



AtkinsRéalis



Rosefield Solar Farm (EN010158)

Buckinghamshire Council's Comments on the Applicant's Response to Deadline 4 Submissions

Buckinghamshire Council

August 2026

Introduction

This document provides Buckinghamshire Council's comments on the Applicant's response to Deadline 4 submissions **[REP5-089]**.

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 there is agreement, and 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, the Council's position remains as set out in its previous 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.

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.

Ref.	Submission Reference and Identifier	Summary Position	Applicant's Response	Buckinghamshire Council Comments
Site Selection				
3.2	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-093], Page 3	Comment noting that a constraints-led alternatives assessment should be undertaken by the Applicant across the full 10km search area. Comment noting that all land parcels, including those beyond the willing landowner's area, should be reassessed against ecological, landscape, heritage, and PRow sensitivities.	The Applicant notes these comments and refers the party to the responses provided under Refs. 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 in Applicant's Response to Deadline 3 Submissions [EN010158/APP/8.22] [REP4-081] .	Buckinghamshire Council maintains its position on this matter as per responses provided in earlier Deadlines. As the Applicant notes in Ref 3.4.3, it did not conduct a wider search to consider less harmful locations once it had identified a willing landowner. Given the harms of this Scheme, it remained necessary to comply with the first aspect of the mitigation hierarchy and avoid harm. The approach adopted precluded any avoidance, as the Council has previously explained.
Biodiversity and Ecology				
3.9	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-093], Page 5 and Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094], Pages 7 and 8	Comment noting that the Applicant should identify and secure sufficient compensation land and land management actions to compensate for the displacement of 39 breeding pairs of skylark.	As detailed in ES Volume 2, Chapter 7: Biodiversity [EN010158/APP/6.2.6] and secured via the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (Outline CEMP) [EN010158/APP/7.2.6] and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP) [EN010158/APP/7.6.6] the Applicant is proposing approximately 95ha of grassland creation as alternate grassland habitat for ground nesting birds as mitigation, the creation and enhancement of grassland under Solar PV modules, the enhancement of field margins and provision of winter bird seed and considers this proportionate mitigation to offset potential impacts. The Applicant also refers to comments provided by Buckinghamshire Council within Buckinghamshire Council (Responses to comments on local impact reports (LIRs)) [REP3-055] Page 15, Ref 3.10 noting agreement on the approach taken to the assessment and mitigation of ground nesting birds following updates that were undertaken by the Applicant to the Outline LEMP and Outline CEMP. The Applicant has also revisited the mitigation proposals for ground nesting birds providing a full justification regarding its position for ground nesting bird mitigation, including evidence for the existing population of skylark located within the proposed mitigation areas, at Deadline 5, please refer to the Position Paper on Ground Nesting Birds and Wintering Birds [EN010158/APP/8.36] for further details.	Buckinghamshire Council have concerns regarding mitigation land proposed being sufficient to compensate for the impact on ground nesting birds and over wintering birds. Potential conflicting management requirements will be needed for this land as the area is required for a number of impacted species in principle bats and birds. Three species of farmland bird will be impacted by these proposals: Skylark, Lapwing and Golden Plover. The Applicant's statement that all farmland birds will benefit from this scheme is not considered to be an accurate statement.

