



Lime Down

Solar Park

Statement of Common Ground with Natural England (Tracked)

~~June~~July 2026

Revision ~~2~~3

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010168

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The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010



Schedule of Changes

Revision	Section Reference	Description of Changes	Reason for Revision
2	Table 2-1	Summary of engagement table updated with engagement on 3 June 2026 and 12 June 2026	To capture ongoing engagement between Natural England and the Applicant
2	Table 3-3	Update of Natural England's position and the Applicant's position on Ecology and Biodiversity	Update requested by SoCG party following review of the updated HRA.
<u>3</u>	<u>Table 2-1</u>	<u>Summary of engagement table updated with engagement between 12 June 2026 and 10 July 2026</u>	<u>To capture ongoing engagement between Natural England and the Applicant</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Table 3-3</u>	<u>Update of Natural England's position and the Applicant's position on Ecology and Biodiversity</u>	<u>Updated to reflect the latest position between the two parties and additional matters agreed and update document references.</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Table 3-2 and 3-4</u>	<u>Update to document references.</u>	<u>Update to document references.</u>

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Statement of Common Ground Signatures

This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared and agreed by Lime Down Solar Park Limited (the Applicant) and Natural England.

Signed on behalf of Lime Down Solar Park Limited

Name:

Position:

Date:

Signature:

Signed by Natural England

Name:

Position:

Date:

Signature

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared as part of the proposed Lime Down Solar Park Development Consent Order (the Application) made by Lime Down Solar Park Limited (the Applicant) to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (the Secretary of State) pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008).
- 1.1.2 This SoCG does not seek to replicate information which is available elsewhere within the Application documents. All documents are available in the deposit locations and/or the Planning Inspectorate website.
- 1.1.3 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. SoCGs are an established means in the DCO consenting process of allowing all parties to identify and focus on specific issues that may need to be addressed during the examination.

1.2 Parties to this Statement of Common Ground

- 1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared by (1) Lime Down Solar Park Limited as the Applicant and (2) Natural England.
- 1.2.2 Collectively, Lime Down Solar Park Limited and Natural England are referred to as ‘the parties’.

1.3 Terminology

- 1.3.1 In the tables in Section 3 of this SoCG:
- “Agreed” indicates where the issue has been resolved.
 - “Not Agreed” indicates a final position, and
 - “Under discussion” indicates where these points will be the subject of ongoing discussion wherever possible to resolve, or refine, the extent of disagreement between the parties.

2 Record of Engagement

2.1 Summary of engagement

2.1.1 The parties have been engaged in consultation since 2 October 2023. A summary of the meetings and correspondence that has taken place between the Applicant and Natural England is outlined in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Summary of engagement

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
02 October 2023	Email	Submission of Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) Request Form
16 October 2023	Email	NE responded requesting Scheme Boundary in different format
16 October 2023	Email	Scheme Boundary provided by the Applicant
19 October 2023	Email	NE responded with suggestion for pursuing DAS under Undefined Scope (UDS) contract, and for an initial meeting to be scheduled
24 October 2023	Email	UDS approach to be discussed by the Applicant. A meeting was proposed for 15/11/2023
09 November 2023	Email	NE meeting availability chased by the Applicant
10 November 2023	Email	NE provided meeting availability to agree contract
13 November 2023	Email	Meeting scheduled for 15 November 2023
15 November 2023	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Discussion of options for progressing advice service from NE. UDS approach was agreed for Solar PV Sites, although a standard DAS contract would be sought for Land near Melksham Substation (<i>intended to be a separate planning application at the outset of the Scheme</i>)

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
15 November 2023	Email	UDS budget agreed following meeting
16 November 2023	Email	DAS contract provided by NE for Land near Melksham Substation
17 November 2023	Email	UDS DAS contract provided by NE for Solar PV Sites and Cable Route Corridor
24 November 2023	Email	Signed contracts and Purchase Orders returned to NE by the Applicant
30 November 2023	Email	NE was advised by the Applicant that Land near Melksham Substation would no longer progress as a separate planning application
01 December 2023	Email	NE confirmed all elements of the Scheme would now be covered under existing UDS contract. Further meeting proposed
05 December 2023	Email	Meeting availability provided by the Applicant
11 December 2023	Email	Meeting scheduled for 10 January 2024
10 January 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Preliminary discussion of ecological constraints associated with the Scheme and proposed survey scope
11 January 2024	Email	Meeting notes provided to NE by the Applicant for review, and agreed by NE
15 January 2024	Email	The Applicant requested that advice pertaining to Landscape and Visual be sought under the existing UDS contract
19 January 2024	Email	NE confirmed UDS scope increased to include Landscape and Visual. NE provided further information pertaining to Harries Ground, Rodbourne Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) per meeting actions

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
25 January 2024	Email	Site visit requested by the Applicant to include representatives from NE, Ecology and Biodiversity, and Landscape and Visual
26 January 2024	Email	Updated DAS UDS contract provided by NE
30 January 2024	Email	The Applicant requested that the site visit occur as soon as possible. Requested that Soils and Agriculture also be added to the DAS UDS scope
05 February 2024	Email	NE agreed to provide availability for site visit, and that additional disciplines could be added to the existing UDS contract
08 February 2024	Email	Updated DAS UDS contract provided by NE
09 February 2024	Email	Signed contract returned to NE by the Applicant
12 February 2024	Email	Meeting requested by the Applicant to discuss Soils and Agriculture
21 February 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Summary of survey work already undertaken and presentation of results available. Most of the Panel Areas had been surveyed at an observation density of one per two hectares. NE content with the methodology employed for surveys already completed was acceptable, but that where best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land was identified in future surveys, the observation density should be increased to one per hectare to ensure the boundary between BMV and non-BMV is fully defined. Assessment methodology was queried. NE confirmed that IEMA's guidance should be followed but if there was variance from those guidelines, then all BMV land be categorised as High sensitivity.

