

Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park

~~Draft~~Final Statement of Common Ground with Natural England

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Revision History

Revision	Revision Date	Authorised By	Position	Comment
Issue 1	6/08/25	ES	Head of Planning	1 st Draft for NE Review
Issue 2	25/11/25	ES	Head of Planning	Updated draft to reflect NE Comments
Issue 3	11/02/26	ES	Head of Planning	Updated draft to reflect NE Comments
Issue 4	25/03/26	ES	Head of Planning	Updated draft to reflect NE Comments
<u>Issue 5</u>	<u>20/04/26</u>	<u>ES</u>	<u>Head of Planning</u>	<u>Updated draft to reflect NE Comments</u>
<u>Issue 6</u>	<u>22/04/26</u>	<u>ES</u>	<u>Head of Planning</u>	<u>Updated to reflect NE final comments and Applicant signature.</u>
<u>Issue 7</u>	<u>22/04/2026</u>	<u>RC</u>	<u>Sustainable Development Senior Officer – Natural England</u>	<u>Final signatures are received from both parties</u>

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to support an application (the Application) for a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy Security and Net Zero under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) for the proposed Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park (the Development). The Application has been submitted by Elements Green Trent Limited (the Applicant).
- 1.1.2 This SoCG has been produced to confirm to the Examining Authority (ExA) where agreement has been reached between the Parties, and where agreement has not (yet) been reached.
- 1.1.3 SoCGs are an established means in the planning process of allowing all Parties to identify and focus on specific issues that may need to be addressed during the examination. This SoCG will be revised and updated as discussions between the Parties progress during the Examination.

1.2 PARTIES TO THIS STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

- 1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared by (1) Elements Green Trent Limited as the Applicant and (2) Natural England (collectively, 'the Parties').

1.3 TERMINOLOGY

- 1.3.1 In the table in the Issues section of this SoCG:
- "Agreed" (Green) indicates where the issue has been resolved;
 - "Under discussion" (Amber) indicates where a matter is the subject of ongoing discussion; and
 - "Not Agreed" (Red) indicates a final position.
- 1.3.2 Where Natural England expresses agreement, it does so only in so far as it has considered the issue with regards to its statutory remit and on the basis of the information provided by the Applicant. Agreement is offered without prejudice to the submissions of other interested Parties who may have greater knowledge of technical or site-specific issues.

1.4 RECORD OF RELEVANT CORRESPONDENCE

- 1.4.1 The Applicant has undertaken consultation and engagement with Natural England throughout the development of the Application. The Applicant consulted Natural England in accordance with section 42 of the PA 2008, about the Development and environmental impact assessment as part of the formal pre-application consultation and publicity procedures. This process afforded Natural England the opportunity to provide responses to the information provided at various stages of the pre-application process.
- 1.4.2 Table 1-1 identifies the discussions and correspondence that has taken place between the Parties to date.

Table 1-1 Record of Correspondence

Date	Topic
03/03/2022– 23/11/2022	Setting up Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) contract.
15/08/2022	Written request for advice about scope of bird surveys.
24/01/2023	Written request for advice about scope of great crested newt surveys. <i>Response received 28/03/2023.</i>
31/03/2023	Written request for advice about scope of surveys, assessment and Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).
04/03/2024	Meeting to introduce Development and discuss approach to engagement.
09/05/2024	Meeting to provide Development update and discuss approach.
05/09/2024	Meeting to provide Development update and discuss approach.
14/11/2024	Meeting to provide Development update and discuss approach, including protected species licensing.
06/02/2025	Meeting to discuss PEIR documents.
13/03/2025	Meeting to discuss S42 comments and basis for SoCG.
18/03/2025	Meeting to discuss approach to protected species licensing.
24/07/2025	Meeting to discuss Development updates, next steps and approach to the SoCG. The parties agreed that the Applicant will take the lead on the SoCG drafting.
25/11/25	Applicant Issued Draft SoCG to respond to NE's RR
40 1/12/25	NE issued comments on the Draft SoCG
90 9/12/25	Applicant shared Draft D1 SoCG for signoff, which NE then agreed.
15/12/25	NE Issued comments on the Draft D2 SoCG

19/12/25	NE Issued comments in relation to the soil and ALC comments in respect of the ecological areas, along with suggestions on monitoring.
15/401/26	Applicant Responded with an updated Draft SoCG.
21/401/26	NE Agreed that Issue NE18 has been agreed through the updates made at Deadline 1
11/202/26	Applicant Issued the draft SoCG for review, including detail on BMV micro siting.
23/202/26	Meeting to discuss SoCG status.
10/303/26	Applicant issued status update on SoCG responses.
17/303/26	NE issued a response on SoCG status and issued comments in relation to BMV micro-siting analysis.
<u>20/04/26</u>	<u>Applicant issued updated version to reflect the full agreed position.</u>
<u>21/04/26</u>	<u>NE issued updated SoCG for Applicant review.</u>
<u>22/04/26</u>	<u>Applicant issued final signed version of SoCG to NE for sign off.</u>

1.4.3 It is agreed that this is an accurate record of the key meetings and consultation undertaken between the Parties in relation to the issues addressed in this SoCG.