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Cumulative Effects				
3.19	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094] , Page 15	Comment noting that the current approach to cumulative assessment risks understating the magnitude and weight of landscape, visual and cumulative effects by classifying them as temporary despite their long-term, operational presence. Comment noting that the party considers effects persisting for the full operational period should be treated as long-term and reflected accordingly in both the significance assessment and cumulative appraisal. Further comment noting that this would address the party's concern.	The Applicant acknowledges that effects persisting for the full operational period should be treated as long-term and reflected accordingly within both the significance assessment and the cumulative effects assessment. However, the Applicant considers it appropriate to describe such effects as temporary in planning terms given that the Proposed Development would operate for a finite period of up to 40 years, as secured through the Draft DCO [EN010158/APP/3.1.8], after which it would be decommissioned and the land restored. The Proposed Development is not permanent development. At the end of the operational period, all Solar PV infrastructure, the Rosefield Substation, the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure would be removed. Hardstanding areas would also be removed, and the land restored in accordance with the measures set out in the Outline Soil Management Plan (Outline SMP) [EN010158/APP/7.7.4], including the reinstatement of soils to a condition comparable to that recorded in the pre-construction Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) surveys. The ES clearly identifies effects that would persist throughout the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development and assesses these accordingly. The Applicant does not consider that the description of the development as temporary has resulted in an understatement of likely significant landscape, visual or cumulative effects.	Buckinghamshire Council maintains its position on this matter as per responses provided in earlier Deadlines. Whether or not the Scheme is temporary in overall lifespan, care should be taken not to conflate this with specifically the operational period of the Scheme (within which the development will remain operational).
3.20	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094] , Page 16	Comment noting that the party's concerns regarding the cumulative effects assessment methodology remain due to the absence of a numerical breakdown of land use impacts, including hectare figures within Table 12.12. Comment noting that insufficient assessments have been undertaken on direct and cumulative ALC land loss, particularly given site-specific impacts and specialised agricultural uses.	Table 12.4, which was added to ES Volume 2, Chapter 12: Soil [EN010158/APP/6.2.4] at Deadline 3, and reformatted at Deadline 4, includes a breakdown of land use of key infrastructure by hectare of the Proposed Development. The Applicant proposes that this is a more suitable location than Table 12.12, which shows a summary of effects for each receptor assessed. Table 12.3 also presents a breakdown of ALC Grades within the Order Limits. Given that ALC is concerned with the physical limitations of the land, the Applicant maintains that specialised land use such as the production of blood products for the NHS is not relevant to the assessment. Agricultural outputs, including crop rotations and yields, will be discussed in the Food	Buckinghamshire Council acknowledges the new information provided regarding land use impacts and food security and has no further comments on this.

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			Security Explanatory Note [EN010158/APP/8.35] submitted at Deadline 5. The Applicant has updated ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects [EN010158/APP/6.2.4] at Deadline 5 to include a cumulative effects assessment on BMV land. A focus on BMV land use in this assessment is in line with NPS EN-1 and NPS EN-3, both of which emphasise the use of non-BMV land and the avoidance of BMV land where possible.	
Health and Wellbeing				
3.21	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-091] , Page 2 and Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094] , Pages 21 to 24	Comment noting that the party was unable to identify updates within [REP1-057] addressing the SIA guidance and requests clearer signposting to where this has been assessed, including relevant health determinants. Comment noting that review of the subsequent rev 4 submission [REP3-026] has not identified any further edits addressing this matter. Further comment noting that clarification is sought on which potentially significant environmental effects have not been mitigated where not practicable, and whether any such effects remain.	The Applicant notes that the ISEP (formerly IEMA) Guidance "Social Impact Assessment in EIA" was published in October 2025, after the DCO Application for the Proposed Development was submitted in September 2025, and so at that point wasn't directly referenced in the application documents. The Applicant has since reviewed this guidance, and is content that the approach taken is compliant, but more importantly is in accordance with the requirements of legislation (the EIA Regulations), policy (NPS EN-1process. As such, no amendments to the methodology were made to the document at subsequent re-submissions during the examination phase. For the avoidance of doubt, the guidance referred to by Buckinghamshire Council does not set or identify determinants of health to be considered in a Health Impact Assessment or when assessment population, health and wellbeing effects within an EIA. Instead, at Page 8 of that guidance, the guidance states that: <i>"The ISEP (formerly IEMA) HIA guidance should be used when a separate human health chapter is required for an EIA:</i> – <i>Effective Scoping of Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment (2022)</i> – <i>Determining Significance for Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment (2022)</i> The referenced guidance has been used as the basis for identifying relevant determinants of health for the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement	Buckinghamshire Council notes the Applicant's clarification regarding the applicability of the ISEP Social Impact Assessment guidance and the identification of relevant health determinants within the Health and Wellbeing assessment. The Council also notes the Applicant's confirmation that no significant environmental effects remain unmitigated where mitigation is practicable. The specific points raised under this matter are therefore considered addressed.

