

Rosefield Solar Farm

Draft Statement of Common Ground –
Natural England (Tracked)

EN010158/APP/5.14 2

Revision 2

July March 2026

Deadline 54

Rosefield Energyfarm Limited



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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') has been prepared on behalf of Rosefield Energyfarm Limited ('the Applicant') in relation to the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the construction, operation and decommissioning of Rosefield Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2. The Proposed Development is a proposed new solar farm and battery storage facility located in Buckinghamshire. The proposals also include infrastructure to connect the Proposed Development to the National Grid East Claydon Substation, as well as any necessary supporting site infrastructure and environmental mitigation, including landscaping and ecological planting.
- 1.1.3. The SoCG is being submitted to the Examining Authority as an agreed draft between both parties. It will be amended as the examination progresses in order to enable a final version to be submitted to the Examining Authority.

1.2. Parties to this Statement of Common Ground

- 1.2.1. This SoCG has been prepared by the Applicant and Natural England (NE).
- 1.2.2. NE is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). As a statutory nature conservation body, NE is the Government's advisor on the protection of the natural environment in England. NE's general purposes are to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.
- 1.2.3. NE's role in relation to the Development Consent Order (DCO) process derives from the Planning Act 2008 (the 'PA 2008') and secondary legislation made under PA 2008. The roles and responsibilities of NE under the PA 2008 fall into the following categories:
 - a. As one of the prescribed consultees under Section 42 of the PA 2008 that applicants are required to consult before submitting a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) application.
 - b. As one of the consultation bodies that the Planning Inspectorate must consult before a scoping opinion is adopted in relation to any Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and as a prescribed consultee for the

environmental information submitted pursuant to the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017¹.

- c. As a statutory party in the examination of DCO applications.
- d. As a statutory nature conservation body under the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations)² in respect of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- e. As a consenting and licensing body/authority in respect of protected species and operations likely to damage the protected features of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) pursuant to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA 1981)³ and in relation to European protected species under the Habitats Regulations.

1.2.4. Collectively, the Applicant and NE are referred to as ‘the parties’.

1.3. Purpose of this Document

1.3.1. This SoCG is being submitted to the Examining Authority as an agreed draft between both parties. This SoCG is a ‘live’ document and will be amended and resubmitted as the examination progresses in order to enable a final version to be submitted to the Examining Authority.

1.3.2. The SoCG has been prepared in accordance with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities’ Guidance on the examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (‘DLUHC Guidance’)⁴.

1.3.3. Paragraph 007 of the DLUHC Guidance comments that:

“A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is a written statement prepared jointly by the applicant and another party or parties, setting out any matters on which they agree, or indeed disagree. A SoCG helps to ensure that the evidence at the examination focuses on the material differences between the main parties and therefore makes best use of the lines of questioning pursued by the Examining Authority”.

1.3.4. The aim of this SoCG is, therefore, to provide a clear position of the progress and agreement met or not yet met between NE and the Applicant on matters relating to the DCO Application.

¹ The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Available online: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/572/contents/made>

² The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Available online: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>

³ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Available online: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

⁴ Planning Act 2008: Examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (30 April 2024).

- 1.3.5. The document will be updated as more information becomes available and as a result of ongoing discussions between the Applicant and NE.
- 1.3.6. This SoCG is intended to provide information for the examination process, facilitate a smooth and efficient examination, and manage the amount of material that needs to be submitted.
- 1.3.7. This SoCG does not seek to replicate information which is available elsewhere within the DCO Application documents. All documents are available in the deposit locations and/or the Planning Inspectorate's website (<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010158/documents>).
- 1.3.8. Once finalised, the SoCG will be submitted to the Examining Authority that is examining the DCO Application under Section 37 of the PA 2008 for an order granting development consent for the Proposed Development.
- 1.3.9. For the purposes of examination, this SoCG addresses the following key topic areas:
- Matters relating to protected species, designated sites and habitats;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); and
 - Soil and agricultural land.

1.4. Terminology

- 1.4.1. This SoCG summarises the main topics covered and the status of the matter. The colour coding system used within the table in **Section 4** has been outlined below.

Cell	Status
	Agreed - indicates where an issue has been resolved.
	Under Discussion - indicates where points continue to be the subject of on-going discussions between the parties.
	Not Agreed - indicates a position where both parties have reached a final position that a matter cannot be agreed between them.