2 CURRENT POSITION OF THE APPLICANT AND NATURAL ENGLAND

2.1 INTERNATIONAL DESIGNATED SITES

Table 2-1 International Designated Sites

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.1.1	RR (NE2)	Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Scope	Natural England concur that the assessment has been prepared in accordance with good practice.	Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report [EN010162/APP/5.3A] [AS-020] sets out the scope of the assessment which considers the potential effects of the Development to the 'International Sites'. The scope of the assessment has been discussed with the Environment Agency and Natural England. The Applicant considers that the assessment has been prepared in accordance with good practice.	Agreed
2.1.2	RR (NE1)	Statutory International Designated Sites (Study Area)	Natural England agree with the study area used and are satisfied that all relevant internationally designated sites have been considered.	The Parties agree that there are two Internationally Designated Sites within 30 km of the Order Limits of the Development and they are scoped into the assessment as set out in Table 8.14.1 of Habitats Regulations	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>Assessment Screening Report [EN010162/APP/5.3A] [AS-020]</p> <p>They include Birklands and Bilhaugh Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which lies 7.0 km North West from the Order Limits and Sherwood Forest Possible Potential Special Protection Areas (ppSPA) which is 4.5 km west and north-west from the Order Limits.</p> <p>As recorded in Table A8.1.1 in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.1: Ecology and Biodiversity Consultation [EN010162/APP/6.4.8.1] [APP-214], the Environment Agency requested that the Humber Estuary SAC/Ramsar to be scoped in due to a potential functional link, via the River Trent and its tributaries, for river lamprey, a qualifying feature of the SAC. Humber Estuary SAC/Ramsar is therefore included in Table 1 of Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report [EN010162/APP/5.3A] [AS-020].</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>Effects to other qualifying features of the SAC/Ramsar are scoped out of this assessment and are therefore excluded from Table 1.</p> <p>The baseline study of Designated Sites shows their locations in Figure A8.2.1 and A8.2.2 in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.2: Ecology and Biodiversity Designated Sites Baseline [EN010162/APP/6.4.8.2] [APP-215]. Table 8.7 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051] identifies the Important Ecological Features to be assessed, including the identified Designated Sites. Table 8.8 of the ES outlines the features that have been scoped out of further assessment.</p>	
2.1.3	RR (NE5)	Mitigation Measures (Management Plans – CEMP, LEMP, OEMP and DRP)	Natural England consider the relevant mitigation measures are suitably secured within the DCO control documents.	The embedded mitigation and enhancement measures to prevent effects on the Designated Sites are set out in Section 8.6 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051].	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>The Applicant considers that the measures are appropriate and reduce the effects of the Development to an acceptable level.</p> <p>The mitigation measures are secured in the relevant Management Plans as follows:</p> <p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.1: Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.1A] [REP1-025]</p> <p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3A] [REP1-030]</p> <p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.5: Outline Operation Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.5A] [REP1-034]</p> <p>ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.6: Outline Decommissioning and</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				Restoration Plan (DRP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.6A] [REP1-036]	
2.1.4	RR (NE5)	Effects on Birklands and Bilhaugh SAC	Natural England concur with the assessment of impacts to Birklands & Bilhaugh SAC.	<p>The Parties agree that there is no clear ecological pathway between the Development and Birklands and Bilhaugh SAC. The Parties agree that the qualifying features of the SAC i.e. habitats and plants are extremely unlikely to be functionally linked to the Order Limits, as well as there being no direct hydrological links. The Parties also agree that the Order Limits are not in the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the Birklands and Bilhaugh SAC.</p> <p>The Parties therefore agree that the effects on Birklands and Bilhaugh SAC would not be significant.</p> <p>An assessment of the effects of the Development on Birklands and Bilhaugh SAC is provided in Section 8.8 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051].	
2.1.5	RR (NE5)	Effects on Sherwood Forest ppSPA	Natural England concur with the assessment of impacts to the Sherwood Forest ppSPA.	<p>The Parties agree that the Development is not considered to be functionally linked land for the two potential qualifying features, breeding European nightjar and Woodlark. The Parties therefore agree that the effects on Sherwood Forest ppSPA would not be significant.</p> <p>An assessment of the effects of the Development on Sherwood Forest ppSPA is provided in Section 8.8 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051].</p>	Agreed
2.1.6	RR (NE5)	Effects on Humber Estuary SAC/Ramsar	It is noted that cable burial is included as an embedded mitigation measure. Natural England acknowledge that cable burial is a factor likely to reduce EMFs, however, must note that the effect of EMFs on Migratory Lamprey are largely unknown, and there is no established burial depth	<p>The Applicant considers that there are no identified likely significant effects on any qualifying interest of Humber Estuary Sac/Ramsar, as stated in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report [EN010162/APP/5.3A] [AS-020].</p> <p>There is a very low likelihood of occurrence of lamprey as a result</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>considered 'deep enough' to avoid effects from EMF. Nonetheless, as a result of the separation distance from the SAC/Ramsar site, absence of crossings of the River Trent itself, and the other embedded mitigation set out, Natural England concur with the conclusion regarding impacts to Lamprey associated with the Humber Estuary SAC/Ramsar.</p>	<p>of the very large separation distance between the Development and the SAC and the physical obstructions to lamprey distribution in the Trent catchment. Furthermore, the embedded designed-in mitigation secured in ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204] ensures that in the very unlikely event that lamprey are present, there is no potential for likely significant effects in any event. The Development will not undermine the conservation objectives of the Humber Estuary SAC.</p>	



