

For the attention of [REDACTED]
Head of Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery & Innovation
Department of Energy Security & Net Zero
3-8 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

Our ref:

Your ref: EN010163

19 August 2026

By email only: SteepleRenewables@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear [REDACTED]

Applicant's response to request for information

The Applicant writes further to your letter of 6 August 2026 which set out the Secretary of State's request for further information (the "**RFI**"). The Applicant has considered the request and has set out its response below.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Skylark Mitigation

Paragraph 3 of the RFI requests the Applicant update the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to manage the parts of the mitigation areas to be targeted for breeding skylark using a spring-sown crop regime to provide increased suitability for breeding and foraging skylark year-round. The Skylark Mitigation Strategy has been revised by the Applicant and revision 2 of that document is enclosed with this letter. In particular, section 4 has been updated to include a consideration of options for management of the skylark plots. The Applicant has not updated the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to provide only for a spring-sown regime. The Applicant considers that a blanket approach based solely on a spring-sown regime would be inappropriate, as a spring-sown crop regime would only be appropriate if there are appropriate soils and drainage to accommodate such a strategy. The Applicant maintains that the soil and drainage of the site indicates that they are best suited to autumn-sown crops and grassland. Spring sowing may be possible but each field would need to be tested further to verify its suitability to this regime. On this basis, the Skylark Mitigation Strategy as a whole continues to assume that creation of skylark plots would be in autumn-sown cereal

crops. However, the Applicant has now included optionality to ensure that where a spring sowing regime can be accommodated and be viable then that will be implemented.

Paragraph 4 of the RFI requests that the Skylark Mitigation Strategy is updated to account for any in-combination impacts that could arise via the proximity of the Wood Lane Solar project. The Wood Lane Solar project (planning application reference 20/00117/FUL) was considered in Table 7.5 Shortlist of Sites Considered for Cumulative Assessment in Chapter 7- Ecology and Biodiversity (Revision 3) [REP06-017]. The Wood Lane Solar project application documents did not identify any residual adverse ecological effects on skylark as part of the Wood Lane Solar project and no potential for cumulative effects was identified in REP06-017. As such, the Applicant does not consider an update to the Skylark Mitigation Strategy in this respect is required.

Paragraph 4 of the RFI also requested the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to account for any boundary impacts that could arise from the proximity of the Wood Lane Solar project. The site layout for the Wood Lane Solar project (as can be seen in drawing 2904_DR_LAN_101_P1 associated with the Bassetlaw District Council variation application 23/00827/VOC) has been reviewed by the Applicant. Two scenarios for boundary interactions have been considered:

- Locations where the Wood Lane Solar project borders the Steeple Renewables Project solar array areas; and
- A location where the Wood Lane Solar project will border the Steeple Renewables Project skylark mitigation area (a 415m length field boundary to the east of the skylark mitigation area).

For the Steeple Renewables Project, the skylark mitigation field that shares a boundary with the Wood Lane Solar project, has an existing hedgerow (reference BH16 in Appendix 7.3 Habitat Report [APP-105]) present on the boundary between the two projects. It is anticipated that this boundary feature already creates edge effects that will not be significantly altered by the consented development or proposals. Therefore, no new effects are introduced to the mitigation area as a result of the Wood Lane Solar project being installed nearby.

In all cases there are existing hedgerows on the boundary between the two projects. The hedgerows will remain in place. The hedgerows are already expected to have a displacement effect on skylarks on both sides of each hedgerow and this effect will continue regardless of development of the two projects. No new edge displacement effects on skylarks are likely to arise from either of the projects.

In addition, the Steeple Renewables Project Environmental Statement Chapter 7: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP6-016] assumes that there will be 100% displacement of skylark from all solar array areas. Therefore, any displacement of skylarks from

fields adjacent to this boundary, and which support solar arrays, has already been taken into account.

Lastly, the Wood Lane Solar project area does not include any skylark mitigation areas, so no skylark mitigation associated with the Wood Lane Solar project would be affected by the Steeple Renewables Project.

In light of this, the Applicant has not introduced any amendment to the Skylark Mitigation Strategy to take account of boundary impacts.

Outline Landscape Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP)

Paragraph 5 of the RFI requests 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 Applicant has amended the oLEMP to expand monitoring to the intervals requested by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State then requested that the results of these surveys should be used to inform any adaptive management measures required to ensure that the targeted breeding densities are achieved. Specifically, the Secretary of State also requested that the Skylark Mitigation Strategy should be updated to include the monitoring protocol, targeted breeding density, and remediation approach that would be followed should surveys indicate that target breeding density is not being achieved.