2. Proposed Development Description

- 2.1.1. The Proposed Development comprises the construction, operation (including, maintenance), and decommissioning of solar photovoltaic ('PV') development and energy storage, together with associated infrastructure and an underground cable connection to the National Grid East Claydon Substation.
- 2.1.2. The Proposed Development includes the installation, construction and decommissioning works, with the details to be defined at detailed design and subject to approval by the relevant Local Authority. The detailed design of the Proposed Development will be required to be undertaken within the parameters assessed in the Environmental Statement, which are secured through a range of control documents including the **Works Plans [EN010158/APP/2.3.3]**, the **Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.3]**, and the requirements set out in the **Draft Development Consent Order (DCO) [EN010158/APP/3.1.3]**.
- 2.1.3. The design of the Proposed Development has evolved throughout the environmental assessment process to avoid or minimise environmental effects and in response to consultation and engagement feedback, where appropriate. The location of the Proposed Development is shown in Figure 1.1: Location Plan in **ES Volume 3, Background and Context Figures 1.1 - 1.2 [EN010158/APP/6.3] [APP-061]** and described in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 2: Location of the Proposed Development [EN010158/APP/6.1] [APP-045]**, with the consideration of alternatives and the evolution of the design of the Proposed Development presented in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: Reasonable Alternatives Considered [EN010158/APP/6.1] [APP-047]**.
- 2.1.4. The principal components of the Proposed Development include:
- Solar PV development consisting of:
 - Ground mounted Solar PV generating station. The generating station would include Solar PV modules and mounting structures; and
 - Balance of Solar System (BoSS) which comprises: Inverters; Transformers; Switchgear; Combiner Boxes; acoustic barriers and cabling.
 - A project substation (the 'Rosefield Substation') compound comprising: Transformers; Switchgear; reactive power compensation bays; disconnectors; circuit breakers; busbars; control equipment; lightning surge arrestors; building(s) including office, control, functions, material storage, material laydown areas and welfare facilities; firewalls; fencing and acoustic barriers; a security cabin; parking as well as wider monitoring, maintenance and emergency equipment;
 - A Main Collector Compound and two Satellite Collector Compounds comprising: Switchgear; Transformers; ancillary equipment; operation and maintenance and welfare facilities; material storage; material laydown areas; fencing and acoustic barriers; and security cabins;

- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) compound comprising: batteries and associated Inverters; Transformers; Switchgear, ancillary equipment and their containers; office, control and welfare buildings; fencing and acoustic barriers; monitoring, maintenance and emergency systems; air conditioning; electrical cables; fire safety infrastructure; operation (including maintenance) security facilities; material storage; and material laydown areas;
- Interconnecting Cabling Corridor(s) to connect the Solar PV modules and the BESS to the Satellite and Main Collector Compounds to the Rosefield Substation;
- A Grid Connection Cable Corridor to connect the Rosefield Substation to the National Grid East Claydon Substation via 400kV cabling;
- Ancillary infrastructure works comprising: boundary treatment; security equipment; lighting; fencing; landscaping; internal access tracks; works to facilitate vehicular access; earthing devices; earthworks; surface water management; utility connections and diversions; and any other works identified as necessary to enable the Proposed Development;
- Green and blue infrastructure, recreation and amenity works comprising: landscaping; habitat management; biodiversity enhancement; the creation of three permissive footpaths; and works to divert PRow Footpaths;
- Site-wide operational monitoring and security equipment; and
- Highways infrastructure improvements and safety works comprising: minor junction improvement works; road widening; passing places; and works to facilitate vehicular access to the Site.

3. Record of Engagement

3.1. Record of Engagement

- 3.1.1. The parties have been engaged in consultation throughout the early stages of the Proposed Development. **Table 1** shows a summary of key engagement that has taken place between the Applicant and NE in relation to the DCO Application.
- 3.1.2. A detailed breakdown of engagement that has been undertaken is provided in **ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.2]** and **ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2] [[APP-055](#)]**.

Table 1: Record of Engagement

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
14 September 2023	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Proposed Bernwood SSSI Offsets from SSSI designated woodlands and HS2 mitigation planting Displacement to bats Cumulative effects	Sheephouse Wood SSSI, Finemere Wood SSSI, Grendon and Doddershall Woods SSSI, ancient woodland and Bechstein's bats (all of which would fall under the proposed Bernwood SSSI designation) have all been scoped into the assessment and the conclusions of these individual assessments can be applied to the Bernwood SSSI, should the SSSI be designated following submission of the DCO Application. ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] includes an assessment on how the land affected by the Proposed Development is currently being used by bats for foraging, commuting and roosting, including the potential for displacement effects to foraging and commuting bats, which has fed into the mitigation design. The assessment of inter project cumulative effects on biodiversity which accounts for other existing and/or approved developments within the 10km Zone of Influence as detailed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.2].
22 February 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Design updates Bat activity survey results	Solar PV modules in Parcel 1a were removed from the zonal masterplan and this area is now proposed as a dedicated biodiversity mitigation area.

