

# **Green Hill Solar Farm**

## **EN010170**

# **Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 2 and Responses to Action Points**

Prepared by: Pinsent Masons LLP

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The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Rules 8(1)(c)



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## Issue Sheet

Report Prepared for: Green Hill Solar Farm

Examination Deadline 3

Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions and Responses at  
Issue Specific Hearing 2 and Responses to Action Points

**Prepared by**

Pinsent Masons LLP



## 1 Summary of Oral Submissions at Issue Specific Hearing 2

Agenda Item	Comment
1. Welcome, introductions, arrangements for the Hearing	The ExA introduced the hearing and made some preliminary remarks.
2. Purpose of Issue Specific Hearing 2	<p>Purpose of the hearing is to address matters raised by the ExA following its consideration of the application documents.</p> <p>The following parties introduced themselves during ISH2:</p> <p>The Applicant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Claire Brodrick, Partner, Pinsent Masons</li><li>• Alison Dablin, Associate, Pinsent Masons</li><li>• Lesley Giles, Project Development Manager, Island Green Power</li><li>• Jane Crichton, Associate Director, Lanpro</li><li>• Charlotte Astrella, Senior EIA Consultant, Lanpro</li><li>• Chris Poole, Senior Ecologist, Clarkson and Woods</li><li>• Joshua Rigby, Manager, Water Environment, Arthian</li><li>• Chris Jackson, Director of Landscape Architecture, Lanpro</li><li>• Joshua Jones, Principal Environmental Consultant &amp; Senior Manager, Arthian</li><li>• Stuart Morse, Director, KMC</li><li>• Kirsty McCullen, Director, KMC</li><li>• Stephen Flynn, Senior Planner, Lanpro (virtual)</li><li>• Paul Gregory, BSTandT (virtual)</li><li>• Alexandra Clacy, Environmental Engineer, Arthian (virtual)</li><li>• Alex Lowe, Associate Director (Arboriculture and Ecology), Lanpro (virtual)</li></ul> <p>Si Gillett, Humbeat (virtual)Milton Keynes City Council ("MKCC")</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elizabeth Verdegem, Team Leader, Development Management</li></ul> <p>North Northamptonshire Council ("NNC")</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gary Grant, Barrister at Kings Chambers</li><li>• Ryan Mills, Chartered Landscape Architect Consultant</li><li>• Nicola Thompson, Planning Consultant</li><li>• Sven Rufus, Ecologist</li></ul> <p>West Northamptonshire Council ("WNC")</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nicky Scaife, Major Projects Team Lead</li></ul> <p>Other Interested Parties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Richard Humphreys KC, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar</li><li>• Carly Tinkler, Chartered Landscape Architect, Stop Green Hill Solar</li><li>• Marion Turner-Hawes, on behalf of the Wellingborough Walks Action Group</li></ul>





