity and operational controls will be confirmed at the detailed design stage to ensure continued safe and resilient operation of the BESS during any period of retained storage. This further design work will determine whether water</p>	<p>As requested by the EA, the outline BSMP and Drainage Strategy have been updated to acknowledge that a water discharge activity permit may be required to discharge uncontaminated firewater. It is considered that this approach is acceptable as the design of the BESS has not been finalised.</p>

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		<p>discharge activity permit(s) and/or water abstraction licence are required. The Applicant has discussed and agreed this approach with the Environment Agency, as set out in Draft Statement of Common Ground with Environment Agency [EN010158/APP/5.15.2].</p>	

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17.	Population		
Q1.17.1	<p>Critical National Priority (CNP)</p> <p>Provide comments on the written representation submitted by Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd [REP1-133] regarding the application of CNP. Could the potential impact on these businesses fall under the exceptions to CNP as described at paragraph 4.2.15 of National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-1 as an ‘unacceptable risk to, or unacceptable interference with, human health and public safety’, in light of the role of the businesses in supplying the National Health Service and wider medical sector? If not, why not?</p>	<p>The residual impacts on Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd would not constitute an exception to the CNP policy. No evidence has been provided that there would be an “unacceptable risk to, or unacceptable interference with, human health and public safety” as written into NPS EN-1 Paragraph 4.2.15 (2023). The Applicant’s assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on the business is that it would be not significant, and various mitigation measures have been proposed, as set out further below. In developing the Proposed Development, the Applicant has taken feedback from concerned non agricultural businesses, and has amended the Proposed Development’s design over that period to help to avoid, reduce and/or minimise the potential for noise and accessibility effects perceived by these businesses. In order to limit disruption to land used by TCS Biosciences, based on this organisation’s feedback the Applicant has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed the option for the Rosefield Substation to be located in Field E23 (now proposed for Solar PV only), thereby reducing perceived operation phase noise effects; and • Confirmed in the Design Approach Document [EN010158/APP/5.8.2] [REP1-018] that at the detailed design stage, the Solar PV module arrangement for Field E23 would be designed to incorporate movement corridors for TCS Biosciences sheep and/or horses to cross the field to access their other adjacent grazing fields. <p>The above points are captured within the Written Summary of Applicant’s Oral Submissions at Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 (CAH1) [EN010158/APP/8.7] [REP1-107]. As indicated in the Written Summary of Applicant’s Oral Submissions at Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 (CAH1) [EN010158/APP/8.7] [REP1-107], the Applicant updated the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3], Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3] and Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] at Deadline 1 to include bespoke mitigation to address the sensitivity of nearby businesses, particularly Preston Farms and TCS Biosciences Ltd. This also includes a commitment that the Applicant will liaise with Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd (together, the Prestons’) during the preparation of the detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan(s) and subsequently during the construction phase. The Applicant also amended design commitment G2 of the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.4] to specifically require the design of corridors through the Solar PV development in Field E23 to be undertaken in consultation with the tenants and the Applicant is engaged in ongoing discussion with Preston Farms. The Applicant recognises the importance of the operation undertaken by TCS Biosciences and, therefore, has: consulted with businesses (including TCS Biosciences Ltd) during the pre-application period, has amended the Proposed Development’s design over that period to help to avoid, reduced and/or minimised the potential for noise and accessibility effects perceived by these businesses, which is reported in the ES. This has resulted in the assessment within the ES concluding non significant residual impacts on Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd. Therefore, the Applicant does not consider that the Proposed Development gives rise to/or places any ‘unacceptable risk to, or unacceptable interference with, human health and public safety’. This is concluded within the Planning Statement [EN010158/APP/5.7.3] [REP1 016] and, accordingly, the Applicant considers that the CNP presumption applies to the Proposed Development. The Applicant considers that were the non-significant residual effects to manifest, there is no evidence to suggest that they would jeopardise the future of the business, and also no evidence that it would have a measurable impact on the functioning of the NHS. In order to address uncertainty, the Applicant has developed a suite of precautionary, flexible and responsive management plans that are secured and allow for: the design of bespoke measures; the monitoring of potential effects, and the management and</p>	<p>This was addressed in detail at ISH1, and documents are due to be submitted at Deadline 3 and Deadline 4 relevant to this. The Council was assisted by the evidence and submissions of Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd at ISH1, and will review further documents when they become available. The Council’s position remains as in its answer to this question in its original submission on ExAQ1.</p>

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		<p>correction of such effects if they arise. A full address of the Written Representation submitted by Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd [REP1-133] is available in Appendix 1 - Response to the Written Representation received from TCS Biosciences Ltd and Preston Farms of the Applicant's Response to Written Representations [EN010158/APP/8.12]) to provide a clear, single document setting out the detail of the Applicant's position regarding the effects on and mitigation for these commercial operations. This includes an appended technical note (Annex 1 - Noise and Vibration Technical Note) which has also been submitted at Deadline 2 to provide further information regarding the effects of noise and vibration on livestock (cattle and sheep) and horses, and set out how guidance (including from the British Horse Society) has been used to further develop the approach to monitoring, mitigation and engagement secured within construction and operational management plans. Engagement with Preston Farms and TCS Biosciences is ongoing to seek agreement to the approach to managing the effects of the Proposed Development, where practicable.</p>	
Q1.17.2	<p>Baseline Environment – agriculture economy Section 14.5 of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 14 (Population) [APP-057] provides some details of the number of people in employment on the Claydon Estate within the order limits.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide full details of the total number of people employed (full time equivalents), including seasonal workers, for each tenancy and the Claydon Estate itself. 2. What impact would the proposed development have on the number of jobs? 3. Would any of the proposed “land swaps” for tenants of the Claydon Estate impact employment numbers? 	<p>The full number of people employed by the tenancies within the Order Limits is not known by the Applicant, though was sought – as such an indicative assessment of the employment capacity of the land (based on the ratio of agricultural land to agricultural employment across Buckinghamshire) has been provided as a hypothetical approach to assessment of effects on the agricultural economy. Although the Applicant does not have full information on the total number of people employed, engagement with the agricultural operators has confirmed that the actual employment supported by the agricultural land affected by construction activity is far lower than the indicative capacity, and therefore the above assessment sets a hypothetical, ‘worst-case’ assessment of employment capacity rather than actual net employment reduction which would be influenced by commercial agreements between the Applicant and agricultural operations affected. As set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] the Claydon Estate currently has ownership of a wider area of land outside of the Order Limits, and has confirmed that it will continue to farm the remainder of the land with contractors (where currently farmed, and not included within potential land swaps with tenants). The Claydon Estate does not plan to reduce the number of employees supported by its wider operation as a result of the Proposed Development. The Claydon Estate has engaged with agricultural operators where they are tenant farms, and has in most cases agreed land swaps that will reduce the indicative net effect on employment by supporting the ongoing viability of agricultural operations on alternative land. As such, in most cases, due to agreements for land swaps, the viability of the tenanted operations would not be affected and employment levels would be maintained on alternative land. In some cases, where land is temporarily required on a short-term basis for construction activity but can then be returned to agricultural use, this land (except for access routes within it) would continue to be farmed after construction, with interim compensation arrangements agreed during the construction phase when that land is inaccessible where this applies. The Proposed Development would also generate employment – albeit in different sectors, as set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] – 600 FTE jobs would be supported during the construction phase, and 24 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs would be supported during the operational phase.