2.2 NATIONAL DESIGNATED SITES

Table 2-2 National Designated Sites

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.2.1	RR (NE6)	Statutory National Designated Sites (Study Area)	Natural England agree that all relevant SSSI sites have been identified and assessed in the ES.	<p>The Parties agree that there are nine SSSI sites (Site of Special Scientific Interest) within 5 km of the Order Limits. The Order Limits of the Development crosses several of Natural England's IRZs including two which trigger the 'All Planning Applications' development category, namely, Eakring and Maplebeck Meadows SSSI and Mather Wood SSSI.</p> <p>The Parties agree that no other IRZ triggers within the Order Limits include the development category of 'Wind and Solar Energy'.</p>	Agreed
2.2.2	RR (NE6)	The Scope of Important Ecological Features	Natural England agree that all relevant notified features of the identified SSSI sites have been considered, and that valuable functional linkage with the Order Limits is unlikely.	In relation to the national designated sites, the Parties agree that the Important Ecological Features as set out in Table 8.7 and the Features scoped out of further assessment in Table 8.8 are agreed, as presented in ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051] .	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				The Parties agree that the notified features identified in all other SSSI are very unlikely to be functionally linked to the Order Limits due principally to the lack of clear ecological connectivity.	
2.2.3	RR (NE7, NE8, NE9)	Mitigation Measures (CEMP)	Natural England agree that the mitigation measures proposed are likely to avoid impacts upon the identified SSSI sites.	<p>The Parties agree mitigation measures as set out in Section A5.3.11.2 of the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204] are acceptable and sufficient to mitigate for potential effects to the notified features of the Designated Sites.</p> <p>Mitigation includes:</p> <p>(1) measures to mitigate for potential adverse effects from dust pollution and hydrological impact pathways on Eakring and Maplebeck Meadows SSSI during construction.</p> <p>(2) the construction of passing places will be outside the bird breeding season in order to avoid disturbance to the breeding bird</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>assemblage of Eakring and Maplebeck Meadows SSSI.</p> <p>(3) measures to avoid waterborne pollution in the upstream work areas of Laxton Sykes SSSI.</p> <p>(4) protective fencing around the cable works to prevent encroachment into Mather Woods SSSI.</p> <p>Requirement 12 in Schedule 2 to Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005] secures that no phase of the authorised development may commence until a construction environmental management plan for that phase has been submitted to and approved by Newark and Sherwood District Council. This must be prepared in accordance with the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204].</p>	
2.2.4	RR (NE9)	Effects on Laxton Sykes SSSI	NE welcome consideration of impacts to Laxton Sykes SSSI due to the potential of direct hydrological connectivity and	The Parties noted that there is a direct hydrological connection via a small stream flowing northwards from the Order Limits to the SSSI.	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>consider significant impacts to the notified interest features of Laxton Sykes SSSI to be unlikely.</p>	<p>Subject to the surface water mitigation measures and the watercourse crossing inventory in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204], the potential adverse effects mediated by surface water will be mitigated. The Parties agree that the residual effects from localised pollution will be low risk in terms of impacts to the SSSI. The mitigation measures are secured in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204] and a detailed CEMP is secured by Requirement 12 in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005].</p> <p>The effects on Laxton Skyes SSSI have been assessed to be negligible and the Parties agree that the assessment of effects is acceptable..</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.2.5	RR (NE7)	Effects on Eakring and Maplebeck Meadows SSSI	Natural England consider significant impacts to the notified interest features of Eakring and Maplebeck Meadows SSSI to be unlikely.	<p>Subject to the mitigation measures in relation to the construction of new passing places (Work no. 8: Access Works) outlined within the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204], the potential effects from hydrological pathways and dust pollution will be mitigated. The mitigation measures are secured in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204] and a detailed CEMP is secured by Requirement 12 in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005].</p> <p>In relation to the operation phase, the Parties agree that the enhancement of 74 ha of grassland habitats around The Beck, c. 500 m downstream of the SSSI (as specified ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.1: Outline LEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.1A] [REP1-025] will result in beneficial effects.</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>The Parties agree that there are no other likely pathways for ecological effects from operational activities.</p> <p>The effects on Eakring and Maplebeck Meadows SSSI have been assessed to be negligible and the Parties agree that the assessment of effects is acceptable.</p>	
2.2.6	RR (NE8)	Effects on Mather Wood SSSI	Natural England consider significant impacts to the notified interest features of Mather Wood SSSI to be unlikely.	<p>The Parties agree the assessment of impacts on the Mather Wood SSSI is acceptable, as outlined in Section 8.8.5 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051].</p> <p>No construction works will take place within or on the boundary of the SSSI and so there will be no permanent or temporary habitat loss. With the implementation of the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204], the likelihood of effects to the notified features of the SSSI will be reduced.</p>	Agreed