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Michael Griffiths, Lavendon Resident and Stop Green Hill Solar</li><li>• Professor Peter Dobson, Oxford University, specialism in battery safety</li><li>• Robin Aitken, Stop Green Hill Solar</li><li>• Keith Burrel, local resident</li></ul>
<b>3.1 Matters for Discussion</b> 3.1 Matters for Discussion Introduction to agenda item 3	N/A
<b>3.2 Effects for Ecology and Biodiversity</b> Effects for Ecology and Biodiversity Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [APP-056], [APP-171], [REP1-023], [REP1-033], [REP1-137], [REP1-142], [REP1-143]. The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to ecology and biodiversity matters since ISH1, including: <i>a) Effects on internationally designated sites and protected species, including bats</i> <i>b) Effects on trees and hedgerow, including ancient woodland buffer zones</i> The ExA will invite interested parties (IPs) to comment on the applicant's position in respect of ecology and biodiversity effects. The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect of the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.	<u>Effects on internationally designated sites and protected species, including bats</u> Chris Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, explained with regard to the Habitats Regulations Assessment and the effects of the scheme on Functionally Linked Land (FLL) associated with the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, that discussions with Natural England have continued. An updated draft of the Statement of Common Ground is currently with Natural England for their review and input. A revised version of the Habitats Regulations Assessment [REP1-153] was submitted at Deadline 1. The minor updates were generally in response to various Examining Authority questions and consultation from other stakeholders. Other updates included the removal of a single small field (FF16) from the precautionary FLL mitigation offering, given the need to instate a hedgerow along the boundary of the field for visual screening, rendering it unlikely to be suitable for use by golden plover. This reduces the precautionary FLL mitigation land offering by approximately 1.86 ha. However, this is not considered to be a significant change, given that the total area of precautionary mitigation land provided is still 73.79ha (previously 75.65ha), and still significantly exceeds the baseline area of FLL identified on a precautionary basis. Following comments from Natural England and as outlined in response [NE-004] in the Applicant Responses to Deadline 1 Submissions [REP2-050] document, the FLL mitigation fields will be available for birds prior to the commencement of development on adjacent fields and will be maintained as suitable for use by the target species for the duration of the construction phase. This change will be reflected in a revised version of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Revision B [EX3/GH7.4_B] to be submitted at Deadline 3. It is acknowledged that birds within FLL mitigation fields during construction may be disturbed by noise and visual disturbance associated with construction work in adjacent fields. The Applicant will look to discuss any practicable and proportionate additional mitigation measures with Natural England as part of the Statement of Common Ground process. With regards to other protected species, updated versions of several technical appendices were submitted at Deadline 1 which included final results of ecological surveys completed in Spring 2025. These final surveys were in relation to Green Hill A.2 only and related to bats (ES Appendix 9.6 – Bat Surveys) [REP1-047], otters and water voles (ES Appendix 9.7 – Otter and Water Vole Surveys) [REP1-049], and breeding birds (ES Appendix 9.8 – Breeding Bird Surveys) [REP1-051]. No significant survey findings were returned, meaning these final surveys did not result in any changes to the assessment of impacts on these species. In addition, final walkover surveys of parts of the Cable Route Corridor, which were previously inaccessible, were completed; the results of these surveys were also submitted at Deadline 1 through updates to ES Appendix 9.2 – Habitat Surveys [REP1-045] and ES Appendix 9.13 - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment [REP1-043]. Mr Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed the inclusion of this new data within the BNG assessment resulted in a very minor change to the outcome of the assessment (with the Scheme anticipated to result in a net gain of +70.66% in habitat units, rather than the previous +70.68% net gain. This represents a very comparable result to the previous assessment.  <u>Effects on trees and hedgerow, including ancient woodland buffer zones</u> Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant, provided two updates. Update on discussions with Wellingborough Walks Action Group ("WWAG") As set out in the Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 1 and Responses to Action Points [REP1-162] the Applicant's arboricultural and planning consultants met with Wellingborough Walks Action Group virtually on the 6 November 2025 to undertake an orientation session to signpost Wellingborough Walks Action Group to the arboricultural mitigation and explain where this mitigation is secured in the appropriate management plans and, in turn, secured through the Requirements in Schedule 2 to the Draft