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
23 February 2024	Email	NE confirmed change of personnel due to paternity leave. NE also confirmed no further information pertaining to Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI available
05 March 2024	Email	NE recommended Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) team also attend site meeting. NE seeking confirmation on confidentiality ahead of contacting CNL
05 March 2024	Email	The Applicant provided approval for NE to contact CNL, and requested potential dates, once available
26 March 2024	Email	Update on site visit availability requested by the Applicant
16 April 2024	Email	Update on site visit availability requested by the Applicant.
17 April 2024	Email	Interim Bat Activity Survey Report provided by the Applicant for review by NE, per meeting actions, to inform survey scope discussion
30 April 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant
07 May 2024	Email	Confirmation of receipt by NE, with updates to be provided this week
15 May 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant
06 June 2024	Phone Call/Voicemail	Update requested by the Applicant
11 June 2024	Phone Call/Voicemail	Update requested by the Applicant
13 June 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant
02 July 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant. NE input required to agree survey scope and inform Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
12 July 2024	Email	NE agreed proposed bat activity survey scope at Solar PV Sites following review of Interim Report
18 July 2024	Email	Meeting availability requested by the Applicant to discuss survey scope. Site visit availability requested by the Applicant
05 September 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Discussion of survey methodology for the cable route corridor. Suggestion for targeted surveys to confirm the mapped soil information rather than detailed soil survey. NE confirmed that a targeted approach would be appropriate pre-DCO application submission but noted an aim for 1 auger boring per 2 hectares. Confirmation that an Outline Soil Resources Management Plan would be produced to accompany the DCO application.
19 September 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant. Survey scope provided by the Applicant, utilising extracts from EIA Scoping Report. Meeting availability requested ahead of Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) preparation
14 November 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant
20 November 2024	Email	Update requested by the Applicant following receipt of Out of Office email
03 December 2024	Email	NE provided meeting availability
04 December 2024	Email	Meeting scheduled for 16 December 2024
16 December 2024	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Meeting to discuss project updates, survey scope and HRA considerations. NE noted that although potential bat roost features are proposed to be retained and

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		buffered within the Solar PV Sites (and therefore no detailed surveys for roosting bats undertaken), there may be potential for loss of access to the roost from PV panel installation. NE advised that, in the context of HRA considerations and relevant case law, when deciding whether mitigation measures are embedded or additional at Screening Stage, the reasoning needs to be clearly demonstrated. Where there is uncertainty, carry through measures to Appropriate Assessment stage.
16 December 2024	Email	NE provided meeting availability, with availability for site visit to be provided in 2025
17 December 2024	Email	Meeting scheduled for 12 February 2025. Meeting note, survey scope and Scheme Boundary provided by the Applicant, per meeting actions
23 December 2024	Email	NE agreed meeting notes, and confirmed availability to review PEIR Chapter and survey scope ahead of Statutory Consultation
29 January 2025	Email	Statutory notification under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008 issued by the Applicant to Natural England for the launch of the statutory consultation.
10 February 2025	Email	Meeting agenda provided by the Applicant
11 February 2025	Email	NE confirmed receipt of meeting agenda and confirmed review of PEIR Chapter complete
12 February 2025	Email	Meeting postponed by NE due to staff illness. Meeting rescheduled for 27 February 2025

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
27 February 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Meeting to discuss survey scope, and discussion of effects on statutorily designated sites including Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) considerations. NE advised that the survey scope proposed for the Solar PV Sites was appropriate, provided that the same survey effort was achieved for all Solar PV Sites at the point of submission. A lower survey effort was considered reasonable for Cable Route Corridor, although once habitat surveys have been completed, this conclusion can be better informed. NE advised that generally the Solar PV Sites do not appear to comprise functionally-linked land (FLL) for the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). However it was noted the surveys were ongoing at Lime Down C, which is the nearest of the Solar PV Sites to the SAC, and a more detailed breakdown of lesser horseshoe activity would help draw firmer conclusions. For HRA matters NE agreed that ruling out likely significant effects on Severn Estuary SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA) is appropriate. Survey data demonstrates no linkage for bird species associated with the designated site, and aquatic connectivity is over a significant distance. Implementation of pollution prevention measures within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is not considered specific mitigation for the SAC/SPA in a HRA context. In terms of the Severn Estuary Ramsar site, there is potential for impacts to eels within the Avon catchment. Implementation of pollution prevention measures via CEMP and use of trenchless technology at suitable water crossings along the Cable Route

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		Corridor can be expected to will avoid certain impacts. However, impact of electro-magnetic fields (EMFs) should be considered. Mitigation measures, which may include increased depth of cables beneath water courses, should be considered additional mitigation and carried through into HRA Appropriate Assessment stage. Provision of 15m buffer from Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI is considered suitable to avoid significant negative effects. Potential for benefits to the SSSI through improvements to surrounding habitats, which could be seeded using hay cut from the SSSI. It should be confirmed that devil's-bit-scabious is absent from within the Solar PV Sites before concluding impacts on marsh fritillary (a reason for designation for the SSSI). Agreed that other statutorily designated sites are outside the Zone of Influence of the Scheme.
19 March 2025	Statutory consultation response	Response to the statutory consultation received from Natural England.
3 June 2025	Email	Statutory notification under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008 issued by the Applicant to Natural England for the launch of the targeted consultation
9 June 2025	Email	Meeting scheduled for 30 June 2025
26 June 2025	Email	Response to the targeted statutory consultation received from Natural England and confirmation of no further feedback,
30 June 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Discussion of approach to HRA, with reference to Bath and Bradford on Avon (BaBOA) Bats SAC, functionally linked land, and embedded mitigation measures. Confirmation that 'Core Roost' in proximity to Lime Down C had been declassified in 2020

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		Agreed that HRA needs to consider all available data Agreed standard construction phase mitigation measures considered embedded mitigation for HRA
01 July 2025	Email	NE agreed meeting notes, and the Applicant confirmed updated Order Limits to be provided
22 August 2025	Email	HRA report provided by the Applicant for NE review and meeting availability requested
26 August 2025	Email	NE provided meeting availability
27 August 2025	Email	Meeting scheduled for 04 September 2025
04 September 2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Discussion of proposed approach to HRA, with a focus on Screening Stage. Agreed no additional sites or pathways missed within HRA scope Precautionary approach to Appropriate Assessment discussed Functionally-linked land to BaBOA Bats SAC discussed Radius for cumulative assessment discussed Clarification sought on nature of temporary works associated with Cable Route Corridor Follow-up meeting scheduled for 15 September
11 September 2025	Email	Meeting notes provided by the Applicant. Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy, Bat Survey Report, Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Statutory Biodiversity Metric provided by the Applicant for NE review
12 September 2025	Email	Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan provided by the Applicant for NE review

