

To:
The Applicant

Our Ref: EN010163

6 August 2026

Dear Sir or Madam,

Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Application by Steeple Solar Farm Limited (“the Applicant”) for an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed Steeple Renewables Project (“the Proposed Development”)

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

1. Following the completion of the Examination on 10 April 2026, the Examining Authority submitted a Report and Recommendation in respect of its findings and conclusions on the above application to the Secretary of State on 10 July 2026. In accordance with section 107 of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State has three months to determine the application.
2. The Secretary of State would be grateful if **the Applicant** could provide updates or information as appropriate in response to the queries set out in this letter.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

Skylark Mitigation

3. The Secretary of State notes the Wildlife Trust’s comments regarding the potential to improve the mitigation outlined for loss of breeding skylark territories [RR-055]. The Skylark Mitigation Strategy [APP-115] states that the Eastern and Western mitigation areas will use arable management in conjunction with skylark plots to mitigate impacts to breeding skylark. The Biodiversity Net Gain assessment [APP-114] indicates that significant proportions of the mitigation areas will be converted from ‘winter stubbles’ to ‘cereal crops’. The Secretary of State requests that **the Applicant** update the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to manage the parts of the mitigation areas to be targeted for breeding skylark using a spring cropping regime, to provide increased suitability for breeding and foraging skylark year-round. Should this approach not be feasible, **the Applicant** should justify their position

within the Skylark Mitigation Strategy, detailing the merits of their proposed strategy in relation to a spring cropping regime.

4. The Secretary of State notes the approved plans for Wood Lane Solar (20/00117/FUL) adjacent to the Western mitigation area. **The Applicant** is requested to update the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to account for any boundary or in combination impacts would could arise via the proximity of this development.

Outline Landscape Ecology Management Plan

5. The Secretary of State observes that the outline Landscape Ecology Management Plan's ("oLEMP") [REP6-016] proposed monitoring protocol for the mitigation areas is to '*monitor in Year 2 and Year 5. If the mitigation is found to be failing, further monitoring may be needed up to Year 10*'. The Secretary of State requests that **the Applicant** update the oLEMP to ensure surveying is conducted in years 1, 2, 4, 6 and 10, followed by once every 5 years for the lifetime of the Project. The results of these surveys should be used to inform any adaptive management measures required to ensure that the targeted breeding density, which should be clearly stated, is achieved. The Skylark Mitigation Strategy should be updated to include the monitoring protocol, targeted breeding density, and remediation approach should the surveys indicate that target breeding density is not being achieved.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACTS

6. The Secretary of State notes that vegetation screening is not planned for the western side of the Battery Energy Storage System facility. **The Applicant** is requested to update the relevant documents to consider the feasibility of vegetation screening in this area and whether such screening could reduce visual effects for road users/residential receptors.

ACQUISITION OF LANDS AND RIGHTS

7. **The Applicant** is requested to provide an update on outstanding agreement(s) and negotiation(s) with respect to Compulsory Acquisition or Temporary Possession matters relating to plots: 03/08, 03/03 and 03/11 as identified in REP6-028 – 8.6 Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker (Clean) (Revision D). **The Applicant** is also requested to provide an updated Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker.

DEADLINE FOR RESPONSE

8. The deadline for response is **23:59 on 20 August 2026**.
9. Responses should be submitted **by email only** to SteepleRenewables@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

10. Responses will be published on the Steeple Renewables Project page of the National Infrastructure Planning website **as soon as possible after 20 August 2026**:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010163>

11. This letter is without prejudice to the Secretary of State's consideration of whether to grant or withhold development consent for the Proposed Development or any part of the project. Nothing in this letter is to be taken to imply what the eventual decision might be or what final conclusions the Secretary of State may reach on any particular issue which is relevant to the determination of the application.

Yours faithfully,



John Wheadon

Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery & Innovation

Department of Energy Security & Net Zero