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	<p>DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C].</p> <p>Before this meeting, the Applicant sent an email to WWAG on the 31 October 2025 with a link to those specific references in the DCO submission where mitigation is located and secured. Marion Turner-Hawes of WWAG sent an email on the 7 November 2025 with queries on the tree survey methodology which the Applicant responded to on the 10 November 2025 setting out how the tree survey was undertaken and how different elements such as group of trees, woodlands and hedgerows were assessed. Then a subsequent email was received from Marion Tuner-Hawes 12 November 2025 seeking clarification on tree and hedgerow loss and retention which the Applicant responded to on the 18 November 2025, signposting to the specific commitments in the DCO to minimise tree and hedgerow removal and secure the mitigation strategy.</p> <p>General Update</p> <p>Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed an arboricultural survey was undertaken across all Sites and the Cable Route Corridor by an arboricultural consultant. The results of the tree survey are provided in the Environmental Statement Chapter 19: Arboriculture [APP-056] as well as the Environmental Statement Appendix 19.2 Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171].</p> <p>Effects to ancient and veteran trees and ancient woodland within the Sites were scoped into the Environmental Statement as well as effects to all trees and woodlands within the Cable Route Corridor. The assessment found that there will be no arboricultural effects on ancient and veteran trees and ancient woodland within the Sites. The assessment also concluded that, as a worst case, there will be two moderate residual effects to trees within the Cable Route Corridor. The first moderate effect would occur from the removal of Category B trees of moderate quality within the Cable Route Corridor. It should be noted that this is based on a precautionary assessment of tree removal within the Cable Route Corridor as a worst case, and in practice impacts are likely to be lower as the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171] seeks to avoid tree removal as far as practicable and subject to engineering constraints. The second moderate effect would result from canopy lifting, required to one Category A high quality tree to achieve a visibility splay for an access to the Cable Route Corridor near Green Hill A.2. Again, this was a precautionary assessment, and this impact could potentially be avoided through further detailed design of the Cable Route Corridor access post-DCO consent.</p> <p>Mr Lowe continued to explain that existing farm tracks within the ancient woodland buffer zones of Horn Wood (Green Hill F) and Three Shires Wood (Green Hill G) will be improved for lengths of 840 metres and 24 metres respectively. Whilst farm tracks already exist in these proposed access track locations, the Applicant has committed to not using these tracks during the construction stage as they are located within the ancient woodland buffer zones. For their use during the operation stage only, any required improvements to the existing farm tracks will be undertaken using a 'no-dig' method of installing hard surfacing to avoid harm to the roots of trees on the edge of the ancient woodlands as secured in the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171]. Minor pruning work may be required to trees next to the sections of access track to provide clearance for operational vehicles. All tree work will be undertaken in accordance with arboricultural good practice as secured in the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171]. Negligible impacts to trees on the edge of the ancient woodlands are identified, resulting in a minor residual effect to woodland edge trees within Horn Wood and Three Shires Wood. This is due to the precautionary approach of assuming pruning work will be required as the worst case in the Environmental Statement Chapter for Arboriculture.</p> <p>A robust package of mitigation measures is secured within the DCO including commitments to not remove any ancient or veteran trees or Category A trees of high quality within the Cable Route Corridor as well as tree protection fencing throughout construction to ensure trees can be retained safely. These measures are detailed in the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement and further committed to in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [APP-545], Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan [APP-546] and Outline Decommissioning Statement [APP-547].</p> <p>Mr Lowe concluded, the effects to trees and ancient woodlands remain unchanged since Issue Specific Hearing 1.</p> <p>Details on the extents of hedgerow losses anticipated to facilitate access for the construction and operation of the Scheme are provided in Section 1.2: Approach to Construction and Maintenance Access Gaps at Hedgerows of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EX3/GH7.4_B]. This approach to hedgerow removal will be secured through Requirement 7 of the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C] and finalised in the detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan post consent.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, turned to interested parties for their comments.</p> <p>Mrs Turner-Hawes, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, expressed concern about the powers contained in the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C] to remove trees and hedgerows.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that, as discussed in ISH1, the powers contained in the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C] are limited by Article 40 (Felling or lopping of trees and removal of hedgerows). Removal of trees and hedgerows must be set out in the detailed</p>