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			[EN010158/APP/6.4.7] – latest version to be re-submitted at Deadline 5 - as is explained throughout the document. Buckinghamshire Council may be conflating the 'Wider Determinants of Health' (used in health impact assessments and defined and referenced within the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [EN010158/APP/6.4.7], with the determinants of social wellbeing referred to by the ISEP Social Impact Assessment guidance in the context of the 'Sustainable Wellbeing Framework' which it recommends is used to define outcomes in Social Impact Assessments (noting that guidance suggests the criteria within the framework is adapted to the specific project and the type of impacts being assessed). This wellbeing framework is derived from a National Wellbeing Framework, which is used in an overarching sense to determine policy as well as assess development (of all kinds). Notwithstanding this, the Applicant is content that where there is a clear health pathway – both physical and mental – that criteria within the Sustainable Wellbeing Framework have been applied through the application of Wider Determinants of Health. To clarify the Applicant's position regarding the comment 'clarification is sought on which potentially significant environmental effects have not been mitigated where not practicable, and whether any such effects remain' – no significant effects remain that it has not been practicable to mitigate. The only potentially significant environmental effects reported in the EIA which remain after embedded and additional mitigation have been applied are in relation to landscape and visual matters.) and the approach agreed through the scoping.	
3.22	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-091] , Page 3	Comment noting that the significant residual human health effects identified in Table 7 of [REP3-026] should be clearly summarised and included in the non-technical summary.	Following a discussion at Issue Specific Hearing 3, the Applicant has taken an action to update the Non-Technical Summary [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] to include health and wellbeing, including clearly summarising the significant residual effects. This has been submitted at Deadline 5.	The updates made to the Non-Technical Summary at Deadline 5 [REP5-049], including the inclusion of a dedicated Health and Wellbeing section, provides a significantly clearer summary of health determinants, vulnerable populations, mental health and wellbeing, cumulative and in-combination effects, mitigation measures and residual health and wellbeing conclusions. The Council considers that these changes have substantially improved the accessibility and transparency of health reporting