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
04 September 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Design updates and presentation of the landscape and ecological mitigation proposals Grazing proposals Hydrological regime within the Order Limits including inclusion of ponds Concern over the potential reduction in insect biomass and bat foraging resources Bat activity surveys and bat displacement	Updated Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) surveys have been undertaken across the Site to include areas that were not part of the Order Limits in 2022. The results of GLTA surveys are presented within ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.2: Bat Preliminary Roost Assessment Report (2022) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-088] and ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.14: Bat Preliminary Roost Assessment Report (2025) [EN010158/APP/6.4.2]. Paired static detector surveys have been undertaken to compare levels of bat activity, in particular <i>Myotis</i> species, at boundary features and within open field habitats. This is presented within ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.16: Paired Static Bat Detector Survey Report (2025) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-102].
11 November 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	A review of the Applicant's response to Natural England's review of the bat activity report was undertaken.	Comments have been incorporated into ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.16: Paired Static Bat Detector Survey Report (2025) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-102].
11 March 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Design update including presentation of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Enhancement and Mitigation Plan along	The Applicant has amended the design of the Proposed Development to include buffer distances of up to 30m from fence lines within the Proposed

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
		with early planting proposals, grazing proposals and survey updates. Updates to landscape plans including increasing the number of ponds proposed to be created, early planting proposals and increased buffer around Field D29 and partially Field D28. Natural England raised ongoing concerns regarding the study area around Shrubs Wood in Fields B6 and B7 and requested the removal of Solar PV development in these fields to avoid the isolation of this woodland block and maintain connectivity.	Development to woodland/hedgerow along the boundary of Fields D28/D29 linking Finemere Wood and Runt's Wood. Setbacks from hedgerows in Fields B3, B6, B7, B8 and B10 that link Shrubs Wood, Sheephouse Wood and Decoypond Wood have also been increased from 10m to 15m with a mosaic of species-rich grassland and arable field margins proposed along with strengthening of the existing hedgerows to provide a wide corridor link (30m between fence lines and 40m between the edges of the closest solar panels) between these woodlands, helping to reduce potential displacement effects from Solar PV to foraging and commuting bats and ensure the connectivity between these woodlands is maintained, as detailed within Section 7.7 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.2].
31 March 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Summary of Great Crested Newt (GCN) survey works and progress updates with mitigation plans and proposals. District Level Licensing approach with NatureSpace	Works with the potential to affect GCN would be carried out either under the Buckinghamshire District Level Licensing Scheme through NatureSpace Partnership or under a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England as set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.2]. The licensable works would encompass clearance, and construction/decommissioning works required within the intermediate and distant habitat zones of ponds

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
			(likely up to 250m) within the Order Limits. Both licensing options are still under consideration by the Applicant, to be confirmed prior to construction.
15 July 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Summary of the Biodiversity ES chapter and paired static receptor surveys. Update on mitigation proposals	Full results of the paired static surveys are presented within ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.16: Paired Static Bat Detector Survey Report (2025) [EN010158/APP/6.4] [APP-102].
05 August 2025	Site visit	Site visit undertaken with Natural England to look at proposed mitigation areas and links between woodland blocks in Parcels 1, 1a and 2.	Better understanding for Natural England of the existing biodiversity baseline conditions on Site and proposed mitigation measures. Discussions held informed measures included within the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EN010158/APP/7.6.2].
29 October 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Summary of application documents and Natural England's comments on the Biodiversity ES Chapter	The Applicant grouped Natural England's comments into key themes and provided a response to each of these themes by email following the meeting.
21 January 2026	Microsoft Teams Meeting Online	Summary of NE Relevant Representation and discussion on further information relating to bats that will be submitted into the examination at Deadline 1	A high frequency noise assessment to inform the potential for the construction works to disturb roosting bats and a literature review highlighting that although not analogous to cattle grazing, sheep grazing under modules is likely to support invertebrate species of value to foraging bat species will be issued as part of the Bat Technical Study [EN010158/APP/8.5] at Deadline 1.

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
<u>26 February 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>SoCG</u> <u>Principal Areas of Disagreement</u> <u>HS2 mitigation areas</u> <u>Hedgerow buffer measurements</u>	<u>The Applicant simplified the SoCG wording to remove unnecessary technical detail.</u> <u>Natural England were to revise the wording of the PADs to reflect the ongoing discussions being held between the Applicant and Natural England.</u> <u>The Applicant agreed to review the boundary of HS2 mitigation planting in relation to the Proposed Development Order Limits.</u> <u>The Applicant will continue to maintain the approach taken to measuring buffers from hedgerow centreline.</u>
<u>02 April 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Summary of NE queries on the Bat Technical Study that was submitted by the Applicant at Deadline 1 alongside the Statement of Common Ground.</u>	<u>Natural England welcomed the additional information presented by the Applicant in the Bat Technical Study in relation to the assessment undertaken on the potential impacts that could occur to bats during the construction phase and operational phase. However, inconsistencies were noted between the wording in the assessment and the Outline CEMP. The Applicant agreed to review the wording and update the outline CEMP where necessary to align with the Bat Technical Study regarding construction noise to ensure bat roosts would not be disturbed. The Applicant also agreed to discuss if additional construction phase noise monitoring could be undertaken.</u> <u>The Applicant and Natural England concluded that operational noise is unlikely to be the main issue in</u>