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
15 September 2025	Email	Meeting postponed allowing NE time to review documents. Amended HRA report provided by the Applicant for NE review
29 October 2025	Email / letter	Notice under Section 56 of the Planning Act 2008 issued by the Applicant to Natural England.
9 January 2026	Relevant Representation	Natural England submitted a relevant representation to the Planning Inspectorate.
10 February 2026	Email	Confidential Badger Survey Report and Figures provided to NE for review
19 February 2026	Microsoft Teams Meeting	Discussion of Natural England's Relevant Representation comments. It was agreed that levels of horseshoe activity at Lime Down C as well as the timings of calls indicate a nearby roost. However, the Applicant is reluctant to agree to consider classify the land as functionally linked to the SAC even on a precautionary basis. It is NE's position that due to the relatively high activity levels recorded, functional linkage must be considered even if outside previously defined zones, and this would be the case for any project locally. It was agreed by both parties that based on the survey evidence, other areas within the Solar PV Sites (i.e. Lime Down A, B, D & E) are not FLL for the SAC. Notwithstanding the potential disagreement on this matter, mitigation measures to avoid significant impacts on lesser horseshoes due to fragmentation will be adopted at Lime Down C. Whilst a disagreement may remain on whether Lime Down C represents FLL for lesser horseshoes, both parties agree mitigation is sufficient to conclude no significant effects will likely occur on this species and therefore on the SAC.

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		NE Relevant Representation comments relating to protected species and licencing matters were discussed. It is possible that comments from the NE licencing team within RRs regarding lack of survey information can be resolved once NE have had opportunity to review confidential badger information, which has now been provided to NE. NE will clarify if any comments remain unresolved following review of confidential badger survey report and outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy.
17 April 2026	Email	The Applicant provided Natural England with the draft SoCG document for comment.
1 May 2026	Written Representation	Natural England submitted a written representation to the Planning Inspectorate.
18 May 2026	Microsoft Teams Meeting	The Applicant concurred with Natural England on the outstanding matter not yet agreed concerning consideration of Lime Down C as potentially functionally-linked land. The Applicant has agreed to assess Lime Down C as potentially representing functionally-linked land for lesser horseshoe bats associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. An updated version of the Habitat Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)] will be prepared accordingly and submitted at Deadline 3.
20 May 2026	Email	The Applicant provided Natural England with the updated SoCG document following the meeting on 18 May 2026.
21 May 2026	Email	Natural England confirmed the updates to the SoCG accurately reflects the work undertaken between Natural England and the Applicant on the project to date.
03 June 2026	Email	The Applicant provided a tracked copy of the latest version of the Habitats Regulation Assessment Report for Lime Down ahead of Deadline 3 which was updated to capture the

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		outcome of the meeting on 18 May 2026 and reflects the latest position for Lime Down C.
12 June 2026	Email	Natural England confirmed that the Habitats Regulation Assessment report had been updated in line with the agreements from the meeting on 18 May 2026 and provided their updated position for Lime Down C.
<u>29 June 2026</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Natural England confirmed that the species licencing matters identified relating to great crested newts, dormice and riparian mammals have been agreed.</u>
<u>1 July 2026</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>The Applicant provided Natural England with further detail and clarification regarding the assessment of Badgers.</u>

3 Matters Raised

3.1.1 This section sets out a table for each relevant matter raised, identifying where matters are agreed, still under discussion, or not agreed.

3.1 Alternatives and Design Evolution

Table 3-1: Alternatives and Design Evolution

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.1.1	Extent of panels within Lime Down C	Recommended that the extent of panels within Lime Down C is reviewed to avoid adverse landscape and visual effects on the CNL. Where panel areas are reduced, this should be used to provide landscape and ecological enhancements, particularly for lesser horseshoe bats.	As shown on the Works Plan, panels will not be located in the parts of fields directly adjacent to the National Landscape boundary within fields C1, C6, C8, and C10 retained clear of panels. Photomontages from 13 viewpoints demonstrates that this limits the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development.	Under Discussion