</p>	<p>This was one of a number of matters addressed in detail at ISH1- in respect of TCS Biosciences and Preston Farms, alongside general comments made by the Claydon Solar Action Group in relation to other agricultural businesses affected by the Scheme. The Council notes that documents are due to be submitted at Deadline 3 and Deadline 4 relevant to this.</p> <p>The Council supports the request of the ExA for further clarity to be provided by the Applicant in respect of the existing baseline conditions for the agricultural economy. This connects to a broader concern of the Council that the conclusions made by the Applicant regarding the assessment of effects of the Scheme on the agricultural economy are not sufficiently transparent. The reporting groups multiple businesses into combined receptor groups for which a single set of assessment inputs is produced - i.e. one sensitivity, one impact magnitude and a generalised mitigation reference, then leading to a single residual effects assessment (in this case, for the agriculture economy, but also the case for other receptor types in the scope of the Population assessment).</p> <p>The Applicant has alluded at ISH1 to a greater depth of individualised analysis, design refinement and targeted mitigation. However, this underpinning evidence is not set out clearly within the submission documents, which leads to a reduced confidence that the assessment has been rigorously and consistently undertaken. Incomplete baseline information is a contributing factor in this reduced confidence that the assessment has been based on a clear understanding of existing circumstances, which in turn could lead to inaccurate assessment and mitigation.</p> <p>The Council maintains its position that there is a need for further assessment of Population effects to be undertaken and reported in a way that allows the reader to understand all factors that have led to the conclusions for a combined receptor type.</p>

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Q1.17.6	<p>Beneficial residual effects</p> <p>ES Chapter 14 [APP-057] identifies that with embedded and additional mitigation measures in place, slight-beneficial socio-economic effects would be experienced during the construction and decommissioning phases on tourism and the tourist economy (tourist accommodation) due to the effect of non-local construction workforce on the tourism accommodation market. Provide further justification for this conclusion having regard to the potential for a reduction in visitor numbers and use of accommodation due to actual or perceived negative impacts and disruption due to construction or decommissioning activities.</p> <p>Permanent, slight beneficial effects are also identified for the operational phase for community access/walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Provide further justification for this conclusion having regard to the potential for usage of PRoW and permissive paths to be impacted by noise, landscape and visual and other effects that may reduce the attractiveness of such routes. Should the provision of permissive paths contribute towards a conclusion of permanent beneficial effects when the permissive paths might be removed upon decommissioning?</p>	<p>It should be noted that during the construction and decommissioning stages, effects on tourist accommodation and the tourist economy and its components are considered separately – the former assessed as slight beneficial, the latter as slight adverse. The Applicant does not consider that there would be evidence to support the conclusion of a reduction in the number of visitors to the area due to actual or perceived effects, as environmental changes associated with these phases are highly localised and unlikely to be significant on the tourist economy (albeit some receptors – a small number of PRoW and one tourist receptor) would experience significant landscape and visual effects. The tourist economy is substantial and diverse, and as such is unlikely to experience noticeable change as a result of the construction or decommissioning of the Proposed Development. At the same time, there would be an increase in the use of tourist accommodation by construction workers – this is likely to be minimal and dispersed across a wide area, but would nonetheless represent an identified and quantifiable increase in accommodation use, within spare capacity, that would have a slight beneficial effect, as reported in ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2]. ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] assesses the potential for effects on community access, separately to effects experienced relating to noise, traffic and access, landscape and visual and other environmental impacts – this is made clear at paragraphs 14.6.52 to 14.6.59. As such, the slight beneficial effects during the operational phase relate to The assessment of connectivity in terms of journey distance, in the context of replacement and alternative access and where the Proposed Development affects existing (or provides new) strategically important links identified by policy, designation, stakeholder feedback or where there are substantively new routes that provide an improvement to the network in-line with wider plans and policies identified in this chapter. That assessment sets out that during the operational phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diversion of PRoW ECL/7/2, SCL/13/1, SCL/12/2, SCL/13/2 and ECL/4/2) is likely to result in a slight adverse effect on these links • However, in the case of diverted routes combining SCL/12/2 and SCL/13/2, there is a decrease in journey length which would result in a neutral or slight positive effect for that link. • The creation of new permissive paths would also increase community accessibility and recreational opportunities in an area that is currently inaccessible. The routes would improve community connectivity between the existing public highway and community areas such as East Claydon, Middle Claydon and Botolph Claydon in the east and Calvert in the west. • Overall, therefore on balance there is likely to be a permanent, slight beneficial residual effect on community access (PRoW and Permissive Paths) and their users (WCH), which is considered to be not significant. ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] has been amended at Deadline 2 to confirm that while these effects would be long-term, they would not be permanent. Elsewhere in the ES, it is concluded that during the operational phase users of PRoW will experience: • Negligible to minor adverse (not significant) effects relating to noise (ES Volume 2, Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] [REP1-040]) and air quality (ES Volume 2, Chapter 6: Air Quality [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] [APP-049]); • Negligible effects in terms of severance, non-motorised user amenity and fear and intimidation) (operational (including maintenance) phase were scoped out of the 	<p>The Council respectfully disagrees with the Applicant's assertion that the environmental changes associated with construction (or operation) would be unlikely to be significant on the tourist economy.</p> <p>The Applicant assesses the tourism resource as medium sensitivity [REP2-034], connecting the appeal of the area to the wider landscape and cultural resources. It then writes that the magnitude of impacts draws from the findings of landscape and visual and cultural heritage findings. These are topics about which the Council raised concerns regarding foundational correctness of these assessments at ISH1 and these concerns then permeate into this judgement regarding the magnitude of impact on the tourism resource. At 14.10.49 of the ES population chapter [REP2-034] the Applicant states that the impact magnitude ranges from minor to moderate/major adverse to tourism. It then concludes a slight adverse and non-sig residual effect.</p> <p>Table 14.23 of the Population chapter of the ES [REP2-034] provides the significance criteria. Cross referencing medium sensitivity for 'tourism' against a moderate to major adverse magnitude of impacts leads to a moderate or major adverse effect, which is significant. Only minor impact magnitude would lead to non-significant effects for a receptor of medium sensitivity. The assessment is not clear on how, therefore, a slight adverse residual effect is concluded - the professional judgement is not explained.</p> <p>The Applicant does not appear to draw any meaningful connections between impacts on the tourism resource (cultural heritage, landscape and PRoW impacts) and impacts on tourism accommodation occupancy. This omission fails to reflect that the tourist accommodation providers are reliant upon customers wishing to visit the area and, further, assumes that such businesses would view a change in customer base from tourists to workers as a beneficial effect; and one from which the business could recover once the Scheme is operational. This is considered to be a weakness of the assessment and the Council is of the view that more detailed analysis is required to justify the conclusions drawn by the Applicant.</p>

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		<p>assessment (ES Volume 2, Chapter 15: Transport and Access [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] [APP-058]) as a result of being unlikely to give rise to greater than negligible effects);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant effects (moderate or moderate/major adverse) for only five PRoW (including Bernwood Jubilee Way, PRoW between Calvert Road and HS2, PRoW between Botolph Claydon and Runt’s Wood, PRoW to Finemere Hill and PRoW, lanes and roads between East Claydon/East Claydon Road and to within Parcel 3) (ES Volume 2, Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual [EN010158/APP/6.2.2]). For context, there are 96 PRoW within 500m of the Proposed Development, of which 30 intersect with the Order Limits. 	