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

Table 2-3 Protected Species

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.3.1	RR	Protected Species Mitigation	Natural England agree that the approach taken to avoid impacts to Protected Species is in line with the mitigation hierarchy. However, it should be noted that Natural England have not reviewed in detail the reasonable avoidance measures proposed.	<p>The Parties agree that the approach taken to avoid impacts on the protected species is acceptable, as presented in Section 5.3.11 of the Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP), included in ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] [APP-204].</p> <p>The Parties agree that the approach to the CEcMP is appropriate, which has been prepared on the basis of 'reasonable avoidance measures' and seeks to avoid the need for species mitigation licences in most scenarios.</p>	Agreed
2.3.2	RR (NE12)	Protected Species Licences	<p>Current Position</p> <p>Natural England specialists provided the following technical input concerning the applicant's</p>	<p>Section A5.3.11.1.4 ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3A] [REP1-</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>proposed intention to use a CL31 displacement class licence for the management of water vole during construction activities.</p> <p>"I have, though, reviewed the ask from Mike from the GNR Team regarding the use of the CL31 Licence for their approach to water vole mitigation, and, provided that their approach is implemented exactly as proposed and outlined in the documents referenced, then their proposals are consistent with what is permissible under the CL31 approach. The only thing to flag to them is that translocation of water voles is not covered, as the CL31 Licence permits displacement only. Moving water voles to a different/distant site would require a separate licence. I appreciate they have not proposed any translocation based on the documents I've reviewed, but it is important that they understand that a different</p>	<p>030] was revised to clarify the position about protected species licencing. As stated in section A5.3.11.8.3 of the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3A] [REP1-030], water vole mitigation is expected to take place under a CL31 displacement class licence and Natural England has confirmed that site-specific, draft licence applications to Natural England are not required. Requirement 12 in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005] secures that no phase of the authorised development may commence until a construction environmental management plan for that phase has been submitted to and approved by Newark and Sherwood District Council. This must be prepared in accordance with the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3A] [REP1-030].</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>licence, specifically an A11 Mitigation Licence, would be required if translocation becomes a likely part of their mitigation approach.</p> <p>In general though, their proposals look ecologically appropriate and consistent with the CL31 conditions. With regards to whether they need to submit anything akin to a draft licence application to us for our review at this stage, I would agree with Mike that it is not necessary nor required here, given that when they do act under the CL31 they are not required to submit site-specific information ahead of use of the licence; they will only need to report on licence use as part of the end of year reporting requirements for the class licence."</p>		



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>Based on the above, NE raise no further concerns and consider this agreed.</p> <p>Deadline 2 Position</p> <p>Natural England welcome the approach to avoid impacts to protected species, in line with the mitigation hierarchy.</p> <p>It is unclear at this stage whether the applicant intends to submit draft Licence applications during examination & clarity has been requested in this regard.</p> <p>Where the need for licences is identified later on in the development process (i.e. upon completion of pre-commencement and pre-construction studies, as proposed by the applicant), this licence will need to be applied for in the usual manner; Natural England are unable to provide a position on the likelihood of a licence being granted without</p>		



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			having reviewed a draft licence application. WR - Applicant states that a draft species licence for Water Vole has been submitted. To date Natural England has not received this application.		

2.4 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Table 2-4 Biodiversity Net Gain

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	Applicant's Position	NE's Position	Status
2.4.1		BNG assessment methodology	The Parties agree that the BNG calculation presented in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.13: BNG Assessment [EN010162/APP/6.4.8.13] [APP-226] has been prepared in accordance with the statutory biodiversity metric.	In the absence of mandatory BNG for NSIPs, Natural England have not reviewed the BNG Assessment Methodology in detail so cannot comment on the suitability of the calculations.	Not reviewed
2.4.2		BNG Results	The Parties welcome the commitment of a minimum of 60% biodiversity net gain in area-based habitat units, a	Natural England welcome the commitment to specific biodiversity net gain targets within the Draft DCO	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	Applicant's Position	NE's Position	Status
			minimum of 26% biodiversity net gain in hedgerow units and a minimum of 11% biodiversity net gain in watercourse units during its operational lifetime. This commitment is secured by Requirement 8 in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005].	[EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005].	