3.2 Landscape and Visual

Table 3-2: Landscape and Visual

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.2.1	Legislation and Policy	No comment.	The Applicant considers that Section 8.3 of the ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060 REP3-026] has identified and appropriately considered all applicable legislation and policy.	Agreed
3.2.2	Methodology	No comment.	The methodology adopted within section 8.7 of the ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060 REP3-026] and ES Volume 3 Chapter Appendix 8.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology [REP1A-006] follows the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' Third Edition (GLVIA3) and derived from consultation and engagement with stakeholders and by reviewing relevant guidance and studies and is considered acceptable to fully understand the extent of effects associated with the Development.	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.2.3	Baseline Conditions	No comment.	The description of the existing baseline landscape and visual conditions set out within Section 8.8 of ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060 REP3-026] are representative of the baseline site conditions and therefore acceptable to inform the assessment.	Agreed
3.2.4	Assessment Results – Cotswold National Landscape	Lime Down D & E have no landscape of visual relationship with the National Landscape. The below comments therefore focus on potential landscape and visual impacts of Lime Down A – C. NE welcome the detailed assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on each of the special qualities of the national landscape provided in Section 3 of the Assessment of Effects on the Cotswolds National Landscape and its Special Qualities. Based on the information provided in this assessment, Natural England consider that the scheme is unlikely to	ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060REP3-026] provides an assessment of the Scheme's likely landscape and visual impacts on the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and sets out given there is no physical overlap between the Scheme and the CNL, consequently the Scheme causes no direct impacts on the CNL. In terms of public receptors that have a visual relationship with the CNL, ie, public rights of way, ES Volume 3, Appendix 8-6 Assessment of Effects on the Cotswolds National Landscape and it's Special Qualities [APP-197] concludes that there are no	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		result in significant adverse impacts to the Cotswolds National Landscape when considered alone.	long term significant effects on public receptors associated with the Scheme and the CNL, which is predominantly as a result of the measures incorporated into the Scheme to avoid harm to the CNL. Furthermore, ES Volume 3, Appendix 8-6 Assessment of Effects on the Cotswolds National Landscape and it's Special Qualities [APP-197] concludes that there would be no significant effects on the special qualities of the CNL as a result of the Scheme.	
3.2.5	Embedded Design Mitigation	Viewpoints 4 & 6 are located on the boundary of the National Landscape adjacent to the Order Limits. Baseline photography demonstrates that the Order Limits are more visible from National Landscape in these locations due to the proximity between the National Landscape and the Order Limits. However, as shown in the Works Plan, panels will not be located within the northern extent of field A1 or	The approach and proposals for embedded mitigation set out within Section 8.9 of ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060REP3-026] , considers the landscape and visual matters associated with the Scheme as part of an iterative process, and is considered acceptable. Establishing planting will add a positive element to this landscape. Vegetation removal, as	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		within the entirety of fields A11 and A12. This is welcomed and will reduce the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development.	shown on the ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plans [REP1-029 to REP1-032 REP3-037] is relatively minimal.	
3.2.6	Mitigation / Management Plans	NE welcome the avoidance and mitigation measures detailed in Section 2.3 of the Assessment of Effects on the Cotswolds National Landscape and its Special Qualities. The enhancement measures detailed in this section aid in demonstrating that the scheme will further the purposes of the National Landscape.	The proposed mitigation measures set out within in Section 8.9 of the ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060REP3-026], and secured through the ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plans [REP1-029 to REP1-032REP3-037] are considered acceptable. The landscape and ecological improvements are set out on Figure 3-4-1 to 3-4-5.2 in the ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plans [REP1-029 to REP1-032REP3-037]. The Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [APP-283REP3-100] is considered acceptable. Following further development of the Scheme, more	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			detailed planting plans including detail of areas of landscape mitigation, location and types of planting (species), as well as number, density and specification will be provided prior to any works commencing. The detailed landscape proposals will consist of the area and extent of the Scheme shown on ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plans [REP1-029 to REP1-032REP3-037] (Figure 3-4-1 to 3-4-5.2). The Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [APP-283REP3-100] is secured by Requirement 7 of Schedule 2 of Draft Development Consent Order [REP1-007REP3-005]	
3.2.7	Cumulative Effects	Although the project alone is unlikely to cause significant adverse landscape impacts, a cumulative effects assessment is required. Natural England recommends assessing inter-project cumulative effects on the National Landscape to demonstrate	The Cumulative Assessment within ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [APP-060REP3-026] was carried out on a 10km Cumulative Study Area as shown on ES Volume 2, Figure 8-15: Cumulative ZTV and Cumulative Study Area (Figure 8-15 Series) [APP-106]. This area	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		that there would be no significant adverse impacts. It is recognised that Environmental Statement Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual (EN010168/APP/6.1) includes an assessment of inter-project cumulative landscape and visual effects, however this does not specifically consider the potential for cumulative effects on the National Landscape and its special qualities. To demonstrate that there would not be cumulative effects on the National Landscape that would increase effects identified when considering the project alone, it is recommended that a cumulative effects assessment is undertaken which specifically considers the landscape and visual effects of the project and cumulative development sites on the Cotswolds National Landscape and its special qualities.	encompasses a large area of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and there are no inter project cumulative Sites within the CNL. Castle Coombe Circuit Solar Farm is an existing Solar Farm within the CNL located approximately 6km from the nearest Lime Down Solar Site. Within the 10km Cumulative Study Area, Castle Coombe Solar Farm is the only existing Solar Farm within the CNL. As this is an existing development, it has been considered within the baseline assessment rather than the Cumulative Assessment. Following a meeting with Natural England on 18th February 2026, it was agreed that existing solar farms have been correctly considered as part of the baseline assessment. It was agreed that there are no cumulative effects on the CNL itself, noting that the Lime Down Scheme is not within the CNL.	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			Natural England has requested further information regarding potential cumulative effects on the CNL and its special qualities. Given that none of the Cumulative Development Sites nor the Lime Down Scheme are within the CNL, the applicant has considered the cumulative effects of the Lime Down Scheme and the thirteen Cumulative Development Sites on the setting of the CNL. This assessment has been set out in the applicant's response to the Relevant Reps and confirms that there are no adverse cumulative effects within the setting of the CNL or on its special qualities as there is no intervisibility from within the CNL to any of the CD Sites and the Lime Down Scheme.	

3.3 Ecology and Biodiversity

Table 3-3: Ecology and Biodiversity

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.3.1	Legislation and Policy - ES	Natural England has not raised substantive comments in relation to legislation and policy considerations within the Environmental Statement	The Applicant considers that ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] has identified and appropriately considered all applicable legislation and policy.	Agreed
3.3.2	Legislation and Policy - HRA	Natural England has not raised substantive comments in relation to legislation and policy considerations within the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [APP-275]	The Applicant considers that the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)]REP3-090] has identified and appropriately considered all applicable legislation and policy.	Agreed
3.3.3	Methodology - ES	Natural England has not raised substantive comments in relation to legislation and policy considerations within the Environmental Statement.	The methodology adopted within ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] has been derived from the information obtained through consultation with stakeholders and by reviewing relevant guidance and studies and is considered acceptable.	Agreed
3.3.4	Methodology - HRA	Natural England agree with the Zone of Influence used in the Habitats	The methodology adopted within the Habitats Regulations Assessment	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		Regulations Assessment Report (EN010168/APP/7.10) to identify internationally designated sites which could be affected by the proposed development.	Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)REP3-090] is considered acceptable.	
<u>3.3.5</u>	<u>Methodology - Cable Route Corridor Bat Surveys</u>	<u>Given the temporary nature of impacts of habitats within the Cable Route Corridor (CRC), and the full reinstatement of habitats following construction, full activity surveys of the CRC would not be considered proportionate to the level of impact.</u> <u>Bats have been assumed present within the CRC with mitigation and avoidance measures are proposed accordingly, including those referenced within the Habitats Regulations Assessment</u>	<u>The methodology for bats surveys within the Cable Route Corridor is considered acceptable.</u>	<u>Agreed</u>
3.3. 5 <u>6</u>	Baseline	Natural England has not raised substantive comments in relation to legislation and policy considerations within the Environmental Statement	The baseline conditions which are detailed in ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] are representative of the baseline site conditions.	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.3.67	Assessment – General	Natural England's advice is that in relation to issues within its remit there is a number of areas where the applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project will not result in significant adverse impacts on the natural environment.	In terms of the assessments within Natural England's remit, potential impacts on ecology and biodiversity are fully assessed in ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] . This assessment considers baseline ecological conditions and evaluates likely significant effects arising during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Scheme. It identifies avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures to address potential impacts on habitats and protected and notable species. <u>the two parties have reached agreement with regard to the assessment of Great Crested Newts, Dormice, Riparian mammals (Water vole and Otters)</u> . It also identifies opportunities for ecological enhancement, including the creation and long-term management of habitats, and delivery of biodiversity net gain. The Applicant's position on detailed matters raised by Natural England is	Under Discussion