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
			<u>relation to the displacement effect that solar development has on bats and that the potential operational impacts are likely to result from the presence of Solar PV modules rather than operational noise generated from equipment.</u> <u>The Applicant agreed to investigate whether additional HS2 bat monitoring data can be used to support the assessment undertaken to date.</u> <u>The Applicant and Natural England agreed that the Bat Monitoring Strategy should use consistent survey methods to ensure the results remain comparable with baseline data.</u>
<u>15 April 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Bat foraging mitigation (B fields)</u> <u>Hedgerow buffer measurements</u> <u>Bat Monitoring Strategy</u> <u>SoCG</u>	<u>The Applicant agreed to strengthen the wording within the outline Bat Monitoring Strategy.</u> <u>The Applicant will continue to maintain the approach taken to measuring buffers from hedgerow centreline.</u>
<u>10 June 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Bat foraging mitigation (B fields) and licensing requirements.</u> <u>Bat monitoring strategy updates.</u> <u>GCN licensing requirements.</u> <u>Hedgerow buffer measurements.</u>	<u>The Applicant and Natural England discussed removal of Solar PV Modules within the fields of concern, and the potential for these areas to have unrestricted grazing, with the Applicant to review whether additional areas could remain free from Solar PV Modules.</u>

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
			<u>The Applicant agreed to revise the bat monitoring strategy to provide further detail on monitoring objectives.</u> <u>The Applicant agreed to review the relevant National Policy Statement paragraphs with regards to bat licensing requirements and provide clearer justification at future Deadlines.</u> <u>Natural England indicated that the Applicant should confirm which licensing route for GCN would be used prior to the Examination concluding. Natural England agreed to seek further clarification from the Licensing Team.</u> <u>The Applicant will continue to maintain the approach taken to measuring buffers from hedgerow centreline. Natural England requested further consideration of bespoke buffers from certain hedgerows.</u>
<u>18 June 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Importance of the B fields in Parcel and grazing management.</u>	<u>Discussed the importance of the ecological functionality of B fields and requirement for access and grazing in these fields.</u> <u>Further discussion on the configuration and western part of B7 considered as candidate for removal.</u>

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
<u>25 June 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Combined stakeholder meeting attended by Natural England, Buckinghamshire Council and CSAG.</u>	<u>The Applicant provided an update on the recent design changes and provided further detail on the temporary secondary construction compounds and impact of these on foraging bats.</u> <u>Discussion about the HS2 mitigation planting near Decoypond Wood and (perceived) overlap with the Proposed Development.</u> <u>Discussion on the bespoke approach to applying buffer measurements and measurement from the centreline.</u> <u>Discussion regarding BNG methodology and outcomes.</u>
<u>03 July 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Review of the B fields proposal, Deadline 4 submissions and Examining Authority's Second Written Questions</u>	<u>Discussion on the further Solar PV removal in parcel 1, Deadline 4 submission and responses to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions.</u>
<u>23 July 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Review B fields proposal and matters under discussion within the draft SoCG</u>	<u>The Applicant and Natural England reached a compromise in the area of Solar PV development in Parcel 1. The Applicant has agreed to reduce the extent of Solar PV Modules from Parcel 1 which includes the removal of Solar PV modules from the entirety of Field B6 and Field B8, western and southern parts of Field B7 and increasing the southern buffer alongside Sheephouse Wood and Shrubs Wood from 30 to 50m.</u>

Date	Format	Key topics discussed	Key outcomes
<u>29 July 2026</u>	<u>Microsoft Teams Meeting Online</u>	<u>Draft Statement of Common Ground</u>	<u>Discussion on the Draft Statement of Common Ground to be submitted at Deadline 5.</u>
BMV agricultural land			
15 March 2025	Email	Natural England confirmed agreement with a semi-detailed survey (1 auger per 2 hectares (ha) plus representative pits) where the Site is expected to comprise non-BMV land and a detailed survey (1 auger per ha) where the Site is expected to comprise BMV land.	The Applicant confirms that surveys have been undertaken in accordance with the agreed methodology and survey densities for the BMV and non-BMV land as set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2] [APP-055] .
04 August 2025	Email	Confirmation sought from Natural England that it agrees with the approach of assuming that the 53ha of land that was not subject to Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey (due to access restrictions) can be classified as Grade 3b for the agricultural land and non-agricultural for the East Claydon Substation.	The Applicant will continue to try to gain access for the remanding agricultural land to complete a detailed survey however Natural England do not oppose the assumed ALC Grade of 3b and are happy to accept the Grade if access cannot be granted.