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	<p>Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (see Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [REP1-137]), which must be approved by the relevant planning authority under Requirement 7 of Schedule 2 to the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C]. Ms Brodrick noted that the Applicant must also comply with Schedule 16 of the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C] in respect of the discharge requirements. As part of this process, the Applicant must identify whether the detailed design is likely to result in materially new or different environmental effects compared to those identified in the Environmental Statement.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick further explained that this approach is necessary because the exact cable route will not be known until the detailed design phase. Statutory powers over the entirety of the hedgerow are therefore needed to allow for the micro-siting process.</p> <p>Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant, summarised the Environmental Statement Appendix 19.2 Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171/GH6.3.19.2] which concluded that, at the solar PV sites, seven individual trees may need to be removed, with the partial removal of two groups of trees. At the cable corridor route, there are more potential tree removals, with a maximum removal of ninety-eight trees, twenty-eight groups of trees and the partial removal of up to two woodlands. The removals are assessed on a precautionary basis. In areas of the cable route where there will be open cut trenches, all trees that bisect the cable route corridor have been shown to be removed.</p> <p>Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant, highlighted that micro siting will reduce the level of tree removals and that there are robust measures in place to limit tree removal where practicable, including an arboriculture consultant being present to advise on tree removal and the use of protective fencing. Mr Lowe, noted that for any trees inevitably needing removal, there are robust compensatory measures in the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Revision B [EX3/GH7.4_B].</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, added that there are obligations within the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan Revision B [EX3/GH7.4_B] to avoid tree removal wherever practicable, but that this will need to be balanced with other constraints. Ms Brodrick gave ground constraints and the crossing of existing utilities as examples. Ms Brodrick also noted that the hedgerow and tree removal assessment had been done on a worst-case scenario basis.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked if the Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones would fall within the Order Limits in respect of the solar PV sites and the cable route corridor.</p> <p>Mr Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed the Ancient Woodland area is almost entirely offsite and outside the Order Limits. Buffers are to be applied where the thirty meter buffer area intersects with the Order Limits.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, noted that Works Plan [EX3/GH2.4_D] currently permits stated works in the Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones, which is inconsistent with the Ancient Woodland Strategy, and asked whether the thirty meter buffer zones could be excluded from the work polygons on the works plans to give clarity on the matter.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, took this as an action point to review any areas of inconsistency and assess any reasons for such inconsistency. Ms Brodrick noted that the Works Plan [EX3/GH2.4_D] is just one control mechanism which should be read in conjunction with Concept Design Parameters and Principles [REP1-151/7.17A]. Ms Brodrick also noted that it is typical for the works area to be wide but subject to commitments in the management plans for example on drainage.</p> <p><i>Post Hearing Note:</i></p> <p><i>As set out in Table 19.19 of ES Chapter 19: Arboriculture [APP-056], five areas of ancient woodland lie within 50 m of the Order Limits. Of these, two (Horn Wood and Threeshire Wood) contain locations where works fall within their respective ancient woodland buffer zones. The relevant Works Nos. associated with these areas are 8a, 8b, 10a, 1d and 6.</i></p> <p><i>The Works Plans act as a control mechanism, defining where authorised development listed in Schedule 1 may occur. However, the implementation and management of works are further governed by additional controls, including the Concept Design Parameters and Principles [REP1-151] and the relevant management plans, such as the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131], Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy [REP1-140] which are secured by Requirement of the DCO (see the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C] and will be submitted for approval to the relevant local planning authority or authorities in advance of starting the relevant phase of works.</i></p> <p><i>As outlined in ES Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-033] 19: Arboriculture [APP-056], construction traffic will not use access tracks located within Veteran Tree/Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones. Instead, construction traffic will be routed outside these buffer zones, as secured in the Table 3.13 Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131]. During construction Biodiversity Protection Fencing will be</i></p>