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			provided below. <u>It is understood that that the only issue within Natural England's remit yet to be agreed is in relation to impacts on badgers set out below.</u>	
3.3. 78	Assessment Results – Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC	Regarding the Bath on Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, Natural England concur with the conclusions of the HRA except regarding fragmentation effects to lesser horseshoe bat habitat within the Solar PV site where additional mitigation measures have been suggested. Natural England is not satisfied that it can be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the project would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon. Natural England agrees with the scope of the Habitats Regulations Assessment, including the Zone of Influence and the list of internationally	The Applicant agrees that impacts to functionally linked land, where such land supports the populations associated with the SAC population, could affect the integrity of the SAC. The Applicant concurs that relative activity levels and timing of lesser horseshoe bat calls recorded at Lime Down C are indicative of a lesser horseshoe bat roost close to the Order Limits in this location. Following a meeting held with Natural England on 18 May 2026, the Applicant has concurred with Natural England on this matter and has agreed to assess Lime Down C as potentially representing functionally-linked land for lesser horseshoe bats associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. An updated version of the	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		designated sites, and confirms that Salisbury Plain SPA can be scoped out. For the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, Natural England agrees that the solar PV site itself is not functionally linked land for greater horseshoe bats. However, the cable route corridor lies within an impact zone and could be functionally linked, meaning likely significant effects cannot be ruled out due to potential loss or fragmentation of commuting habitat. Impacts relating to loss of roosts, killing, or injury of greater horseshoe bats can be screened out. In relation to lesser horseshoe bats, while the HRA concludes the solar PV sites are not functionally linked, Natural England notes survey evidence showing regular early-night activity at Lime Down C, suggesting nearby roosting and potential functional linkage to the SAC. Although loss of foraging habitat is unlikely to result in significant effects, potential	Habitat Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)REP3-090] will be prepared accordingly and submitted at Deadline 3. Natural England and the Applicant have reached agreement on the mitigation measures which would need to be included within Lime Down C to ensure that significant impacts to SAC lesser horseshoe bats resulting from fragmentation could be avoided. These measures comprise: Retention of hedgerows across Lime Down C with any required new gaps in hedgerows to be limited to a maximum of 10m (it is understood that a majority will be limited to 3.5 – 6m) with the exception of one larger gap of 12 – 14m for the proposed access off the Fosse Way.	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		fragmentation of commuting routes within Lime Down C should be screened in for Appropriate Assessment. For Bechstein's bats, Natural England agrees that likely significant effects from loss or change to functionally linked land can be screened out due to distance, lack of suitable habitat, and absence of records. Evidence to date does not indicate functional linkage to the SAC, and impacts related to fragmentation, roost loss, or killing and injury are considered unlikely. Updated Position It is agreed that a vast majority of the habitat within Lime Down C provides suboptimal foraging habitat for lesser horseshoe bats. It is noted that the design of the proposed development has retained a majority of the hedgerows within Lime Down C and that losses have been minimised. However, due to the reasoning stated in the <i>Habitats</i>	b. Construction Lighting will be controlled to prevent light spill onto suitable commuting habitats. The Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy (EPMS) [REP1-106REP3-102] details how sections of hedgerow to be permanently removed for new internal access tracks where no existing gap is present will typically be between 3.5 m to 6 m wide, with a maximum of 10 m of hedgerow to be removed in any one location for this element of the Scheme. It also details how sections of hedgerow to be removed to provide access from the existing highway network, including for Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL) will require a maximum of 18 m of hedgerow loss at any one access point, although would typically be less than this at most access points. At Lime Down C one AIL Location is expected to comprise a gap of 12 – 14 m in width, at Solar PV Access Location 19 (ES Volume 2, Figure 13-11 Construction Access	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		<i>Regulations Assessment Report</i>, we agree that likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of loss of foraging habitat cannot be screened out. Further, whilst a majority of the hedgerows in Lime Down C have been retained, it is noted that hedgerow gaps will need to be created in a number of areas to facilitate access. Further, uncontrolled artificial lighting could impede lesser horseshoe commuting activity across the site. Therefore, due to the reasoning stated in the <i>Habitats Regulations Assessment Report</i>, we agree that likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of fragmentation cannot be screened out. Mitigation measures for loss of foraging habitat include the establishment of 15m buffer zones to all hedgerows and woodland across the Solar PV site. Further, it is noted that habitat creation and enhancement works will	Locations: Solar PV Sites [APP-156] refers). Appropriate limitations and controls for the use of artificial lighting during construction, designed to avoid impacts on bats and other light-sensitive species are detailed within the Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] as well as the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [REP1-096REP3-092]. Measures set out within the Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] and the Outline CEMP [REP1-096REP3-092] are secured by Requirements 8 and 13 respectively within the Draft Development Consent Order [REP1-007REP3-005]. On 3 June 2026 the Applicant provided NE with an advanced copy of the revised Habitat Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)]REP3-090 to be submitted at Deadline 3. On	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		be undertaken across the solar PV site which will result in an overall increase in foraging value within Lime Down C. Therefore, subject to all measures detailed in the <i>Habitats Regulations Assessment Report</i> being secured in the DCO, we agree that adverse effects on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of loss of foraging habitat can be ruled out. Mitigation to reduce fragmentation impacts includes limiting the width of hedgerow gaps in Lime Down C. It is noted that there will be one larger gap which will be required to be created in Lime Down C for Abnormal Indivisible Loads. The retention of the vast majority of the linear habitat network will enable lesser horseshoe bats to maintain commuting activity across Lime Down C despite the hedgerow gap created for the AIL. Provided that the minimisation of hedgerow gaps as detailed in the	12 June 2026 NE responded to confirm agreement with the revised document, and it is considered full agreement on this matter has now been reached between both parties.	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		<i>Habitats Regulations Assessment Report</i> and the mitigation measures relating to construction lighting are applied in Lime Down C in addition to other sensitive areas of the application site, we agree that adverse effects on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of fragmentation can be ruled out.		
3.3. <u>89</u>	Assessment Results – Severn Estuary SAC and SPA	Natural England agrees that the proposed development is unlikely to result in likely significant effects on the Severn Estuary SAC. Impacts on Annex I habitats and Annex II species can be screened out due to the distance from the SAC, the absence of functionally linked land within the Order Limits, and the application of best-practice pollution prevention measures set out in the Outline CEMP. Natural England agree that likely significant effects to the Annex II Species which the Severn Estuary SAC is designated for as a result of loss or change of functionally linked land,	A full assessment of the Scheme's impacts on the Severn Estuary SAC and SPA is set out in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)]REP3-090 which was shared with Natural England before submission of the DCO application. In ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] it is concluded that with embedded mitigation measure in place during the construction phase, it is currently considered that all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that that the magnitude of any impact would be	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		fragmentation, or killing and injuring can be screened out as habitats within the Order Limits do not provide functionally linked land for the Annex II species. Further, we agree that likely significant effects on the Annex II species from habitat degradation can be screened out due to the distance between the proposed development and the SAC and the use of best practice pollution avoidance measures detailed in the Outline CEMP Based on the result of wintering bird surveys included in Appendix 9-7 Wintering Bird Survey Report (EN010168/APP/6.3) of the Environmental Statement, Natural England agree that the proposed development site does not support land which is functionally linked to the Severn Estuary SPA. We therefore agree that likely significant effects as a result of loss or change of functionally linked land to this designated site can be screened out.	negligible even assuming a worst case scenario and no significant adverse effects will occur on the Severn Estuary SAC and SPA. Operationally, impacts on the Severn Estuary SAC and SPA are likely to be negligible, owing to the nature of the Scheme whereby no further construction activity or other intrusive, extractive or potentially damaging / polluting activity is required. Consequently, it is anticipated that no significant adverse effects will occur on the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA during the operation and maintenance phase.	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.3. 9 <u>10</u>	Assessment Results – Severn Estuary Ramsar	Based on the result of wintering bird surveys included in the Wintering Bird Survey Report Natural England agree that the proposed development site does not provide functionally linked land for the bird species which the Severn Estuary Ramsar is designated for. We therefore agree that likely significant effects as a result of loss or change of functionally linked land for Ramsar Criteria 5 & 6 can be ruled out. Natural England agree that the proposed development is unlikely to result in habitat degradation of Ramsar Criteria 1 & 3 Habitats which the Severn Estuary Ramsar is designated for due to the distance between the proposed development and the Ramsar and the use of best practice pollution avoidance measures detailed in the Outline CEMP. Potential impacts on the Ramsar site from habitat fragmentation and injury to eel and sea trout have been screened in due to possible watercourse	A full assessment of the Scheme's impacts on the Severn Estuary Ramsar, including potential impacts of EMFs on eels is set out in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)]REP3-090 which was shared with Natural England before submission of the DCO application. In ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015], it is concluded that with embedded mitigation measures in place, it is considered likely that impacts on the Severn Estuary, as well as species cited as a reason for designation (eel and sea trout) can be avoided during the construction phase and a neutral, non-significant effect is anticipated. Given the distance from the Solar PV Sites and the minimal requirements for operation and maintenance phase works which could result in watercourse contamination or sediment mobilisation, it is anticipated that no significant adverse effects will occur on	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		crossings during construction and operational effects from buried cables. Mitigation measures include avoiding new watercourse crossings where possible, using trenchless crossing methods in suitable watercourses, and burying cables at least 5 m below channel beds to reduce electromagnetic effects on migratory fish. Subject to these measures being secured through the Order, Natural England agrees that adverse effects on the Ramsar site can be ruled out.	the Severn Estuary Ramsar via this pathway during the operation and maintenance phase due to any impacts being of negligible magnitude. The likely significance of effects arising from EMFs on fish as a result of the Scheme are difficult to quantify, however, on a precautionary basis, the ES chapter concludes that impacts on eels and sea trout from EMFs could lead to an adverse impact on the Severn Estuary Ramsar which would be significant at an International Level. A precautionary approach to mitigation has been taken, whereby all cables which cross suitable watercourses for migratory fish will be buried to a minimum depth of 5m, to maximise attenuation of electromagnetic fields and minimise the risk of any adverse impacts. This depth is far greater than typical installation depths and will significantly reduce the EMF, particularly magnetic (B-field), exposures. In this way, it is anticipated that the low risk of impacts on	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			European eel, sea trout, and other species will be avoided and effects reduced to neutral and non-significant levels.	
3.3. 40 <u>11</u>	Assessment Results – Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI	Natural England is satisfied that the proposed development will not result in significant adverse effects on the Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI	A full assessment of the Scheme's impacts on the Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI is set out in ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] . It concluded that with embedded mitigation, no significant adverse effects are anticipated during the construction phase. The adoption of mitigation measures as set out within the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [APP-283REP3-100] , which will be finalised in the eventual detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, with the proposed habitats shown in the Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [REP1-029 to REP1-032] , a neutral, non-significant residual effect is anticipated during the operation and maintenance phase.	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.3. 41 <u>12</u>	Assessment Results – Other National Statutory Designated Sites	Natural England has not raised substantive comments in relation to the assessment on other statutory designated sites.	Other national statutory designated sites within 5 km of Scheme considered in ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] of the ES are as follows: • Sutton Lane Meadows SSSI; • Corston Quarry and Pond LNR; and • Conygre Mead LNR. The above designated sites are all located outside of the Order Limits and are at least 1 km from any part of the Scheme, and no direct or indirect impacts to habitats within these designated sites during the construction phase are anticipated.	Agreed
3.3. 42 <u>13</u>	Assessment Results – Protected / Notable Species	Natural England has outlined its position on European protected species and is seeking further information on potential impacts. This includes details of habitat clearance, badger survey methodology, mitigation for impacts on great crested newt (GCN) habitat related to the solar PV site, and evidence of engagement with	The Applicant's position on each of these matters is detailed below. <u>It is understood that that the only issue within Natural England's remit yet to be agreed is in relation to impacts on badgers set out below.</u>	Under discussion