Q1.17.8	<p>Residual effects on agricultural businesses and landholdings</p> <p>The applicant’s assessment of residual effects in section 14.10 of the ES [APP-057] identifies mitigation that has informed the assessment conclusions, including replacement land “...of at least the same level of provision, and in terms of severance of wider landholdings (where all replacement land is equally accessible from remaining landholdings and agricultural facilities; and for example, through the commitment to allowing for an grazing animal corridor through Field E23 to prevent severance)”.</p> <p>Paragraph 14.10.2 concludes that during the operation phase “...the value (sensitivity) of the agricultural land holdings as a receptor is very high and the magnitude of change expected at this operation is minor. Therefore, there is likely to be a temporary or permanent slight adverse residual effect on agricultural businesses and landholdings, which is considered to be not significant.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide comments on the implications of conclusions on residual effects on agricultural businesses and landholdings in the event that replacement land is not agreed by tenants to be of the same level of provision or if the grazing corridor is not effective. <p>Provide further justification for the conclusion of slight (not significant) effects in the context of table 14.23 (significance criteria) which indicates that</p>	<p>A full address of the Written Representation submitted by Preston Farms Ltd and TCS Biosciences Ltd [REP1-133] is available in Appendix 1: Response to the Written Representation received from TCS Biosciences Ltd and Preston Farms of the Applicant’s Response to Written Representations [EN010158/APP/8.12]. Residual effects would be considered significant if the mitigation provided does not reasonably reduce the magnitude of change to ‘minor’ – this would align with the definitions set out in Table 14.22 in ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] (i.e. loss or partial loss of key characteristics; changes that compromise the viability of the business; introduction of severe severance with limited accessibility provided). However, the Applicant considers that the replacement land is of equal or better quality, accessibility and environmental amenity such that it would not compromise the viability of the operations, and that the animal corridor will be of appropriate and adequate design. The Applicant notes that all parties offered Heads of Terms for replacement land (including Preston Farms) have agreed these terms. It is noted that in some cases, affected fields are used for agricultural and non-agricultural operations. Throughout the development of the Proposed Development the Applicant has taken feedback from concerned non-agricultural business, including TCS Biosciences, to help avoid, reduce and/or minimise the potential for noise and accessibility effects perceived by these businesses. As set out in the Written Summary of Applicant’s Oral Submissions at Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 (CAH1) [EN010158/APP/8.7] [REP1-107], some of the amendments to the design to reduce noise and other impacts, based on this feedback, include the removal of the Rosefield Substation and BESS from Field E23 (now only Solar PV development) to reduce noise, and incorporating suitable livestock movement corridors through the Solar PV fields for TCS Biosciences livestock to access surrounding adjacent grazing fields.</p> <p>The Applicant has detailed a range of measures to ensure animals are not adversely affected by the Proposed Development. At Deadline 1, the Applicant amended design commitment G2 of the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.4] to specifically require the design of corridors through the Solar PV development in Field E23 to be undertaken in consultation with the tenants and the Applicant is engaged in ongoing discussion with Preston Farms, which includes reference to this point. In-line with methodology set out within ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2], professional judgement and expertise have been used to assess impacts where quantitative or appropriate guidance is not available. As set out in ES Volume 1, Chapter 5: Approach to the EIA [EN010158/APP/6.1] [APP-048], where more than one effect classification exists for any given scenario (i.e. slight or moderate), professional judgement is used to assign a single effect classification. For effects on the viability of agricultural and non-agricultural businesses, the significance of the effect is informed by professional judgement of the factors that influence magnitude and sensitivity outlined in tables 14.21 and 14.22 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2]. These factors are – as determined by guidance – not quantitative in nature and therefore rely on professional judgement to confirm significance. A ‘slight’ residual effect</p>	<p>This was one of a number of matters addressed in detail at ISH1 - in respect of TCS Biosciences and Preston Farms, alongside general comments made by the Claydon Solar Action Group in relation to other agricultural businesses affected by the Scheme. The Council notes that documents are due to be submitted at Deadline 3 and Deadline 4 relevant to this.</p> <p>The Council supports the request of the ExA for further clarity to be provided by the Applicant in respect of the professional judgement that has been used to reach conclusions on the significance of effects, with reference to Table 14.23 [REP2-034]. This connects to a broader concern of the Council that the conclusions made by the Applicant regarding the assessment of effects of the Scheme on agricultural businesses and landholdings are not sufficiently transparent. The reporting groups multiple businesses into combined receptor groups for which a single set of assessment inputs is produced - i.e. one sensitivity, one impact magnitude and a generalised mitigation reference, then leading to a single residual effects assessment (in this case, for the agricultural businesses and landholdings, but also the case for other receptor types in the scope of the Population assessment). This grouping fails to reflect the circumstances referenced by the ExA, namely that replacement land is not agreed by tenants to be of the same level of provision and / or the grazing corridor is not effective.</p> <p>The Council maintains its position that there is a need for further assessment of Population effects to be undertaken and reported in a way that allows the reader to understand all factors that have led to the conclusions for a combined receptor type.</p>

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	<p>a combination of very high sensitivity and minor magnitude of change can lead to either a slight or moderate effect. Paragraph 14.6.69 states that a moderate effect would be deemed as significant.</p>	<p>has been determined rather than ‘moderate’ based on the consideration of embedded and additional mitigation that reduce the magnitude of change to ‘minor’ – such mitigation represents best practice and in some cases: a) Goes beyond the expected standards – for example where Heads of Terms for replacement land provided in land swaps far exceed the provisions of compensation under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986; and b) Has been developed in response to issues raised by affected businesses and reflects bespoke and highly responsive mitigation – such as indicated in the Written Summary of Applicant’s Oral Submissions at Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 (CAH1) [EN010158/APP/8.7] [REP1-107], a number of the outline management plans were updated at Deadline 1 to include construction management measures specifically in response to concerns raised by individual business.</p>	