4. Current Position

4.1. Position of the Applicant and NE

- 4.1.1. The following tables set out the position of the Applicant and NE, following a series of meetings and discussions with respect to the key areas of the Proposed Development. This includes matters where discussions are ongoing.
- 4.1.2. As noted above, this is a 'live' document, and some aspects have yet to be agreed upon between both parties. The intention is to provide a final position in subsequent versions of the SoCG, addressing and identifying where changes have been made, and ultimately, documenting agreement by both parties on relevant points.
- 4.1.3. Where discussions are ongoing, the parties have included an indication of the likelihood that disagreement will remain by the end of the examination in accordance with the **Rule 6 letter [PD-008]**.

Table 2: Position of the Applicant and Natural England

Ref	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment	Applicant's Response	Status
1- Protected species and habitats				
1.1	Nationally Designated Sites	The Environmental Statement has fully considered impacts to the existing SSSIs as well as the proposed Bernwood SSSI as best it can, given the status of the proposed designation, which we welcome. The importance of the Bechstein's bat population, their sensitivity, and the potential impacts from the project have been appropriately characterized. Potential direct and indirect impacts to the interest features of the SSSIs have been appropriately assessed. Natural England agree with the conclusion that there are no residual impacts (after mitigation) on SSSIs.	The Applicant welcomes this agreement.	Agreed
1.2	Internationally Designated Sites	Natural England agree the scope of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening exercise is appropriate.	The Applicant welcomes this agreement.	Agreed
1.3	Protected Species	Natural England agree with the biodiversity survey efforts and conclusions of the assessment excluding bats (see below).	The Applicant welcomes this agreement.	Agreed
1.4	Protected Species - Impacts to Bat Species Assemblage	Natural England recommend for PV panels and infrastructure from fields B6, B7, and B8 to be removed and for the creation of additional diverse grassland and scrub habitats along buffer zones, but also continue to manage these areas as cattle-grazed pasture adding to the mitigation measures onsite and providing grazed pasture in a range of location, aspects and sheltered locations due to the importance of this area to Bechstein Bats.	<u>The Applicant has worked with Natural England to reach a compromise in the area of Solar PV development in Parcel 1. The Applicant has agreed to reduce the extent of Solar PV Modules from Parcel 1 which includes the removal of Solar PV modules from the entirety of Field B6 and Field B8, western and southern parts of Field B7 and increasing the southern buffer alongside Sheephouse Wood and Shrubs Wood from 30 to 50m. This has been updated in the Works Plans [EN010158/APP/2.3.6] and Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.6] at Deadline 5.</u> <u>This will ensure that there is no net loss of grassland within 1.5km radius of Shrubs Wood, as requested by Natural England. In total, out of a baseline of 28.13ha of grassland within 1.5km, 28.65 ha (102%) of sheltered grassland within 1.5km of Shrubs Wood will continue to be available to foraging bats.</u> <u>Whilst less sheltered, Field B17 is also within 1.5km of Shrubs Wood and will comprise a further 14.68ha of grassland.</u> <u>The revised proposals result in no net loss of foraging habitat within 1.5km of Shrubs wood. Across other parts of the site, while there may be a loss of the existing grazing regime, the total amount of grassland has increased and should maintain or improve the existing foraging resource for the bats.</u> ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.2] includes an assessment on how the land affected by the Proposed Development is currently being used by bats for foraging and commuting in order to inform the assessment.	Agreed Under Discussion Medium