2.5 AGRICULTURAL LAND AND SOIL

Table 2-5 Agricultural Land and Soil

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.5.1	RR (NE13)	Methodology of the ALC Assessment	Natural England welcome the completion of an ALC survey across a total 2869.1 hectares (ha) of land, of which 1764.6 ha are within the Order Limits, in line with the 1988 ALC Guidelines and at a detailed level (1 auger per hectare) within ES Volume 4 – Technical Appendices Technical Appendix A17.1:	ES Volume 4, Appendix 17.1: ALC Survey [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.1] [APP-288] [APP-289] has been carried out at a density of 1 auger per hectare, with an appropriate number of pits completed, as set out in ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17] [APP-060]. Therefore the methodology of	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			Agricultural Land Classification – Part 1 of 2 [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.1] [APP-288].	the ALC Assessment is considered acceptable.	
2.5.2	RR (NE14) / WR	ALC Survey Results and Assessment of Effects (C, O, D)	<p>Current Position</p> <p>NE welcome the updated Planning Statement [EN010162/APP/5.4B] to include further details on the approach to BMV policy. Whilst we welcome the updates, we maintain our view that the information presented may still be misleading in relation to the extent of BMV land that would be subject to temporary disturbance. Nonetheless, with the proposed mitigation and the commitment for these areas to be restored to the same ALC grade, it is unlikely to alter the outcome of the EIA.</p> <p>NE therefore considers this matter to be agreed as the outcome remains unchanged. Nonetheless, we highlight the importance of ensuring that</p>	<p>In terms of the ALC and its accuracy, the survey has been carried out by qualified and experienced surveyors at a detailed level, and it follows NE's guidance. It provides the classification of land required in order to understand and assess impacts of the Proposed Development, including the amount of BMV. The results are provided in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 17.1: ALC Survey [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.1] [APP-288] [APP-289].</p> <p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17A] [REP2-032] assesses the quality of land that will be affected temporarily for construction, temporarily for the duration of the operational phase, and permanently.</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>future Environmental Statements clearly present the full extent of potential effects in the absence of mitigation, to enable both the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State to be fully informed.</p> <p>Deadline 2 Position:</p> <p>Natural England confirms that no significant additional effects are expected to arise from this larger area of disturbance that have not already been considered within ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17A] [REP2-032]). The overall conclusions of the EIA therefore remain valid. Natural England also confirms that we are not seeking any further mitigation measures beyond those already proposed by the applicant. This position equally applies to the decommissioning phase, as described in the ES.</p>	<p>The factual analysis regarding the temporary and permanent use and loss of agricultural land are found in the documents as signposted below. It is worth emphasising that the large proportion of the Development is fully reversible. The quantum of permanent loss is limited, such that mostly the considerations need to focus on land use rather than land loss.</p> <p>Requirement 19 of Schedule 2 of the Draft Development Consent Order [EN010162/APP/3.1E] then secures the decommissioning of the Development, and requires the Detailed Decommissioning and Restoration Plan to be submitted for approved by NSDC within 6 months of the 40th anniversary of the first export of electricity from the Development. Requirement 20 then secures the Detailed Soil Management Plan before any phase of the Authorised Development can commence.</p> <p>These controls therefore provide clear and robust controls that</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>Deadline 2 Position:</p> <p>ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17] [APP-060], Paragraph 153 'summary of construction phase effects' states that the quantum of BMV land to be disturbed by the development is 19.4ha. Natural England disagrees with this statement. This figure considers only the elements of the development that will be in situ for the entire operational lifespan of the proposal. There is a considerably larger area of BMV land that will be disturbed during construction only (including construction compounds, access tracks (13.4ha BMV) and cable routes (95ha BMV)). Whilst these effects are shorter term, they continue to introduce the potential for permanent adverse effects to the soil resource and agricultural land quality.</p>	<p>ensure that the mitigation relied on by the ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17A] [REP2-032] have been secured.</p> <p>In response to NE's request, the Planning Statement [EN010162/APP/5.4B] [REP2-017] has been updated at Deadline 1 and 2 to include further details on the approach to BMV policy, which is set out in Section 6.8. The Planning Statement was then updated at Deadline 3 to reflect the position on the 2025 NPSs, as presented in Planning Statement [EN010162/APP/5.4C] [REP3-018].</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>Whilst it is noted that as a result of the proposed mitigation, in the form of the Soil Management Plan, and with the commitment for these areas to be restored to the same ALC grade, this is unlikely to alter the outcome of the EIA. Natural England consider the overall quantum of BMV land that will be disturbed is significantly larger than the stated 19.4ha.</p> <p>Natural England have made a recommendation to review the amount of BMV land that is temporarily disturbed, to ensure The Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State understand the full extent of potential effects in the absence of mitigation.</p> <p>WR - Recommendation to review the amount of BMV land that is temporarily disturbed.</p>		