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				within the NTS. The changes have addressed previous concerns regarding the presentation of health and wellbeing effects to non-technical audiences, including through the identification of health and wellbeing effects relating to landscape and visual amenity that are assessed as significant for certain sensitive receptors.
3.23	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-091] , Page 4	Comment noting that further clarification should be incorporated into the documentation to set out the intended evolution of mitigation, including receptor- and location-specific measures and monitoring or remedial actions. Comment noting that these commitments should be strengthened through the inclusion of appropriate wording within the REAC.	The Applicant's position is that the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [EN010158/APP/6.4.7], and particularly Annex A (Health Effects Report), already provides a clear narrative of the evolution of mitigation, including receptor- and location-specific measures where necessary and relevant, and a description of monitoring or remedial actions. This was further enhanced by additional information added at Deadline 4, and as such, it is not considered necessary to add any further narrative or detail, or undertake any further impact assessment, to demonstrate clear compliance with legislation, policy or guidance or clearly articulate the approach to bespoke or flexible mitigation to address significant effects where practicable.	Buckinghamshire Council acknowledges the additional information provided through the revised Health and Wellbeing Summary Statement [REP5-066] and associated examination submissions, which have improved the transparency of the assessment and the explanation of mitigation measures. However, the Council remains of the view that the assessment does not sufficiently demonstrate how mitigation responds to the combined experience of effects at a community level, including how multiple effects may interact for specific affected communities over time. The Council considers that further explanation would assist in demonstrating how mitigation has evolved to address the overall combined experience of effects for affected named communities and how this has informed the conclusion that no significant residual health and wellbeing effects would arise.
Noise and Vibration				
3.27	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094] , Page 29 and East Claydon Parish Council [REP4-095] , Page 6	Comment noting that concern relates to potential adverse noise effects at low background receptors, where even sub-threshold levels may be perceptible due to relative change, in line with established assessment principles. Comment noting that the outline OEMP currently lacks sufficient certainty to address these impacts, and should include clearer commitments, site-specific assessments, and robust verification and enforcement mechanisms.	The operational phase noise levels have been assessed in accordance with British Standard 4142 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound'. The prescribed methodology requires the noise levels generated by the Proposed Development to be assessed against the measured pre-development background sound level at the surrounding receptor locations. Taking into account the context in which sound occurs is an important part of a BS 4142 assessment. One factor stated is that the absolute level of sound can be as, or more, important than relative outcomes where background and rating levels are low. This reflects the baseline environment at noise-sensitive receptors surrounding the Proposed Development. BS 4142 does not define 'low' in the context of background sound levels nor rating levels. However, the Association of Noise Consultants suggest that background levels of less than about 30 dB LA90 and rating levels of less than about 35 dB LAr	It remains the case that BS 4142 recognises that both absolute and relative increases in sound level should be taken into account, and one not exclusively preferred over the other. This is an area with locations of high tranquillity, and the Council again highlights that some locations experience increases of 10 dB plus. The Council draw attention to Ref 9-2 in the draft SoCG [REP5-024] which reflects the position reached by the parties.

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			would be a reasonable indication. The background level stated reflects the conditions observed and measured in the baseline environment within the Study Area, particularly at night. On this basis, an external rating level of 35 dB(A), inclusive of penalties for characteristics such as hums, has been adopted as the lowest observed adverse effect level for the night-time period. Not exceeding this threshold constitutes a situation whereby noise can be heard, but does not cause any change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response. There may be a slight effect on the acoustic character of the area but not such that there is a change in the quality of life. This approach aligns with many other consented NSIPs that have applied a similar approach due to low background sound levels, as set out in the Applicant's Response to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions [EN010158/APP/8.23] [REP4-082]. Notwithstanding this, the assessment methodology adopts a precautionary approach in regards to the prediction of noise levels from the Proposed Development. The prediction of noise is based on the assumption that all noise generating items of plant throughout the Site will operate at full duty during both daytime and night-time periods. This is likely to overestimate the noise emissions from the Site, as a reduced operating duty would be expected during periods of the night, due to darkness and temperature fluctuations resulting in lower cooling demands. The assessment also assumes that all sources will propagate downwind to a given receptor, regardless of the relative location; this is likely to result in a further overestimation to the predicted noise level at receptors. The relative differences between the background sound levels and predicted rating levels are therefore likely to be lower in practice than those presented in ES Volume 2, Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration [EN010158/APP/6.2.4]. The operational noise levels are secured by a Requirement in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010158/APP/3.1.8]. The mitigation measures required to achieve the operational phase noise criteria will be subject to the detailed design stage of the Proposed Development, however, the proposed	