Q1.17.9	<p>Magnitude of change for agricultural businesses and landholdings</p> <p>Provide further justification for the “minor” magnitude of change identified in the assessment of effects [APP-057] on agricultural businesses and landholdings in the context of the description of magnitude outlined in table 14.22 and related matters raised by interested parties.</p>	<p>In-line with the criteria set out in Table 14.22 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2], the provision of additional mitigation, embedded design, environmental management and land swaps (where land is considered equally productive, of similar size and quality, and accessible to each Tenant/Occupier, such that effects on viability of those agricultural businesses would not be adversely affected) means that at most, a minor magnitude of change would occur. A minor adverse magnitude of change has been informed by: • A discernible change in attributes, quality or vulnerability, and minor loss of, or alteration to, one (maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements, e.g. amendment to access or acquisition of land resulting in changes to operating conditions that do not compromise overall viability of property, businesses, community assets or agricultural holdings; and • Introduction (adverse) of severance with adequate accessibility provision. As a result of embedded and additional mitigation, the Applicant’s view is that the change: • May result in a discernible change in the operations, as a result of change in location of operations and environmental amenity, but that these changes are not considered to amount to ‘partial loss of/damage to key characteristics, features or elements, e.g. partial removal or substantial amendment to access or acquisition of land compromising viability’ that would be required to meet the criteria for a moderate magnitude of change, as a result of: o Heads of Terms for replacement land of equal or better quality and accessibility provided in land swaps that far exceed the provisions of compensation under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986; and o Mitigation secured in the (updated for Deadline 1) Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3], Outline OEMP [EN010158/APP/7.3.3] and Outline DEMP [EN010158/APP/7.4.3] which include bespoke mitigation to address the sensitivity of nearby businesses, particularly Preston Farms and TCS Biosciences; but • Does not result in the introduction of severance without adequate accessibility provision – having regard to embedded measures such as the animal grazing corridor in Field E23, and measures secured by the Outline CTMP [EN010158/APP/7.5.3].</p>	<p>The Council supports the request from the ExA for further clarification of this matter. The Council also respectfully disagrees with the Applicant’s categorisation of the impact magnitude, noting that discussion at ISH1 revealed several instances where stakeholder views on agricultural viability and impacts differ considerably from the Applicant.</p> <p>The Council maintains its position that there is a need for further assessment of Population effects to be undertaken and reported in a way that allows the reader to understand all factors that have led to the conclusions for a combined receptor type</p>
Q1.17.10	<p>Residual effects on other (non-agricultural) businesses and development land</p> <p>Provide further justification for the conclusion of slight adverse residual effects during the construction and operational phase where the combination of high/ very high sensitivity and minor magnitude can lead to a conclusion of slight or moderate (significant) effects as per table 14.23 of ES Chapter 14 [APP-057]. This is in the context of effects</p>	<p>An assessment of the potential for change to business viability (including driven by access and environmental amenity) has been undertaken where there may be the potential to affect the viability of businesses as a result of significant changes. A ‘slight’ residual effect has been determined rather than ‘moderate’ based on the consideration of embedded and additional mitigation that reduce the magnitude of change to ‘minor’. In the specific case of Hogshaw Farm and Wildlife Park, in explanation of the criteria for ‘magnitude of change’ applied in this instance in accordance with guidance, the Applicant’s view is that changes to do not result in a moderate scale of change, reflecting the fact that: • Effects are limited geographically and are largely not significant (traffic, noise, air quality), with the exception of a single moderate residual adverse effects relating to landscape and visual amenity at Hogshaw Farm and Wildlife Park; • There would be no change in land or access/severance that would affect the</p>	<p>The Council supports the request from the ExA for further clarification of this matter. The points made by the Council in response to Q1.17.6 are also considered relevant to this question.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
	<p>related to landscape and visual amenity which are acknowledged by the applicant as moderate adverse (significant) at Hogshaw Farm and Wildlife Park.</p>	<p>viability of the current operation in-line with criteria in Table 14.22. A minor magnitude of change reflects the fact that there would be a discernible change in attributes, quality or vulnerability in-line with criteria in Table 14.22. The sensitivity of the receptor is considered to be high as a result of the business being sensitive to changes to environment or access such that significant effects may affect operating practices, with limited capacity to absorb or respond to change, in-line with criteria in Table 14.21.</p> <p>As set out in ES Volume 1, Chapter 5: Approach to the EIA [EN010158/APP/6.1] [APP-048], where more than one effect classification exists for any given scenario (i.e. slight or moderate), professional judgement is used to assign a single effect classification. For effects on the viability of non-agricultural businesses, the significance of the effect is informed by professional judgement of the factors that influence magnitude and sensitivity outlined in tables 14.21 and 14.22 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2]. These factors are – as determined by guidance – not quantitative in nature and therefore rely on professional judgement to confirm significance. In the Applicant’s view, despite the high sensitivity of the receptor, it is not considered that a single moderate environmental effect is likely to endanger the viability of the business and the services and facilities it offers. Mitigation has been applied to reduce the significance of landscape and visual effects as far as reasonably practicable, and it is not considered that this would affect the viability of the businesses concerned given their diverse attraction and business model. During the pre-application period, consultation feedback has been considered, resulting in design changes and embedded mitigation being proposed to seek to limit adverse effects. A substantial woodland tree buffer is proposed to the eastern boundary of Fields D8, D9, D19 and D26.</p>	
