

Date: 16 December 2025
Our ref: 534308
Your ref: **EN010170**



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Dear Sir/ Madam

NSIP Reference: EN010170

The Examining Authority's second written questions and requests for information (ExQ2).

Examining Authority's submission deadline: 17 December 2025

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is pleased to provide our answer to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions within the annex appended to this letter.

Natural England hopes our Deadline 3 answers are helpful and we will continue to work collaboratively with the Applicant to try and resolve the matters provided below.

For further advice on this consultation please contact the case officer Jessica James Jessica.james@naturalengland.org.uk and a copy to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully

Jessica James
Senior Officer
West Anglia Area Team
Natural England

Annex 1: Natural England's response to the Examining Authority's (ExA's) first written questions reference ExQ1

ExQ1	Question to:	Question and Answer:
7 Biodiversity, ecology and natural environment		
Q 2.7.6	Natural England	<i>Consultation on document and plans to be certified</i> The draft development consent order [CR1-014] currently provides for the statutory nature conservation body to be consulted on the final landscape and ecological management plan, ecological protection and mitigation strategy and biodiversity net gain strategy. Would Natural England wish to be consulted on any of the other documents and plans to be certified, as set out in Schedule 13, Part 1 of the draft order?
		<i>Yes, Natural England would like to be consulted.</i>

8. Habitats Regulations Assessment		
Q 2.8.1	Natural England	<i>Natural England Disturbance to species outside the Special Protection Area</i> Does the applicant's response to Issue reference NE-004 (Visual and noise disturbance) of the applicant's Responses to Deadline 1 Submissions document [REP2-050] adequately address Natural England's concerns in this regard? If not, please outline how the concerns could be addressed.
		<i>Yes, the applicants response to REP2-050 adequately addresses Natural England's concerns.</i>
Q 2.8.2	Natural England	<i>Natural England Functionally Linked Land Methodology</i> Although the use of a "land parcel scale" in determining FLL was approved by Natural England, the applicant's response at NE-003 of its Responses to Written Representations at Deadline 1 [REP2-048] sets out that a "land parcel scale" was not used in determining FLL. Does this affect Natural England's conclusions on the approach to determining FLL?

		<i>Natural England have agreed the approach to determining FLL with the client. The use of 'land parcel scale' is just a different term than expected and caused confusion. Natural England can conclude they have agreed the approach to determining FLL.</i>
Q 2.8.3	Natural England The Applicant	<p><i>Special Protection Area qualifying features impact pathways</i> The updated HRA [REP1-153] sets out qualifying features of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area at paragraph 5.2.4. Para 5.2.6 states that "the site qualifies under article 4.2 of the Birds Directive as it is used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds (waterbirds as defined by the Ramsar Convention) in any season. In the non-breeding season, the area regularly supports 23,821 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1999/2000-2003/04), including wigeon, gadwall, mallard, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, great crested grebe, cormorant, bittern, golden plover, lapwing and coot". However, Table 2 (Summary of Screening Outcomes in Isolation and in Combination) (Page 32) lists only the following qualifying features and impact pathways for them: bittern, golden plover, gadwall, mute swan and waterbird. Should all the species listed at paragraph 5.2.6 be included in Table 2?</p>
		<i>Yes, all the species listed at paragraph 5.2.6 should be included in Table 3. Waterbird assemblage is a qualifying feature of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.</i>
Q 2.8.4	Natural England	<p><i>Ramsar site conservation objectives</i> To clarify question 9.0.10 of the Examining Authority's Written Questions 1 [PD-007], please confirm whether the conservation objectives for the Special Protection Area which are set out in Natural England's response to the question (in its Responses to ExQ1 document [REP1- 181]) also apply to the Ramsar site.</p>
		<i>Natural England confirm the conservation objectives for the Special Protection Area also apply to the Ramsar site.</i>