Ref	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment	Applicant's Response	Status
			The Applicant will be providing further detail on grazing and bats within the Bat Technical Study [EN010158/APP/8.5] that will be issued at Deadline 1 and will continue to discuss this matter with Natural England.	
1.5	Protected Species - Impacts to Bats during construction	Natural England note that there may also be direct impacts during the construction of the solar farm through disturbance to bats and their roosts particularly due to noise disturbance during the piling of the PV panel installation.	The Applicant has undertaken an assessment of the potential for the construction works to disturb roosting bats and for high frequency noise from electrical infrastructure and batteries to disturb commuting and roosting bats species, with the conclusion that any disturbance effects are not likely to be significant. This will will form ed ed part of the Bat Technical Study [EN010158/APP/8.5] that will be was submitted at Deadline 1. <u>The Applicant has committed to measures to minimise noise and vibration impacts, these include:</u> - <u>Perimeter fencing surrounding the Solar PV development will be offset at least 30m from existing woodland and hedgerows located along the boundaries of Field D29 and partially in Field D28.</u> - <u>Perimeter fencing surrounding the Solar PV development will be offset at least 15m either side from existing hedgerows located within Fields B3 and B7, between Fields B7 and B8/B10 and between Fields B8/B10 and B9/B11.</u> - <u>Perimeter fencing surrounding the primary and secondary compounds will be offset 50m from existing woodlands.</u> - <u>Restricted construction hours from 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday, and 07:00 to 12:00 on Saturday. Between 07:00 to 08:00 and 18:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 08:00 on Saturdays, noisier activities (such as piling) would be restricted depending on the construction activity proposed to take place and its proximity to sensitive receptors.</u> - <u>Best Practice Noise mitigation including use of acoustic enclosures, maintenance of plant and toolbox talks to contractors.</u> - <u>Proportionate noise considerations in relation to indirect/disturbance impacts will take into account the likely or confirmed value of any tree that could support roosts (bearing in mind structure and location within bat CSZ/home ranges), distance from works and time of year. Proportionate measures could include undertaking works under a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS), buffer distances or timing restrictions whilst noting that, if bats are not in occupation, they cannot be disturbed.</u> - <u>The noise assessment within Bat Technical Study [EN010158/APP/8.5] [REP1-105] will be updated at detailed design stage prior to construction once the actual plant is confirmed.</u>	Agreed

Ref	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment	Applicant's Response	Status
1.6	Protected Species – Bat Survey and Field Parcel Analysis	Natural England has queried whether the acoustic data reliably identifies barbastelle bats and notes missing comparison between the 2022 and 2024/25 survey results. They also highlight issues with grouping arable and grazed pasture as “open habitats,” missing quantification of grazed grassland loss, and a lack of interpretation for limited data on grazed pasture compared to hedgerows. <u>Natural England provided detailed advice on the survey data collected to support the application. The Applicant was unable to gather sufficient data to support that fields of concern were not in use by the bat population. For the Applicant to successfully gather meaningful data, they would have had to apply for a License to radio-track the population, and Natural England would have been unlikely to grant this given the existing pressures on the population. Further detail on Natural England's position is detailed in Natural England's Response to the Examining Authority's questions on relevant representation - Additional Submission accepted at the discretion of the Examining Authority [AS-038].</u>	<u>The above measures are secured within the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.7] and Outline CEMP [EN010158/APP/7.2.6] which Natural England agree are appropriate.</u> <u>In discussions with Natural England, the Applicant has removed the flexibility for the Secondary Construction Compound to be located in Field B6 or Field B7 in Parcel 1. This has been updated at Deadline 5.</u> The Applicant will be providing further analysis of the paired static data at Deadline 1 for clarification and will continue to discuss this matter with Natural England. This further analysis will form part of the Bat Technical Study [EN010158/APP/8.5] that will be submitted at Deadline 1. <u>Natural England provided detailed advice on the survey data collected to support the application. Whilst additional data to determine the use of the B fields in Parcel 1 may have been helpful to the Applicant, acoustic data from HS2 was discounted and Natural England considered a licence to undertake additional radio-tracking unlikely to be granted. Mitigation therefore assumed specific B fields were of value, given the data summarised to support the SSSI extension (Murphy et al).</u> <u>Further detail related to this matter is provided in 1.10 within this Statement of Common Ground which has been agreed with Natural England.</u>	Agreed Under Discussion Low
1.7	Protected Species – Buffer Zone Measurement	Natural England have requested confirmation that the width of the buffer will be measured from the edge of the feature being protected and not hedgerow centreline. <u>If buffers are not effective in preventing an avoidance response, there is the potential for significant impacts to landscape connectivity, effectively cutting off foraging and commuting resources. A precautionary approach is to retain as much of the existing resource in line with the mitigation hierarchy.</u> <u>If this approach is not implemented, then many of the proposed buffers will simply include the existing ecological features which could be negatively impacted by the development. We continue to recommend that the</u>	<u>The Proposed Development has been designed by the Applicant to incorporate bespoke offsets from sensitive receptors, including sensitive hedgerows. For the majority of hedgerows exceeding 3m in width within the Order Limits, offsets have been increased to provide wider buffers from the Solar PV development. For example, adjacent to Runts Wood, Sheephouse Wood, Shrubs Wood and Claydon Brook. This is illustrated within Appendix 5 of the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.6] and secured by the Design Commitments [EN010158/APP/5.9.7] and Works Plans [EN010158/APP/2.3.6].</u> The Proposed Development has undertaken the measurement of offsets from the centreline of hedgerows based on drone-generated topographical data and UK Habitat data. The spatial extent of development as set out in the DCO Application has similarly been based on offsets from the centreline of the hedgerows. This is considered to be the most consistent data source available across the Site. <u>There is no standard methodology for measuring offsets to hedgerows. The Applicant has undertaken a review of precedent Solar DCOs and found that the</u>	Not Agreed Under Discussion Low