Q1.17.11	<p>Residual effects on tourism and the tourist economy</p> <p>In relation to the operational phase, paragraph 14.10.51 concludes that “Therefore, there is likely to be a temporary slight adverse residual effect on tourism, which is considered to be not significant.”. Should this conclusion consider that the “temporary” effect would be for 40 years which is long-term?</p>	<p>This paragraph has been amended to account for the duration of temporary effects, which will be long term, in an updated version of ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] submitted at Deadline 2.</p>	<p>The Council notes that the Applicant has altered the terminology, but does not appear to have reflected any more detailed consideration of a 40-year time frame within the assessment. For example, no change is made to the narrative regarding the impact magnitude; and therefore significance judgements remain unchanged also.</p> <p>The Council maintains its position that there is a need for further assessment of Population effects to be undertaken and reported in a way that allows the reader to understand all factors that have led to the conclusions for a combined receptor type. This should include consideration of a 40 year presence for the operational solar farm in context, reflecting that the tourism business is connected to the quality of the landscape and cultural heritage resource, alongside long distance recreational routes.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
18. Soils			
Q1.18.1	<p>Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land</p> <p>What are the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land in the order limits and how have they been considered by the applicant?</p>	<p>The Applicant points to Appendix 4 of the Planning Statement [EN010158/APP/5.7.3] [REP1-016] which sets out how the Proposed Development is compliant with Paragraph 5.11.34 of NPS EN-1 (2023). Furthermore, there is no standardised guidance for how to assess the economic impact of BMV soils. The IEMA (now ISEP) (2021) A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance does not specify the economic value of soil as it is highly dependent on individual land management and crop variation. The economic value of agricultural landholdings and agricultural economy have been assessed within the ES Volume 2, Chapter 14: Population [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] and no significant effects have been reported.</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council agrees that there is no standardised method to assess the economic benefits of BMV land.</p>
Q1.18.2	<p>BMV land – regional context</p> <p>Table 12.2 of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 12 (Soil) [APP-055] records that the Planning Inspectorate’s scoping opinion requested that the loss of BMV land should be considered “within a regional context”. The Examining Authority (ExA) notes that ES Chapter 17 (Cumulative Effects) [REP1-044] identifies a 1 kilometre zone of influence from the order limits whilst the study area for soils assessed in ES Chapter 12 is confined to the order limits only.</p> <p>Paragraph 12.10.9 states that “The temporary availability of this land is also not considered to be significant in the regional context”. However, no regional context is provided. How has the applicant considered effects on BMV land in a regional context?</p>	<p>The Applicant has considered the regional context of BMV land in Appendix 1 – Site Selection Report of the Planning Statement [EN010158/APP/5.7.3] [REP1-016] which considers a 10km search area. According to the provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) mapping, the area within 10km of the Order Limits is predominantly made up of a mixture of Grade 3 and 4 with only small pockets of Grade 2. Furthermore, against the small proportion of BMV (1.51% / 10.2 ha) within the Order Limits and the approximately 57,332 ha of BMV within Buckinghamshire, it is considered that the effects on BMV land is not significant in a regional context. It is noted that the provisional ALC mapping does not differentiate between sub-grades 3a and 3b, however, it is considered the land within the Order Limits and wider search area includes relatively low levels of BMV land. It is also worth noting that the Applicant took into account agricultural land quality when identifying an appropriate Site and during the design evolution of the Proposed Development. It is anticipated that other projects, including those included within the short-list specified in Table 17.3 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] would be required to follow similar principles to reduce the level of BMV land impacted by the scheme and commit to a soil management plan or similar to ensure soils are not adversely affected. The decommissioning phase will not adversely affect soils due to the commitments detailed within the Outline Soil Management Plan (Outline SMP) [EN010158/APP/7.7.3] whereby the reduction in soil quality can be reversed, preventing medium or long term effects to the availability of BMV for the Proposed Development and for other similar projects in the region</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council is satisfied that the cumulative effects on BMV land have been considered. Furthermore, the publication of the Predictive ALC map in April 2026 indicates a greater proportion of BMV land regionally than predicted by the Provisional ALC map.</p>
Q1.18.3	<p>Food production</p> <p>ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] and the Planning Statement [REP1-016] state that due to amendments in the National Planning Policy Framework, “there is no longer a need to consider the availability of agricultural land for food production in planning terms”. Provide further commentary on this position in the context of National Policy Statement (NPS)</p>	<p>The Applicant recognises the importance of agricultural use on national food security and confirms low quality land has been prioritised for the Proposed Development, with only 1.51% of the Site considered to be BMV land. The Applicant notes that the National Planning Policy Framework should be considered both an important and relevant consideration to the Secretary of State in decision making. Normal agricultural use (e.g. arable and/or grazing as current) would continue (except for the cable installation and access track construction) in Work Nos 2B, 6, 7 and 10B (Works Plans [EN010158/APP/2.3.2] [AS-006]) (all areas outside of main developable Parcels). The area under the Solar PV Modules will either be managed by grazing or a cutting regime as set out and secured in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3]. The managed grassland will improve soil nutrient retention, carbon storage and water retention due to the improved microbial community and nutrient input from the grassland. A grazed grassland will have improved nutrient retention over a cutting regime however a grassland within a cutting</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council disagrees with the Applicant’s statement that amendments in the National Planning Policy Framework result in there being “no longer a need to consider the availability of agricultural land for food production in planning terms” and does not see where this is stated in the NPPF. Buckinghamshire Council recommends the removal of this statement from ES Chapter 12 and the Planning Statement.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council also disagrees with the argument that there will be an improved microbial community, carbon storage and water retention as research shows that these claims are poorly understood. Certain research has shown a significant reduction in photosynthesis, biomass accumulation and therefore carbon accumulation under solar PV modules (ADAS, 2023, The impact of solar photovoltaic (PV) sites on agricultural soils and land). It is not clear whether the Rosefield Solar Farm grazing stock would contribute to our food system.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
	EN-3 paragraph 2.10.11 and the ‘Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan’ which “encourages deployment of solar technology that delivers environmental benefits, with consideration for ongoing food production...”.	regime will still have the same residual effect during operation.	Buckinghamshire Council requests that a written review of the cropping outputs for land proposed for the development over the past 5 years be provided along with a discussion on what markets these crops are supplied too.