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		Natural England where protected species licences may be required. To date, no draft protected species licence applications have been submitted for review. Natural England advise that further evidence is required to assess the potential effects and sufficiency of mitigation in relation to protected species. Natural England is not satisfied that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the project will not result in significant adverse effects to protected species		
3.3.1314	Bats	Bat surveys have been conducted; however, some Ground Level Tree Assessments fell short of best-practice standards. Although no immediate impacts are anticipated, potential tree loss may necessitate additional surveys in accordance with current guidelines. Natural England has also warned that Lime Down C could still be functionally connected to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of	As reported in paragraphs 1.2.11 and 1.2.12 of ES Volume 3, Appendix 9-3: Bat Survey Report [APP-200], the bat survey guidelines with respect to GLTA methodology were updated in September 2023. Surveys up until that point had followed the most up-to-date guideline, and since most of the survey work had been completed prior to the publication of the updated guideline the same methodology was used	Under discussion Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		Conservation (SAC), despite the declassification of roosts, indicating that population-level effects cannot be dismissed. The proposed maximum gaps of 10 meters in hedgerows within bat impact zones are deemed suitable, and any lighting mitigation measures should adhere to the latest bat and lighting guidance.	subsequently to ensure consistency across all surveys. It is acknowledged within ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] that some loss of trees within the Cable Route Corridor may be necessary for access / installation of the cable route. Any trees potentially requiring removal will be subject to further update inspection, which requirement is secured by the Outline EPMS [REP1-406REP3-102]. The Applicant refers to the previous detailed response concerning the relationship between lesser horseshoe bats using Lime Down C and the SAC populations, and has concurred with Natural England on this matter and has agreed to assess Lime Down C as potentially representing functionally-linked land for lesser horseshoe bats associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. An updated version of the Habitat Regulations Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.10 (Rev 2)]REP3-	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			0901 will be prepared accordingly and submitted at Deadline 3. Notwithstanding, the Applicant refers to the assessment of impacts on all bat species using the Solar PV Sites for foraging / commuting in paragraph 9.10.182 of ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] which concludes the Scheme will not result in significant residual effects through fragmentation for any species, including lesser horseshoe bats. Nevertheless, the Applicant confirms that the mitigation measures proposed for minimising fragmentation impacts within the Cable Route Corridor, will also apply to Lime Down C. These measures relate to the narrowing of any required hedgerow gaps to 10 to 12 m in width, and control measures for lighting during construction. The Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] has been updated at Deadline 1 to ensure these measures are adopted for	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			Lime Down C as well as the Cable Route Corridor.	
3.3.1415	Dormice	Further detail is required on The Applicant has clarified how hedgerow removal will be carried out, including whether clearance will be single or two-stage. Works should Proposed works align with recommended seasonal timings to avoid impacts to breeding or hibernating dormice or provide clear justification where non-standard timings are proposed.	The Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] has been updated at Deadline 13 to include additional details on the approach to considering dormice during hedgerow removal.	Under discussion A greed
3.3.1516	Badgers	Natural England's review is limited due to the absence of the full badger survey report. Additional clarification is needed on survey methodology, coverage, effort, findings (including sett locations and classifications), and surveyor competence to demonstrate alignment with best practice and legal requirements. While impact pathways and mitigation are broadly appropriate, conclusions currently rely on assumptions and future licensing to manage uncertainty, particularly for the	The methodology and findings of badger surveys are detailed within the Badger Survey Report (ES Volume 3, Appendix 9-2: Badger Survey Report [APP-199]) as well as corresponding ES Volume 2, Figures 9-2-1 to 9-2-5 Confidential Badger Setts – Solar PV Sites [APP-115] . These were made confidential at the instruction of PINS due to containing sensitive information relating to a species at risk of persecution. These documents are available on request to those with a	Under discussion