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		<u>proposed buffers are additional to existing features in the landscape.</u> <u>Although permitted DCOs have included buffers measured from the centre line of a hedgerow, it is not clear if these buffers are intended to prevent harm to Annex II bat populations.</u>	<u>approach varies between measuring from the centre line and edge of existing hedgerows. The majority of projects measure offsets from the centre line including Springwell, Mallards Pass, Peartree and Byers Gill – all of which have received DCO consent.</u> <u>-Hedgerow size can change over time as hedgerows are trimmed and then left to grow out again; therefore, the Applicant believes that the approach of measuring the hedgerow from the centreline is the most reliable.</u>	
1.8	Protected Species - Outline LEMP	Natural England have requested greater commitment to the use of cattle which will help ensure that the habitats within the mitigation areas continue to support a wide invertebrate assemblage, <u>and to maintain existing ecological resources</u>, as this is not presently secured within the application. Natural England recommend for the LEMP to ensure that hedgerow buffer zones are managed with whole insect lifecycles in mind. Avoid promoting floristic diversity over the development of tussocky grassland that is left uncut for multiple years avoiding annual disruption of lifecycles. <u>Natural England note that there is not enough evidence to support that the grazing by sheep will offer foraging resource for Bechstein's bats specifically. Additionally, these grazed areas will be under the avoidance influence of the solar panels.</u> <u>Natural England will review the revised Outline LEMP and will continue to discuss this matter with the Applicant prior to Deadline 6.</u>	It is proposed that grazing with cattle is undertaken on the <u>grassland mitigation area 93ha of mitigation area</u> set aside with no Solar PV panels as outlined in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.2], as the importance of cattle dung to foraging bats is acknowledged. <u>The Applicant has indicated its willingness to secure grazing as part of the long-term management regime and has had positive discussions with tenants who may be willing to provide either cattle or sheep grazing.</u> <u>The Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.6] secures the commitment to grazing in Appendix 6 with further detail provided in in paragraph 3.3.27 and 5.2.3 – 5.2.5. The Applicant will continue to discuss this matter with Natural England, following their review of the updated Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.6] submitted at Deadline 5.</u> <u>Grazing will be implemented unless there are extenuating circumstances outside of the Applicant's control, such as an outbreak of disease requiring the animals to be kept indoors or quarantined, or in the highly unlikely event that the Applicant cannot procure a herd of cattle / stock of sheep.</u> <u>It However, it</u> is also proposed to graze underneath Solar PV panels with sheep as outlined in the Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.2]. The scientific literature indicates that sheep droppings, although not supporting the same invertebrate assemblage as cattle dung, do support invertebrates of value to foraging bat species. So, this measure is also likely to increase the biomass of potential bat prey. Information on sheep dung and bats will be <u>was</u> presented at Deadline 1. The Outline LEMP [EN010158/APP/7.6.2] details how habitat creation and enhancement measures would benefit the invertebrate assemblages present. Further detail regarding management of hedgerows buffers to encourage the establishment of tussocky grassland margins would be included in the detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan following detailed design in consultation with Natural England.	Under Discussion Low

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1.9	<u>Great Crested Newt Licence Protected Species Licensing</u>	A separate protected species licence from Natural England or Defra may be required. Natural England will need to review a full draft licence application to issue a Letter of No Impediment (LONI) which explains that based on the information reviewed to date, that it sees no impediment to a licence being granted in the future should the DCO be issued. <u>Natural England have been approached to produce a Letter of No Impediment for impacts to Great Crested Newt (GCN). We have not been able to provide this. A LONI needs to be tied to a clearly defined and fixed approach, because Natural England must be able to conclude (with confidence) that the proposed mitigation and licensing route is deliverable and lawful. That includes being satisfied on matters such as impacts, mitigation measures, and the tests under the Habitats Regulations. It is not possible for a single LONI to cover multiple alternative strategies in parallel, particularly if the underlying detail relating to the survey, impact assessment, mitigation, and compensation measures associated with any of the potential mitigation proposals to be licensed has not been prepared yet and or presented to NE for review.</u> <u>If the Applicant does not address the detail of the planned licensable mitigation approaches until later in the project, they can pursue that approach. We advise that the Examining Authority may take issue with this.</u>	It is acknowledged that a great crested newt licence will be required. Initial discussions have been held with Natural England Wildlife Licensing team and NatureSpace to discuss potential licensing options for great crested newts and the licensing approach will be confirmed prior to construction. <u>It should be noted that NatureSpace have in principle given the Applicant a District Level Licensing offer, so there is a feasible licensing option available should NE insist that 2 potential licensing routes cannot be on the table at detailed design, therefore GCN licensing is not a constraint to consenting the application.</u>	Not Agreed Under Discussion Low
1.10	Further bat surveys	Natural England agree that further bat survey would not be helpful.	Following the meeting with NE held on 11 March 2025 it was agreed that the survey effort undertaken for bats was sufficient to inform the baseline in combination with the Murphy <i>et al.</i> (2024) report. It has been agreed that activity surveys and static detector surveys within the western-most fields in Parcel 1, where access was previously not possible, will not be required, given that these fields are already known to be important to Bechstein's bats as they are located within the known core sustenance zone and home range of the Bernwood population of Bechstein's bat. Ground-level tree assessment surveys of areas not previously surveyed in 2022 were undertaken in 2024/2025. In addition, paired static detector surveys have been undertaken to compare levels of bat activity, in particular <i>Myotis</i> species, at boundary features and within open field habitats.	Agreed
1.11	Hairstreak butterfly surveys	Natural England initially indicated that black hairstreak butterfly surveys should be carried out as the SSSI sites located on the boundary of the Proposed Development	Following consultation with Natural England, the Applicant provided justification as to why surveys for both black and brown hairstreak butterfly were not proposed to be undertaken pre-DCO submission. Preliminary assessments have shown habitat	Agreed