Q1.18.5	Soil ecosystems The assessment of soil ecosystems during the operation phase in ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] identifies a slight beneficial effect. Paragraph 12.10.14 indicates that this is partially predicated on grazing of the land. Provide comments on any implications of this conclusion in light of response to the above question regarding agricultural grazing and the extent to which it is secured.	In the absence of grazing, the same conclusions would be drawn for the residual effects on soil ecosystems during operation due to the absence of heavy farming activities such as cultivation and fertiliser/pesticide application. The area under the Solar PV Modules will either be managed by grazing or a cutting regime as set out and secured in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.2] [REP1-086] . The managed grassland will improve soil nutrient retention, carbon storage and water retention due to the improved microbial community and nutrient input from the grassland. A grazed grassland will have improved nutrient retention over a cutting regime however a grassland within a cutting regime will still have the same residual effect during operation.	Buckinghamshire Council disagrees with the argument that there will be improved microbial community, carbon storage and water retention as research shows that these claims are poorly understood. Certain research has shown a significant reduction in photosynthesis, biomass accumulation and therefore carbon accumulation under solar PV modules (ADAS, 2023, The impact of solar photovoltaic (PV) sites on agricultural soils and land). In addition, disturbance and compaction of soil during the installation of piling and other construction activities would take a long time to recover during the operation phase, meaning that a beneficial effect to soil compared with the original baseline is unlikely. Provide comments on the extent to which agricultural grazing has been secured.
Q1.18.6	Future baseline Paragraph 12.5.14 of ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] states that “While there may be potential changes in relation to climate change, including greater rainfall intensity and frequency of droughts, that could affect soil conditions, land grade, and farming practices, it is likely that these would only become apparent over longer time frames”. Provide further justification for this statement, including cross referencing with the applicant’s consideration of climate change in ES Chapter 16 (Water) [REP1-042] .	Paragraph 16.5.40 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 16: Water [EN010158/APP/6.2.3] [REP1-042] states that climate change is likely to result in wetter winters and longer drier summers. ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Climate Change Resilience Assessment [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-105] Table 10, notes increased winter precipitation, increase in magnitude and frequency of extreme rainfall events, and increased risk of drought as a likely climate change effect during the operational phase of the Proposed Development. While such changes may affect elements relating to soil resources such as moisture conditions, paragraph 12.5.14 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] refers to the fact that more fundamental changes to soil characteristics would occur on a timescale outside the Proposed Development’s operational life.	Climate change is likely to result in wetter winters and longer drier summers, with a resulting impact on soil properties. While processes of soil creation/development occur on a long timescale, climate change induced processes of soil degradation (e.g. soil erosion due to high rainfall events) would occur on timescales within the lifespan of the Proposed Development. These impacts should be considered in terms of land drainage and land management over the operational period and land management
Q1.18.7	Worst case scenario Table 12.4 of ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] does not specify the maximum area of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Satellite Collector Compounds assessed as being a reasonable worst-case scenario. Confirm the maximum area assessed.	ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] Table 12.4 has been updated at Deadline 2 to include the maximum areas that have been assessed. The maximum area of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is 7.8ha and Satellite Collector Compounds is 18.2ha; all areas are Grade 3b.	Buckinghamshire Council welcomes the breakdown of ALC grades for the BESS and Satellite Collector Compounds but points out that the formatting of the updated table is not displaying as intended and values have not lined up with the correct columns.
Q1.18.8	Outline Soil Management Plan (oSMP) – Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) guidance	All soil handling and storage for the Proposed Development will be managed under the Defra guidance therefore the wording in paragraphs 3.2.9 and 3.7.7 has been updated in Outline SMP [EN010158/APP/7.7.3] at Deadline 2 for clarification.	The updates to the Outline SMP [EN010158/APP/7.7.3] at Deadline 2 have been noted.

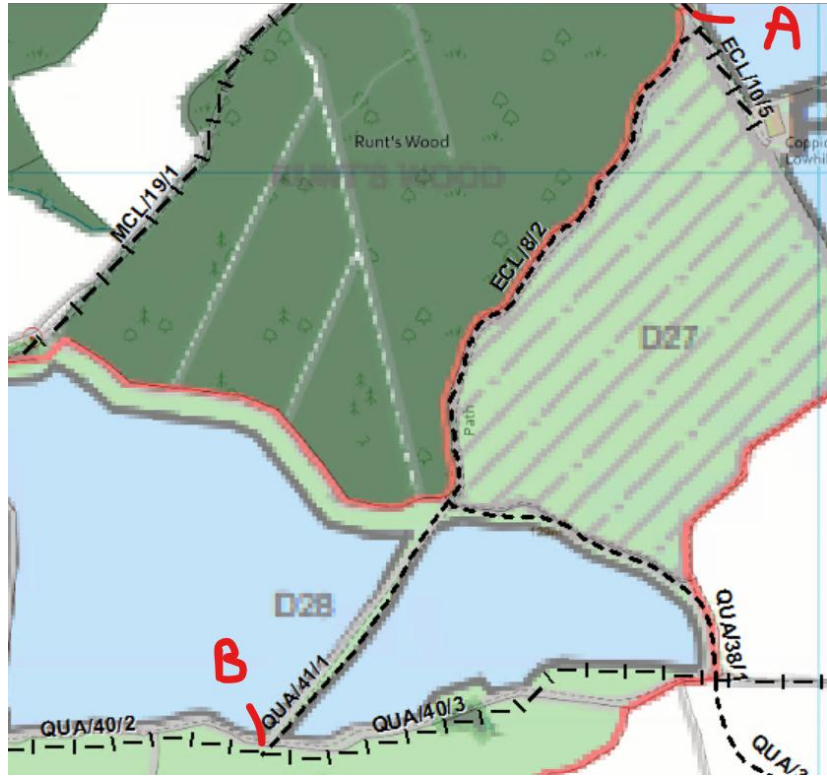
ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
	<p>Paragraphs 3.2.9 and 3.7.7 and of the oSMP [REP1-088] state that soil storage and handling will “normally be as specified” in the Defra guidance. When would soil handling and storage not be as specified in the Defra guidance and why? When the guidance is not applied, what alternative measures would be used? What is the process for determining and signing off deviations from the guidance?</p>		
Q1.18.9	<p>Green and blue infrastructure Paragraph 12.13 of ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] states that “The permanent land take for Green Infrastructure affects an assumed total area of 8.7 hectares (ha), none of which is classified as BMV land” and that a total of just over 10ha would be occupied by green and blue infrastructure, none of which would be classified as BMV. However, figure 12.1 of ES Chapter 12 [AS-022] appears to show grade 2 and 3a agricultural land in areas “proposed mitigation and/or enhancement” in the vicinity of Knoll Hill. Confirm whether any BMV land would be used for green and blue infrastructure and whether this would be permanently lost for agricultural use.</p>	<p>There would be an area of BMV land located within Field B9 (adjacent to Knowl Hill) in Parcel 1 that is proposed as green and blue infrastructure. The statement set out in Paragraph 12.13 is correct as none of the area of Green or Blue Infrastructure within the area of BMV land is considered to be permanent for the purposes of the assessment. This land could be returned to agricultural production once this has been returned to the landowner at the end of the decommissioning phase. This land will be reinstated and returned to the same agricultural land classification grade as prior to the installation of the Proposed Development and returned back to the landowner at the end of the decommissioning phase, as set out and secured in the Outline SMP [EN010158/APP/7.7.3].</p>	<p>Paragraph 12.8.13 of ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] states that “for the purposes of this assessment, it has been assumed that Green Infrastructure has the potential to be permanent”. Therefore, the assessment should be assuming that there is potential for BMV land to be permanently required for green and blue infrastructure.</p>