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		cable route corridor and newly excavated setts. The badger impact assessment outlines relevant impact pathways and suggests suitable mitigation measures; however, its conclusions are largely based on assumptions and unspecified future actions. There is still uncertainty regarding the extent of sett exclusion works, especially along the cable route corridor and for newly excavated setts. Despite this uncertainty, the assessment draws conclusions about the significance of impacts, relying on future licensing to address these unknowns. Given the limited detail in the surveys and the uncertainty in design, it is challenging to determine whether the assessment and proposed mitigation are adequate for the affected badger populations. Although the mitigation strategy generally aligns with Natural England's expectations, and the commitments to pre-construction surveys, buffer zones, and licensing are positive, it remains overly reliant on	legitimate need to view them, and a copy has now been sent to Natural England for review. The Applicant acknowledges it is not possible to provide full details on the exact footprint of certain works (particularly within the Cable Route Corridor) at this stage. It is the Applicant's view however that a robust process for identifying and, if necessary, mitigating impacts to badger setts will be secured via the approach to be adopted as part of Method Statement 8 of the Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102]. The exact details of any mitigation (if required) for impacts on individual setts will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. The Applicant will continue to consult with Natural England on the appropriateness of any future mitigation requirements, via mitigation licence application if necessary.	

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		future surveys and licenses to address currently undefined impacts. Additional clarity and detail regarding impacts and mitigation measures, particularly concerning sett structures, would be advantageous once the scheme design is finalized <u>The Environmental Statement Volume 3, Appendix 9-2: CONFIDENTIAL Badger Survey report outlines the survey work undertaken to date, which broadly follows established good practice for baseline badger surveys. However, updated surveys will be required within the appropriate season and within six months prior to submission of the formal application to ensure the data remains current.</u> <u>Further, more detailed surveys may be necessary to inform the status and extent of any affected badger social groups. These could include techniques such as bait marking or camera trapping. At present, the need for such advanced surveys has not</u>		

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		<u>been confirmed, as the full extent of potential impacts is not yet understood.</u> <u>Additionally, approximately 17 hectares within the cable route corridor have not yet been accessed for ecological survey. Natural England will require this area to be surveyed prior to submission of any formal licence application.</u> <u>The Badger Survey Report does not currently provide a detailed assessment of impacts, as these cannot yet be fully determined due to uncertainties in the final alignment of the cable route and the requirement for updated badger surveys, reflecting the mobile nature of the species.</u> - <u>In the absence of up-to-date survey data and a confirmed scheme design, Natural England (NE) is unable to provide a substantive assessment of potential impacts or the adequacy of any proposed mitigation measures.</u>		

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		<u>NE would expect a clear and proportionate application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid – mitigate – compensate). However, as both the nature and extent of impacts, along with proposed mitigation measures, have not been clearly defined at this stage, it is not currently possible to determine whether this hierarchy has been appropriately applied.</u> <u>The report does not define the extent of standard disturbance zones (i.e. 30 m, 20 m, and 10 m buffers), sett entrances and tunnel directions associated with badger setts. The inclusion of this information would assist Natural England in assessing potential impacts once the construction footprint and working areas have been finalised. Clear identification of these zones in relation to proposed works is necessary to inform the evaluation of likely disturbance effects and any required mitigation measures.</u>		