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			mitigation strategy and the noise monitoring that would be undertaken to demonstrate compliance are set in the Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (Outline OEMP) [EN010158/APP/7.3.6]. These are considered to be suitably robust.	
3.36	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094] , Pages 33 and 34	Comment noting that the Applicant may be underestimating soil sensitivity, with guidance indicating a higher risk of structural damage and insufficient mitigation proposed. Comment noting that the outline SMP should include seasonal constraints, clear responsibilities, and strengthened wording to prohibit soil handling above plastic limits and require testing.	The Applicant maintains that the Institute of Quarrying's (2021) guidance 'Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings' that is referenced by Buckinghamshire Council is being applied correctly within the Outline SMP [EN010158/APP/7.7.4]. The guidance specifies that climate must be taken into account when classifying the risk of damage to soils, which the Applicant has done in classifying the clay soils on Site as of Medium resilience to structural damage. This is also consistent with the ISEP (formerly IEMA) 2022 guidance 'A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment'. The mitigation proposed in the Outline SMP [EN010158/APP/7.7.4], which includes use of track matting, use of low ground pressure vehicles and restrictions on works during wet conditions has been agreed with Natural England, who are satisfied that the measures outlined afford the soils sufficient protection from damage during handling. While seasonal constraints on work cannot be committed to, the Outline SMP [EN010158/APP/7.7.4] does specify that soils will only be handled in dry conditions, and following a plasticity test conducted by a suitably trained individual. These measures have been accepted by Natural England. The wording of Section 3.2.4 has also been updated at Deadline 5 to make it clearer that any soil handling above the plastic limit is not permitted, as discussed with Buckinghamshire Council.	The Council continues to disagree with the Applicant's classification of the site soils as having medium resilience to structural damage. The soils present across the site comprise predominantly clay and heavy clay loam soils, with weakly developed structure and Wetness Class IV characteristics. In accordance with standard industry guidance from the Institute of Quarrying Buckinghamshire Council's opinion, these soils should be regarded as having low resilience to structural damage and therefore require a particularly precautionary approach to handling and management. While the Applicant relies primarily on the Field Capacity Days methodology to justify a medium resilience classification, the Council considers that this approach does not adequately reflect the actual behavioural characteristics of the soils when disturbed. Although Buckinghamshire Council accepts that the Outline SMP contains appropriate soil handling measures and therefore does not object to its use as a framework document, concern remains that the underlying classification may lead future contractors and site managers to underestimate the care required during stripping, storage, movement and reinstatement of soils. In practical terms, the Council's concern is that the stated classification risks creating a perception that the soils are more resilient than they are in reality. The above reflects the Council's agreement at Ref 8-6 of the draft SoCG [REP5-023], will expressing the remaining note of caution that care should not be taken to overestimate the soil's resilience.
Transport and Access				
3.40	Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-092] , Pages 4 and 5 and Buckinghamshire Council [REP4-094] , Page 3	Comment requesting that the Applicant provides further justification, including the relevant guidance relied upon in relation to the glint and glare assessment, and a clear explanation of how safety risks have been considered independently of traffic volumes.	NPS EN-3 does mention roads (motorists) and PRowS in the list of elements to be considered within a GGA (glint and glare assessment), but it does not provide a method of assessment nor any means of determining significance. In the absence of formal guidance, Pager Power's informal guidance (Solar Photovoltaic and Building Development – Glint and Glare	See the Council's response to the ExA's Rule 17 letter on this issue.

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			Guidance) which is presented in Appendix 1 of ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.4: Glint and Glare Assessment [EN010158/APP/6.4.2] is currently considered best practice in the industry, and the vast majority of solar farm DCOs in the UK (if not all) refer to it. Pager Power's guidance is based on safety for roads, rail and aviation, and amenity for dwellings. Section 7 of the guidance details how road receptors should be identified and classified, how the assessment should be undertaken and how the significance of effects should be determined. The process for determining significance of effects is detailed in a flow chart in section 7 (figure 13). This chart shows that effects to Local roads should be classified Low impact and that mitigation is not required. The Applicant has considered the potential for glint and glare impacts to each of the local roads within 1km of the solar PV development and provided commentary on these within the GGA at section 8.1. The Applicant has noted some instances where solar reflections may be possible to the drivers of cars approaching the solar PV modules travelling either east or west along School Hill, Orchard Way and Hogshaw Road, but it is notable that the sun would also be visible at these times and visible in the same direction as the solar PV modules, as such they would not conceivably be producing an effect not already present to drivers on these roads. Additionally, the vast majority of these roads are lined with dense hedgerows which will largely obscure the solar PV modules.	