Q1.18.10	<p>Residual effects on agricultural land quality during the operation phase Paragraph 12.10.13 of ES Chapter 12 [APP-055] states that “...the significance of the residual effect on agricultural land quality during operation (including maintenance) will be slight adverse/neutral or slight adverse and not significant.” Provide further clarification of when the residual effect would be slight adverse/ neutral or slight adverse.</p>	<p>The residual effect will be slight adverse for BMV land (Grades 2 and 3a) and slight/neutral adverse for Grade 3b in accordance with the IEMA (now ISEP) (2021) A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance. ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] has been updated at Deadline 2 for clarification.</p>	<p>It is noted that no update has been made to align the impact assessment on ALC Grade 2 land with the IEMA methodology as per discussions with Buckinghamshire Council on 15th April 2026. According to the IEMA methodology used (Table 12.8 in [REP2-031]), the impact to Grade 2 land should be classed as minor, not negligible. This would bring the significance of effects up to a moderate adverse effect, which is significant. The Applicant has stated that the 3 ha area of grade 2 land is small compared to the total size of the development and that the project is predominantly sited on non-BMV land. However, this is not a justification to “dilute” the assessment of Grade 2 land simply because a large area of non-BMV land is also proposed to be developed. In absolute terms and according to standard methodology, the impact magnitude is minor and therefore the effect on Grade 2 land is moderate adverse.</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
Q1.18.11	<p>oSMP – Environmental Improvement Plan</p> <p>In the context of NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.10.34, provide further commentary on how the measures in oSMP [REP1-088] are in line with the ambition set out in the government’s Environmental Improvement Plan to bring at least 40% of England’s agricultural soils into sustainable management by 2028 and increase this up to 60% by 2030.</p>	<p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] concludes that only 1.51% of the land is classified as BMV. Therefore, the land with the highest potential for agricultural production will be remaining within the agricultural system. As there is such a low percentage of BMV land used the sustainable management targets are able to be prioritised for the areas of land that are the most productive and have the highest potential of success. In addition, the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] will secure landscape and biodiversity enhancements across the Site, which will provide benefits to soil quality through increasing biological activity over the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>This question does not relate to BMV land but to the sustainable management of agricultural soils, regardless of their grade. Provide commentary on how the operation and maintenance practices for the solar PV modules will support sustainable agriculture.</p>
Q1.18.13	<p>oSMP – potential use of concrete blocks or gabions</p> <p>Paragraph 4.2.5 of the oSMP [REP1-088] states that “The option to install pre-cast concrete blocks or gabions (filled with local stone) known as “shoes” may also be considered, avoiding the need for driven and screw anchored installation, therefore minimising ground disturbance.” Who would consider the use of such methods and in what circumstances would they be applied?</p>	<p>The Solar PV modules would typically be mounted on a piled steel structure. However, the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.4] also include an option for some mounting structures to be supported by ballasted or shallow concrete foundations, for example, to avoid piling depths and mitigate effects (if required) due to ground conditions, to reduce the impact on areas of archaeological sensitivity or to adapt the design of substructure works around existing underground utilities (if required). These methods will be considered and determined during the detailed design, which would be undertaken post consent.</p>	<p>It is recommended to use the least intrusive and damaging methods to minimise degradation of soil quality.</p>
Q1.18.14	<p>oSMP – grass sward</p> <p>Elaborate on commentary in paragraph 4.3.1 of the oSMP [REP1-088] regarding the decision about where grass seeding will occur prior to construction. Who would make this decision? What would happen in instances when grass swards have not established 6 months prior to construction? What alternative methods would be applied in such circumstances?</p>	<p>This will be determined during detailed design. A grass sward will be seeded across as much of the Site as possible prior to any construction works. The establishment of the grass sward is to prevent vehicle rutting and soil erosion. Low pressure vehicles will only be driven on a straight line on the grass and any vehicle turning will occur on track matting. These measures are additional precautions to prevent vehicle rutting and soil erosion therefore the grass sward is not the sole reliance of mitigation.</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council welcomes the seeding of grass sward prior to any construction works.</p>
Q1.18.15	<p>oSMP – drainage</p> <p>The ExA notes the applicant’s amendments to the oSMP [REP1-088] regarding remedial works to agricultural drainage. What assessment has the applicant undertaken to determine the suitability of the existing drainage system to support the operational phase? For the decommissioning phase, paragraph 5.4.8 states that if required due to damage, new drains should be installed into the</p>	<p>Existing land drainage systems have not been considered within the Outline Drainage Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.11.3]. Therefore, the drainage assessment is currently conservative and the required new SuDs will be installed during construction phase to enable the drainage throughout operational stage to meet IDB requirements. Existing land drainage systems which are damaged throughout construction would either be reinstated or diverted during the decommissioning stage to ensure that the fields are returned to the landowner in the condition that they were received and can be returned to their original land use. If required due to damage to a section of an existing drainage system, new drains would be installed into the subsoil, prior to topsoil reinstatement in the decommissioning phase. This is set out and secured in the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3].</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire Council welcomes the securing of land drain repair and/or installation in the Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.3].</p>

ExQ1	Question:	Applicants Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
	subsoil, prior to topsoil reinstatement. How quickly would drains be repaired or replaced due to any damage during the construction phase?		