The Applicant has clarified the monitoring methodology. The Applicant has also set out a number of contingency actions should target densities, as now clearly stated in the oLEMP and Skylark Mitigation Strategy, not be achieved. The contingency measures proposed by the Applicant demonstrate it will react to any reductions in density against target, and will put in place appropriate actions to respond to this. The Applicant has provided examples of contingency measures that will need to be considered and selected as appropriate at the time. The Applicant is clear through these documents that contingency actions will be incorporated, where target densities are not being met and the decline of population on site is not consistent with regional or national trends. The Applicant considers that this is absolutely necessary to avoid a situation whereby the Applicant is locked into providing an ever escalating series of protections where ultimately decline is due to a wider trend outside of the Applicant's control and not directly related to the impact of the project. It should also be noted that even without obvious wider population changes that the population of skylarks on site will fluctuate naturally year on year. For example, the baseline survey for the site recorded 90 and 105 skylark territories respectively demonstrating a 10% variance year on year. The Applicant has, therefore, ensured that the Skylark Mitigation Strategy reacts to trends across two or more seasons rather than implicating contingency actions in a single year of decline that might be caused by natural population variability.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

Paragraph 6 of the RFI requests the Applicant to update relevant documents to consider the feasibility of vegetation screening on the western side of the Battery Energy Storage System facility (BESS). Due to several constraints to the western side of the proposed BESS, which include two sets of existing overhead lines and a proposed cable route and associated easement, the Applicant has proposed vegetative mitigation along the boundary of the Order limits to provide screening of the western side of the BESS. These constraints can be seen on sheet 2 of the Works Plan [REP2-004] or equally sheet 2 of the Crossing Plan [AS-007]. This mitigation provides new hedgerow planting to the east of Sutton le Steeple footpath FP17 (Ref 123/17/2) and to the east of the settlement. The proposed hedgerow along the boundary of the Order limits connects with proposed Woodland Copse planting to the north-west (and to the north of the eastern sections of the settlement) and existing field boundaries to the west of the proposed BESS and north of Common Lane. This can be seen in the Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Strategy [APP-160] and it was this mitigation that was considered in the Environmental Statement: Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact and Residential Amenity [APP-064]. The landscape and visual effects as set out in Chapter 6 would not change as a result of the addition of the hedgerow as shown on drawing number P22-1144_EN_27_B_01 (Sheet 2).

The Applicant has reviewed the margin between the fencing around the BESS and the access track further to the west against the required offsets for vegetation and BESS. Due to changes to design and safety constraints for offsetting vegetation from BESS, as set out by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in their Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Position Statement (October 2025), an additional proposed native hedgerow has been added to this margin in the updated Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Strategy (drawing number P22-1144_EN_27_B_01 (Sheet 2)) submitted alongside this letter. This proposed planting would provide additional close-range screening to the BESS compound and in particular the perimeter fencing on the western side of the facility.

This additional vegetation would contribute additional layering to the existing hedgerows and the proposed new hedgerow on the Order limits to the west of the BESS as described above. However, it is considered that, whilst this additional hedgerow would be beneficial, it would not in itself change any conclusions set out in the ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact and Residential Amenity [APP-064]. This is because the existing hedgerow to the north of Common Lane is largely continuous with minimal gaps through which relevant receptors could gain full uninterrupted views of the western edge of the proposed BESS compound, and the existing proposals for mitigation along the Order limits function as intended to mitigate the visual impact of the BESS.

Whilst the new hedgerow proposed above does not result in a change to the conclusions set out in the Environmental Statement, it would be a proportionate inclusion in its landscape design, as it would provide an additional layering effect and would have the result of softening any peripatetic views of the BESS from Common Lane, or the adjacent settlement. Therefore, the Applicant has provided an updated Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Strategy submitted alongside this letter.

The updated outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan submitted with this letter does not require changes to update the cross references for the updated Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Strategy. The Applicant is content that the references will function to ensure that, through requirement 4 and 6, the undertaker of the Order will be required to adhere to the updated Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Strategy. Requirement 6 functions to ensure that no phase of the authorised development can commence until a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in consultation with Natural England. The LEMP must accord with the oLEMP and must be implemented as approved.

Acquisition of Land and Rights

The Applicant has updated the Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker. In relation to plots 03/03, 03/08, and 03/11, negotiations have been ongoing since October 2023. An agreed, final form, engrossment is currently in circulation between the parties for completion which will enable the Applicant to acquire the necessary rights by voluntary treaty. The Applicant would note that these parties are not active objectors to the Scheme and have not made relevant representation into examination.

Draft Development Consent Order – Certified Documents

As a result of the amendments to the Outline Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Strategy, Outline Landscape Ecology Management Plan, and Skylark Mitigation Strategy we would ask the Secretary of State to note that should the Order be granted, that accommodating amendments would be required to Schedule 12 (Documents to be certified) as set out in the table below:

<i>(1) Document name</i>	<i>(2) Document reference</i>	<i>(3) Version</i>	<i>(4) Date</i>
Figure 6.9 Outline Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Strategy	6.4.6, Figure 6.9	2	August 2026
Environmental Statement: Appendix 7.14	6.3.7 Appendix 7.14	3	August 2026

Outline landscape ecology management plan			
Environmental Statement: Appendix 7.13 Skylark Mitigation Strategy	6.3.7 Appendix 7.13	2	August 2026

Yours sincerely


Development Project Manager
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- Encs:
- Drawing 2904_DR_LAN_101_P1 associated with the Bassetlaw District Council variation application 23/00827/VOC
 - Updated Skylark Mitigation Strategy in tracked copy and clean.
 - Updated outline Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plan in tracked copy and clean.
 - Updated outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan in tracked copy and clean.
 - Updated Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker in tracked copy and clean.