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		<u>There will be a temporary reduction in the availability of foraging habitat for badgers as a result of the loss of in-field habitats during the construction phase, until such time as habitats are reinstated and have sufficiently established.</u> <u>Natural England (NE) has concerns regarding the duration and extent of this temporary habitat loss. Further information is required to determine how long it will take for habitats to recover to a condition functionally equivalent to their current state, and whether this may result in any short- or medium-term impacts on local badger social groups.</u> <u>Additional detail should therefore be provided on the proposed habitat reinstatement, including timescales for establishment, any aftercare or management measures, and how functionality for badger foraging will be restored. This information is necessary to enable a full assessment of the</u>		

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		<u>significance of the impact and the adequacy of any proposed mitigation.</u>		
3.3.4617	Great Crested Newts (GCN)	Survey effort <u>The surveys undertaken to date is likely sufficient to support entry into the District Level Licensing scheme, though updated surveys may be needed if there is a long delay before consent.</u> <u>and</u> the proposed DLL approach for cable route impacts <u>and Solar PC sites</u> is considered appropriate; however, mitigation for Solar PV sites is less clear. While timing of works and pond buffers are welcomed, further consideration is needed for impacts to terrestrial, connective, and foraging habitats, particularly within 50m of ponds, where additional mitigation and licensing may be required.	As part of embedded mitigation measures for the Solar PV Sites, a 50m protective buffer around ponds with confirmed GCN presence (or where GCN absence has not been confirmed) will be adopted in which no impacts to terrestrial habitats will occur. This will be secured via measures prescribed in Method Statement 12 of the Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] , which will include maintenance of protective fencing around buffer zones, within which no works will occur. A suite of other precautionary mitigation measures for works between 50m to 250m of GCN ponds are also prescribed within Method Statement 8 of the Outline EPMS [REP1-106] , including sensitive timings of works, good practice storage of materials and the attendance of an Ecological Clerk of Works (EcoCoW) in a watching brief role. These measures are considered by the Applicant to be appropriate for	<u>Under discussion</u> <u>Agreed</u>

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			addressing potential impacts to GCN at the Solar PV Sites.	
3.3. 17 <u>18</u>	Water Vole and Otter	Potential impacts have been identified, and an avoidance and mitigation approach consistent with the mitigation hierarchy has been proposed, which Natural England agrees with. However, due to limited review of survey detail, it is unclear whether mitigation is fully sufficient. The recognition that licensed mitigation may be required is welcomed.	A precautionary approach to temporary works affecting suitable habitat for water voles and otters is prescribed by (will be secured via) the Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] . This includes pre-commencement inspection and, in the event that any burrow, holts or other sheltering features are encountered, a commitment to avoid impacts (e.g. through adopting trenchless technologies or through micro-siting of cable works). Should any impacts on any such features be unavoidable, appropriately licensed mitigation / compensation will be secured and the Applicant will further engage with Natural England should the need arise.	Under discussion Agreed
3.3. 18 <u>19</u>	Mitigation	Natural England advises that, if approved, the project must be subject to all necessary and appropriate requirements which ensure that unacceptable environmental impacts	The proposed mitigation measures set out within sections 9.9 and 9.12 of ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-015] , and secured within the Outline EPMS [REP1-	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		either do not occur or are sufficiently mitigated.	406REP3-102 and the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [APP-283REP3-100] are considered acceptable.	
3.3. 49 <u>20</u>	Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy (Outline EPMS)	No comment.	The proposed ecological protection measures set out within the Outline EPMS [REP1-106REP3-102] are correctly identified and considered appropriate for protecting habitats and species during the construction phase.	Agreed
3.3. 20 <u>21</u>	Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP)	No comment.	The principles for managing retained and newly-created habitats and ecological features during the operation and maintenance phase, set out in the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [APP-283REP3-100] are correctly identified and appropriate.	Agreed
3.3. 24 <u>22</u>	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	No comment	BNG for NSIPs is not yet mandatory, but the Applicant has sought to meet the requirements as if it were. The approach to assessing and securing BNG, which is detailed in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			Report [REP1-089 REP3-085], is considered acceptable.	

3.4 Soils and Agriculture

Table 3-4: Soils and Agriculture

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
3.4.1	Legislation and Policy	No comments made	The Applicant considers that ES Volume 1, Chapter 17: Soils and Agriculture [REP1-025REP3-021] of the ES has identified and appropriately considered all applicable legislation and policy.	Agreed
3.4.2	Methodology	No comments made.	The methodology adopted within ES Volume 1, Chapter 17: Soils and Agriculture [REP1-025REP3-021] of the ES has been derived from the information obtained through consultation with stakeholders and by reviewing relevant guidance and studies and is considered acceptable. IEMA guidance has been used as the framework for assessment. Survey density was increased in some areas for better definition of the BMV/non-BMV boundary and also in areas where fixed infrastructure such	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			as the BESS and substations are proposed. Targeted surveys were undertaken along the cable route corridor, as access allowed at the time, similarly surveying areas of fixed infrastructure at detailed density.	
3.4.3	Baseline	No comments made.	The baseline conditions which are detailed in ES Volume 1, Chapter 17: Soils and Agriculture [REP1-025REP3-021] of the ES are representative of the baseline site conditions.	Agreed
3.4.4	Assessment Results	Natural England appreciates that the proposed development's siting and design are based on soil surveys identifying Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land within the Order Limits. However, further information and quantification of effects are needed for more detailed advice. Natural England points out that some areas within the Order Limits lack detailed soil surveys and recommends	The assessment results set out within ES Volume 1, Chapter 17: Soils and Agriculture [REP1-025REP3-021] of the ES, including likely significant effects anticipated, are acceptable.	Under Discussion

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
		conducting Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) surveys for all affected agricultural land where post-1988 data is unavailable, including the cable route corridor. Complete survey results are essential for accurately assessing impacts on BMV land. Additionally, the land take for each development component should be quantified in hectares, with affected ALC grades clearly identified and categorized as permanent or temporary loss. Natural England also suggests revising soil assessment criteria to classify ALC Grade 1 and 2 soils as very high sensitivity, Grade 3a as high sensitivity, and to consider permanent loss of more than 20 hectares of BMV land as a major impact.		
3.4.5	Mitigation / Management Plans	No comments made.	The proposed mitigation measures set out within ES Volume 1, Chapter 17: Soils and Agriculture [REP1-026 REP3-021], and secured within Section 1.8 of the Outline Soil Resources Management Plan [APP-	Agreed

Reference	Sub-topic	NE Position	Applicants Position	Status
			280 REP3-098 are considered acceptable.	