19. Transport and access

Q1.19.15	<p>Outline CTMP – wear and tear agreement</p> <p>To the applicant and Buckinghamshire Council: What form of legal agreement would the wear and tear agreement as referenced in section 4.7 of the oCTMP [REP1-084] take? Has any progress been made on this to date?</p> <p>To the applicant: Is a corresponding agreement being sought with other local authorities on the construction traffic route? If not, why not?</p>	<p>An agreement under the Highways Act (1980), Section 59 (Recovery of expenses due to extraordinary traffic) can be agreed between both parties. This would be pursued post-consent as has become standard practice for DCO projects. The proposed is with Buckinghamshire Council as detailed in Section 4.7 of the Outline CTMP [EN010158/APP/7.5.3]. This is due to Buckinghamshire Council being the highway authority with the highest predicted traffic level. The traffic impacts in Oxfordshire County Council and National Highways networks are not considered significant and as such, will not result in appreciable damage occurring. Through the Abnormal Indivisible Load order applications, a separate road damage agreement is made between the road authorities at the haulier</p>	<p>The OCTMP sets out what it is to cover and achieve. A draft agreement template should be provided. Further to the comments in the issue specific hearing, there may be agreement on how wear and tear resulting from construction and decommissioning is managed by Deadline 4.</p>
Q1.19.20	<p>Outline Rights of Way Access Strategy (oRoWAS) – permanent diversions</p> <p>What constraints would prohibit the applicant from defining the minimum width of 2 metres for newly created footpaths in the oRoWAS [REP1-090] as requested by Buckinghamshire Council?</p>	<p>The Outline RoWAS [EN010158/APP/7.8.3] has been updated at Deadline 2 to include reference to a 2m minimum width for newly created footpaths, subject to a survey at the detailed design stage to ensure that additional hedgerow removals are not required where the diverted PRow pass through any hedgerows and to identify where any furniture such as gates may restrict the width.</p>	<p>The Council welcomes the Applicant’s intention to record minimum widths for diverted routes on the definitive map, to comply with the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020 – 2030. The matter is resolved subject to this being appropriately secured (as discussed in ISH1).</p> <p>Note: the widths proposed in the plans between fence or hedge boundaries are easily 2m+ between hedges or fences. Moreover, constraints where footpaths cross field boundaries are given, that is, they do not need to meet the 2m width requirement. BS 5709 2018 for ‘Gaps, Gates and Stiles’, simply requires a 1.1m or 1.525m (footpath/bridleway) gap (or gate) depending on the need for agricultural stock control.</p>

<p>Q1.19.23</p>	<p>oRoWAS and Design Commitments – offsets for permissive paths</p> <p>Whilst offset distances from solar photovoltaic development are specified for PRowS, neither the oRoWAS [REP1-090] nor the Design Commitments [REP1-020] provide corresponding details for offsets for existing or proposed permissive paths. Please provide clarification and update documents as appropriate.</p>	<p>There is a single existing permissive path within the Site, located along the southern edge of Runts Wood in Parcel 2. As shown by Appendix 5: Green and Blue Infrastructure Parameters - Buffer Widths of the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3], this route falls within the 30m woodland offset from Runts Wood and is not considered to require a separate offset. The proposed permissive paths have all been located to follow the margins of fields. Consequently, where they are located in proximity to Solar PV development the offset will correspond to the 10m minimum offsets from hedgerows secured by the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.4] and a separate offset for the proposed permissive paths was not considered necessary. The proposed permissive bridleway follows the existing alignment of a PRow through Field D28 and consequently does not require a separate offset either.</p>	<p>The last sentence should say Fields D27 and D28 as the permissive bridleway would follow Footpaths ECL/8/2 and QUA/41/1 [A to B].</p> 
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20. Water environment			
<p>Q1.20.10</p>	<p>NPS EN-3</p> <p>The Outline Drainage Strategy [REP1-096] paragraph 5.5.1 refers to the provision of approximately 3.67 hectares of impermeable areas which constitute access tracks. However, paragraph 2.10.85 of NPS EN-3 states that “Where access tracks need to be provided, permeable tracks should be used...” Why have you not committed to the use of permeable tracks in accordance with NPS EN-3?</p>	<p>As noted and secured within the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.4], Design Commitment E2 states that internal access tracks will typically be surfaced with permeable material such as gravel and will include drainage such as a swale or ditch on the downhill side of the track. Design Commitment E3 also confirms that the Abnormal Indivisible Load access track will be surfaced with permeable material (assumed to be compacted gravel) or temporary plating. Design Commitments E2 and E3 demonstrate compliance with NPS EN-3 (2023) Paragraph 2.10.85. However, and for the purposes of assessment within the Outline Drainage Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.11.3], it is assumed that access tracks will be constructed from a Hydraulically Bound Mixture, classifying them as impermeable surfaces. This conservative, worst-case scenario has been used to demonstrate and ensure that the drainage design has capacity to handle all surface runoff from the Site, including the access track areas. In practice these areas will not be fully impermeable, therefore the assessment is conservative.</p>	<p>The Lead Local Flood Authority accepts the approach taken in the Outline Drainage Strategy as a conservative worst case scenario to demonstrate that the surface water drainage scheme can appropriately attenuate the required storage volumes from impermeable areas.</p>
<p>Q1.20.18</p>	<p>ES Chapter 16 (Water)</p> <p>ES Chapter 16 [REP1-042] states that there would be opportunities for enhancement to the water environment, through biodiversity enhancements within Parcel 1a where Finemere Wood Site of</p>	<p>Outline Drainage Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.11.3] identifies potential enhancements including reduced runoff and improved water quality gains within Parcel 1a. The cessation of intensive agriculture would reduce fertiliser and pesticide inputs, lowering diffuse pollution risk and improving water quality. The Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.3] secures biodiversity mitigation and planting, and the Outline Drainage Strategy [EN010158/APP/7.11.3], offers attenuation of runoff to ensure there is no increase in flows leaving the Site. These benefits are difficult to quantify as the site already behaves much like natural greenfield land, so any improvements in runoff are likely to be small and difficult to clearly measure and therefore are not reported as</p>	<p>The Lead Local Flood Authority is in agreement that it is difficult to quantify the benefits of the land use change, in relation to surface water runoff.</p>

	<p>Special Scientific Interest and the Muxwell Brook are located and that vegetation cover below the solar panels would slow the rate of surface water runoff during high intensity rainfall events, promoting the interception of surface water runoff, thus overall reducing flood risk in the order limits and downstream of the proposed development. The ExA however notes that no beneficial effects are identified as a result of the proposed development in table 16.11 of ES Chapter 16 for example. Can you quantify the extent of any enhancements stated in the ES? If so, should these be considered as temporary benefits?</p>	<p>significant beneficial effects in Table 16.11 as they do not represent a known change in baseline conditions. Benefits would persist over the operational lifetime and are not temporary.</p>	
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