2.5.3	NE15	Development Design & Avoidance of BMV land (impacts from PV and BESS areas)	<p>Current Position</p> <p>The Micro-siting Analysis for the Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park provides a</p>	<p>Current Position</p> <p>The Applicant provided technical note on BMV Avoidance: Micro-siting Analysis and it shared with</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			comprehensive and well-structured review showing how the project has minimised impacts on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. It demonstrates a thoughtful and iterative design process supported by detailed ALC surveys, with higher-grade soils largely avoided where practicable and unavoidable use of Grade 3a land clearly justified. The consultant provides clear rationale for permanent loss of BMV land and the commitment to restore temporary works areas to a comparable ALC grade, combined with good-practice soil management strengthens the credibility of the approach.	Natural England on 11 th February. This document provides a review of the macro-siting issue, then focuses on micro-siting and the endeavours to minimise the use of BMV within the Site.	
2.5.4	RR (NE15) / WR	Development Design & Avoidance of BMV land (impacts from woodland planting)	<p>Current Position</p> <p>While the BMV micro-siting Analysis' technical report makes a strong case for the overall minimisation of BMV impacts,</p>	<p>Current Position:</p> <p>The Applicant notes <u>NEs position</u> and confirms <u>NE confirm</u> that <u>they have not reached complete agreement on this issue is still matter, however, the subject of ongoing discussion between</u></p>	Under discussion Not agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>woodland planting presents a notable exception.</p> <p>Unlike solar arrays and temporary construction areas, woodland creation constitutes a permanent land-use change, meaning that areas planted on BMV land will not be capable of later restoration to their previous agricultural grade. Although ecological connectivity and landscape benefits are clear, the reliance on BMV land for several planting areas may require further justification to align with policy expectations around avoiding irreversible impacts on high-quality soils.</p> <p>Natural England therefore consider that the 22.4ha of woodland planting should be considered as a permanent loss in the ES and subsequently considered by the SoS in their decision making.</p>	<p>parties. <u>alternative position has been set out for the ExA to consider within this SoCG.</u></p> <p>The areas of woodland proposed extend in total to 22.4 ha, rounded to the nearest 0.1 ha, as set out in 7.1.7 of the “BMV Avoidance: Micro-siting Analysis”. The areas involved are 1.0 ha of Grade 2 and 21.4 ha of Subgrade 3a.</p> <p>Woodland planting does not disturb the soil and land quality resource, as trees are planted straight into the soil. The loss considered by Natural England results from a likely permanent land use change.</p> <p>It is noted that only 1.0 ha proposed for tree planting is Grade 2. The majority, 21.4 ha, is Subgrade 3a.</p> <p>Natural England and the Forestry Commission’s “Joint Statement on Woodland Creation” (April 2023) (attached) wishes to see woodland cover increase from 14.5% ((2023)</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>to 16.5% by 2050. On page 2 it is noted that “we encourage woodland creation proposals on sites that:” (inter alia) “are on agricultural land classes 3a, 3b, 4 and 5”.</p> <p>theThe use of BMV land is restricted mostly to Subgrade 3a. The actual effects (in respect of useable farmland) are limited, and NE’s position statement does not raise concerns about tree planting on Subgrade 3a.</p> <p>The use of BMV land has been balanced against the benefits in respect of ecology and landscape.</p> <p><u>Adopting NE’s position, if woodland is considered to be an irreversible loss or downgrading of agricultural land, then the inclusion of 22.4 ha of BMV land for tree planting will result in a high magnitude impact (Table 17.3 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17A] [REP2-032]) on a resource of high sensitivity (Table 17.2), resulting in</u></p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p><u>a major adverse change/impact (Table 17.4), which is significant. The Applicant agrees with Natural England on this point.</u></p> <p><u>Against the three bullet points of potential additional justification set out in NE's letter of 17th March, the Applicant notes:</u></p> <p><u>(i) it would be possible to plant trees on lower-quality land, but the benefits (in respect of ecology and landscape) would be reduced;</u></p> <p><u>(ii) therefore, as described in the BMV Micro-Siting analysis document, the use of BMV land has been balanced against the benefits;</u></p> <p><u>(iii) the use of BMV land is restricted mostly to Subgrade 3a. The actual effects (in respect of useable farmland) are limited, as set out in the BMV Micro-Siting Analysis, and NE's position statement does not raise concerns about tree planting on Subgrade 3a.</u></p>	