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		Order Limits is a national hot spot for the species and they expect them to be present within the Order Limits.	within the Order Limits is suitable to support these species and therefore their presence within the Order Limits is assumed. Following the meeting with NE held on 11 March 2025, it was agreed that this approach was sufficient to inform the baseline. Targeted surveys of sections of hedgerow that will require removal will be undertaken pre-construction to assess for the presence of black and brown hairstreak butterfly eggs, with section of hedgerow that support eggs translocated to other areas within the Order Limits.	
1.12	Avoidance of harm	Natural England are content with the approach to the avoidance of harm through the implementation of offsets from sensitive habitats including trees, hedgerows and ancient woodland.	The Applicant welcomes this agreement.	Agreed
2- Biodiversity Net Gain				
2.1	Biodiversity Net Gain	The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment and calculation should use the latest version of the Defra biodiversity metric to calculate BNG and adhere to the rules and principles set out within the metric guidance and it is considered best practice to deliver a measurable net gain through any new development.	A biodiversity net gain assessment has been undertaken using the latest version of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric as set out in ES Volume 4, Appendix 7.17: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] and commits to a minimum 40% gain for habitats, 17% for hedgerows and 10% for watercourses.	Agreed
3- Soil and agricultural land				
3.1	ALC survey results	Natural England welcome the full detailed resolution survey, including the survey of the cable corridor and has no further comments regarding the ALC survey methods or results.	The Applicant welcomes this agreement.	Agreed
3.2	Soil handling	Natural England generally welcomes the content of the Outline Soil Management Plan; but recommends stronger measures to avoid soil handling during the wetter winter period. While they welcome provisions such as wet weather stop conditions and soil moisture testing, they advise restricting soil handling to the drier months (April–September) wherever practicable, particularly where land will be returned to agricultural use. Where winter handling cannot be avoided, they suggest increased supervision by trained personnel	The Applicant is unable to agree to complete avoidance of working within the winter months, however, the Applicant has added additional mitigation to the Outline Soil Management Plan [EN010158/APP/7.7.2] to prevent soil damage during the winter. The mitigation includes stopping working if heavy rainfall (>10mm within 24 hours) has occurred until the soil's agreed moisture criteria can be met. Additionally, the soil will only be stripped, stored and restoration when the soil is a dry friable condition. Furthermore, the Applicant has agreed to only use low pressure vehicles on established grass and drive the vehicles in a straight line. Any turning of the vehicles will occur on matting at the end of each row.	Agreed
3.3	Soil handling	Natural England required further clarification over the establishment of grass prior to construction.	The Applicant has included further detail in the Outline Soil Management Plan [EN010158/APP/7.7.2] to state that a grass sward will be established at least six months prior to beginning construction to prevent soil damage.	Agreed
3.4	Predicted ALC results for unsurveyed area	Natural England request that the applicant makes a concerted attempt to survey the remaining area of land within the cable corridor but does not disagree with the conclusion that the land is predicted to be Grade 3b.	The unsurveyed area of cable corridor has been assumed to be Grade 3b based upon the adjacent auger points and publically available data. The soil across the site is relatively homogenous therefore the predicted Grade is expected to align with predictions. The Applicant will continue to request access to the unsurveyed	Agreed

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			area to complete the area however both parties recognise that this may not be possible and in which case the predicted Grade of 3b will be acceptable.	

5. Signatures

This Statement of Common Ground is agreed upon:

On behalf of NE

Name:

Signature:

Date:

On behalf of the Applicant

Name:

Signature:

Date:



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