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.5.5	RR (NE16)	Permanent loss of BMV land (D)	Section 17.8.1.6 of ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17] [APP-060] sets out a 'worst-case scenario' of the loss of 4.5ha of BMV, all subgrade 3a, should the Substations/Bess infrastructure remain in-situ following the decommissioning of the project. This loss has been appropriately assessed in the EIA.	Noted.	Agreed
2.5.6	RR (NE17)	Time Limit (D)	Natural England welcome the inclusion of a time limit in Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1A] [AS-012] requirement 19. Where a time limit is applied, relevant impacts may be considered temporary, providing correct soil management and reinstatement, thus, protecting the long-term potential of the agricultural land resource.	Noted	Agreed
2.5.7	RR (NE18)	oSMP– Soil Handling and Management	Current Position: NE confirmed to the Applicant on the 21 st January that the change made to Requirement	An outline Soil Management Plan (oSMP) is provided in ES Volume 4, Appendix A17.2: Outline Soil Management Plan	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>18 addresses this comment. This matter is therefore now agreed.</p> <p>Deadline 1 Position:</p> <p>Natural England note the commitment to produce a Soil Management Plan, and welcome the principles set out in the ES Volume 4, Appendix A17.2: Outline Soil Management Plan Part 1 of 4 [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.2] [APP-290]. However, we request that Requirement 20 is amended to include consultation with Natural England.</p>	<p>[EN010162/APP/6.4.17.2B] [REP3-065], setting out the principles of handling soils for the construction and decommissioning works. A final SMP will be secured by Requirement 20 in Schedule 2 of the Draft Development Consent Order [EN010162/APP/3.1E].</p> <p>Natural England were added as a consultee to requirement 20 of the Draft Development Consent Order [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005] at Deadline 1. The Applicant considers that the NE point has been resolved.</p>	
2.5.8	RR (NE19)	oSMP – Soil Reinstatement	<p>Current Position:</p> <p>The applicant has amended paragraphs 5.43 and 9.2 in the ES Volume 4, Appendix A 17.2: Outline Soil Management Plan [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.2B] [REP3-065] to include that all land disturbed temporarily during construction is also restored to the same ALC grade,</p>	<p>Current Position:</p> <p>The ES Volume 4, Appendix A17.2: Outline Soil Management Plan [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.2A] [REP2-077] was updated at Deadline 2 to include the requested details. The oSMP was then updated at Deadline 3 for minor formatting updates. Please see paragraph 5.43 and 9.2 in the ES Volume 4, Appendix A17.2:</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>informed by the ALC survey. NE welcome this amendment and therefore consider this matter to now be agreed.</p> <p>Deadline 2 Position: Natural England welcome the inclusion of the 40 -year time limit, secured by Draft Development Consent Order [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005] Requirement 19.</p> <p>Natural England welcome the commitment to restore all fixed infrastructure areas to return the land to the same ALC grade and condition as it was when the construction phase commenced. However, Natural England consider commitment should be made clear within the ES Volume 4, Appendix A17.2: Outline Soil Management Plan Part 1 of 4 [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.2] [APP-290] that all land disturbed temporarily during construction (access tracks, construction compounds, cable routes etc)</p>	<p>Outline Soil Management Plan [EN010162/APP/6.4.17.2B] [REP3-065] which confirm that the Applicant is committed to restoring any disturbed land to its original ALC grade. The Applicant considers that it has fully responded to this matter.</p> <p>Deadline 2 Position: The land will be returned to farming use on completion of decommissioning barring woodland and hedgerow, see ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17A] [REP2-032] and ES Volume 4, Technical Appendix A5.6: Outline Decommissioning and Restoration Plan [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.6A] [REP1-036]. Grassland mixes have been selected to suit land conditions.</p> <p>A final Decommissioning and Restoration Plan ('DRP') is secured through Requirement 19</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>are also restored to the same ALC grade.</p> <p>WR - Recommendation for clearer commitment to restoration of all land disturbed during construction to be reinstated to its original ALC grade.</p>	<p>in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1C] [REP2-005], which provides that the final DRP must be submitted to the planning authority for its approval, in consultation with the county authority prior to commencement of any decommissioning works for any part of the Project.</p> <p>Given that the Development is temporary, the agricultural land, including BMV, would not be permanently lost.</p>	
2.5.9	RR (NE20)	Monitoring and Research (O, D)	<p>Current Position:</p> <p>The applicant has outlined research partnerships aligned with the goals of Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park, including collaboration with Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and the co-development of a PhD project aimed at modelling how solar farm development affects soil carbon storage and biodiversity net gain over time, thereby contributing valuable research in an</p>	<p>Current Position:</p> <p>As outlined in paragraph A13.2.5.1.4 of the ES Volume 4, Appendix A13.2A: Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (OSSCEP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.13.2A] [REP3-058], since mid-2024 the Applicant has been working closely with Nottingham Trent University (NTU) to develop advanced research partnerships aligned with the goals of the Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park. One of</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
			<p>academic field where data is currently limited.</p> <p>Natural England welcome the additional research initiatives that are being pursued as part of the wider project. However, we note that the requirement in question does not constitute mitigation necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms, nor is it required by planning policy. As such, both parties agree that this commitment cannot be secured through the DCO.</p> <p>Natural England raises no further concerns regarding soil monitoring and research and will continue to engage with the Applicant on this matter.</p>	<p>the PhDs that the applicant is co-developing is titled "Quantifying Carbon Sequestration Dynamics in Solar Farm Landscapes: A Predictive Tool for Sustainable Land Use and Biodiversity Co-Benefits." This project will develop a much-needed tool to model how solar farm development influences soil carbon storage and biodiversity net gain over time, an area with limited current data but growing regulatory relevance.</p> <p>The Applicant notes NE's recommendation for additional soil monitoring and research. The Applicant also notes that NE have made it clear that such a requirement is not related to mitigation to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms, or required by planning policy. It is therefore agreed between the parties that such a commitment could not be secured in the Draft Development</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>Consent Order [EN010162/APP/3.1E].</p> <p>Deadline 2 Position:</p> <p>The Applicant notes that there is no policy requirement for monitoring or research to be imposed on the Development. The Applicant is considering how this could be achieved.</p>	
2.5.10	RR	Cumulative Effects on agricultural land	Natural England agree that the cumulative effects of the relevant schemes has been considered appropriately in the ES.	<p>The cumulative effect on BMV land has been considered in ES Volume 2, Chapter 17: Agricultural Land [EN010162/APP/6.2.17A] [REP2-032]. This includes assessments of national and regional availability of land of BMV quality.</p> <p>The cumulative schemes involve the use of approximately 2,350 ha of BMV land within Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. They are principally solar scheme proposals and accordingly will be wholly or mostly reversible, and accordingly they will represent a temporary impact, which is a low</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				magnitude impact on a resource of high sensitivity, which results in a low magnitude effect, which is not significant.	

2.6 ANCIENT WOODLAND AND VETERAN TREES

Table 2-6 Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.6.1	RR	Ancient woodland and Veteran Trees	Noted. Natural England welcome the avoidance of direct loss of Ancient Woodland.	<p>Ancient Woodland is identified in ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.3: Habitats and Vegetation Baseline [EN010162/APP/6.4.8.3] [APP-216]</p> <p>As stated in Section 8.12.6 of the ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.12: Arboricultural Impact Assessment [EN010162/APP/6.4.8.12] [APP-225], Ancient Woodlands G55, G60, G72 and G126 are identified in the targeted survey areas. All works are outside of the 15 m buffer zones, with the exception of an area east of G60, where the</p>	Agreed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				works encroach within the buffer (10.9 m separation; 20 m ² area). Nine veteran trees were recorded in the targeted survey areas: T7, T15, T22, T27, T65, T74, T107, T185 and T190. No ancient trees were observed.	
2.6.2	RR	Arboricultural survey Scope and Methodology	Natural England have not reviewed the Arboricultural Survey Scope and Methodology in detail but welcome the use of our Standing Advice.	The Applicant considers that the arboricultural desk study has been prepared in line with good practice and with Natural England's Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees and Veteran Trees, as presented in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 8.12: Arboricultural Impact Assessment [EN010162/APP/6.4.8.12] [APP-225] .	Not reviewed
2.6.3	RR	Mitigation for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees, and Hedgerows	Natural England have not reviewed the proposed mitigation for impacts to Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran Trees in detail but welcome the use of our Standing Advice.	The Development includes a range of measures to safeguard ancient woodland and veteran trees, and hedgerows during the construction phase. These measures include the provision of Root Protection Areas and a separation distance of 5 m from hedgerow centres. Some	Not reviewed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				<p>hedgerow removals will be required. Where possible, mitigation will be implemented to reduce losses of hedgerows. The measures are outlined in Section 5.3.11.3.2 within ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.3: Outline CEMP [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3A] [REP1-030] and the Applicant considers the commitments are appropriate for the protection of trees and woodland. A detailed CEMP is secured by Requirement 12 in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005].</p> <p>Extensive tree planting and hedgerow and woodland creation is also proposed in the ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.1: Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.1A][REP1-025] , which is secured by Requirement 8 in Schedule 2 of the Draft DCO [EN010162/APP/3.1B] [REP1-005].</p>	



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.6.4	RR	Effects on Ancient Woodland Veteran Trees, and Hedgerows	Natural England have not reviewed the Assessment of impacts to Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran Trees in detail but welcome the use of our Standing Advice.	<p>No works will be undertaken within the RPA of any areas of ancient woodland and so they would not be affected. Therefore, the Applicant considers that the effects on ancient woodland are acceptable.</p> <p>Section 8.8.8 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity [EN010162/APP/6.2.8] [APP-051] states that tree and woodland creation and enhancement would compensate for the losses of habitats and vegetation and create a net increase of the resources. It concludes that the overall effect on the woodland and tree resource during construction is low and constitutes an adverse effect at the Site level. Woodland and hedgerow creation and enhancement as part of the overall landscape scheme, as set out in ES Volume 4, Appendix 5.1: Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.1A] [REP1-025], will have a significant</p>	Not reviewed



Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
				beneficial effect on habitats at the Local scale.	

2.7 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Table 2-7 Public Rights of Way

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.7.1	RR	Relevant Consultees	Noted.	The Applicant considers that NCC is the responsible authority for PRow.	Agreed

2.8 CUMULATIVE SCHEMES

Table 2-8 Cumulative Schemes

Ref	Relevant Documents	Description of Matter	NE's Position	Applicant's Position	Status
2.8.1	RR	Assessment scope and methodology	Natural England consider that all relevant schemes have been considered in the cumulative assessment of matters relevant to our remit.	The Applicant considers that the long list and short listed cumulative sites are properly scoped, and which are presented in ES Volume 4, Appendix 2.1: Cumulative Assessment Stages 1 and 2	Agreed

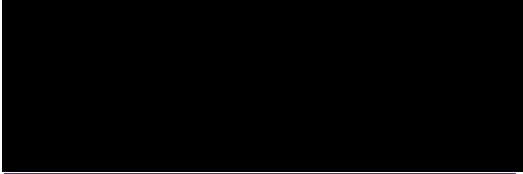


				[EN010162/APP/6.4.2.1A] [REP1-024] .	
2.8.2	RR	Assessment of Effects	The assessment of effects of the Development on local people is beyond the remit of Natural England & we have no comments on this matter.	As summarised in Section 19.4 of the ES Volume 2, Chapter 19: Interrelationships [EN010162/APP/6.2.19] [APP-062] , potential in-combination effects of the Development on local people have been assessed as negligible, in almost all cases, and as a worst-case minor, which is not significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.	Not reviewed


3 SIGNATURES

3.1.1 The above SoCG is a working draft and reflects the current status of the discussions between the Applicant and Natural England, as specified below.

Duly authorised
for and on behalf
of **Elements
Green Trent Ltd**

Name [Elena Sarieva](#)
Job Title [Head of Planning](#)
Date [22/04/2026](#)
Signature 

Duly authorised
for and on behalf
of **Natural
England**

Name 
Job Title Sustainable Development Senior
Officer – Natural England
Date [22/04/2026](#)
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