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	<p><i>installed to protect the ancient woodland as secured in the Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy [REP1-140] section 3.3.</i></p> <p><i>Where access tracks are required within Veteran Tree/Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones for operation, these access tracks will be constructed using a 'no-dig' solution, and all excavation within these buffer zones will be avoided, as secured Table 3.13 in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131].</i></p> <p><i>Works 10 (a) is included as this enables the creation of permissive paths for the exclusive use of pedestrian users. Works No. 6 enables various works such as landscaping and planting, as well as the improvement, maintenance, and use of existing private tracks. Both Works 10(a) and 6 are not expected to give rise to any significant effects and will be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures set out in the relevant management plans referenced above.</i></p> <p><i>Works 1(d) extends across a broader area of the solar sites, and the precise cabling locations will be determined during detailed design; which will, however, be undertaken in accordance with the management plans and design parameters set out above.</i></p> <p><i>Further detail on the works within buffer zones will be provided in the signposting document for the mitigation measures linked to action point 2, which will be submitted at Deadline 4.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, noted that decommissioning works may be needed for Three Shires Way and Horn Wood. The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131] states that all excavation within ancient woodland buffer zones will be avoided, and makes provisions for measures where construction activities must occur in root protection areas. Taken together, the measures in the oCEMP the ExA queried whether there was any uncertainty as to whether development would or would not occur within the Ancient Woodland buffer zones. Ms Beeby queried whether the Applicant could provide clarity in respect of this.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, noted that as far as the Applicant is aware the mitigation measures for Ancient Woodland across the various management plans are consistent with one another. Ms Brodrick agreed that the Applicant would create a list of the various mitigations and where they are located, which will enable the Applicant to highlight any areas of inconsistency and subsequently address these by updating the management plans.</i></p> <p><i>Post Hearing Note: A signposting document for mitigation measures associated with ancient woodland buffer zones will be provided at Deadline 4 (14<sup>th</sup> January 2026).</i></p> <p><i>Notably, the following mitigation measures have been included for individual trees and woodland (including ancient woodland):</i></p> <p><i>Retained trees at the Sites will be protected throughout construction by the installation of perimeter fencing which will be installed at the start of construction works. Any trees at the Sites not protected by perimeter fencing will be protected with Tree Protection Fencing for the duration of construction – secured in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131];</i></p> <p><i>Trees along the Cable Route Corridor will also be protected with Tree Protection Fencing for the duration of works in a given section of the Cable Route Corridor – secured in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131];</i></p> <p><i>The aim of the tree protection fencing is to fence off the RPA of the tree to ensure it is protected from construction works. Once installed, tree protection fencing will not be moved or altered in any way without prior consultation and sign off from the ACoW. If fencing does need to be moved back to create construction space, appropriate ground protection as per Section 7.9 below must be used to cover the exposed RPAs during works until such time as the tree protection fencing can be reinstated in its original position;</i></p> <p><i>Any excavation work within the RPAs of retained trees (such as for cable trenches, Access Tracks or Permanent/Temporary Access Points) will be undertaken using hand tools only and the root pruning methodology within the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement. All excavation work within RPAs will also be supervised by the ACoW – secured in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131];</i></p> <p><i>Dust and sediment controls will be in place for relevant works near ancient woodlands along the Cable Route Corridor and near the Sites - secured in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131];</i></p> <p><i>Construction traffic will not use access tracks within the Veteran Tree/Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones in order to avoid the pruning of veteran trees/trees within ancient woodland to achieve clearance heights for tall vehicles or machinery. Instead, construction traffic will be routed outside of Veteran Tree/Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones - secured in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131];</i></p> <p><i>Any access tracks (for use during operation/decommissioning) situated within Veteran Tree/Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones will be constructed using a 'no-dig' solution and all excavation within Veteran Tree/Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones will be avoided - secured in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [REP1-131].</i></p>





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	<p><i>Controls on the use of artificial lighting during the construction phase in proximity to woodland will be implemented to minimise artificial light spill onto these habitats – secured in the Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy [REP1-140].</i></p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked the Applicant to explain how the no dig surfacing approach proposed in respect of Horn Wood and Three Shires Way would operate to protect Ancient Woodland in relation to root damage and soil compaction in the root protection area.</p> <p>Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the improved track will be built on top of the existing ground level, meaning no excavation will be required and root impact avoided entirely.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked for further clarity in relation to whether heavy machinery will be required to complete no dig surfacing.</p> <p>Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that no dig surfacing works in a piecemeal manner in that the machinery will start at one end of the track and begin surfacing before it continues further along. Therefore, there will be no need for heavy machinery to go across the track before it had been improved. Mr Lowe also noted that at both Horn Wood and Three Shires Way, these are pre-existing farm tracks used by farm machinery, meaning there is a level of pre-existing compaction already present.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, noted that development can cause direct and indirect harm through pollution, noise and vibrations and asked whether the Applicant had addressed these potential harms in respect of the Ancient Woodland, particularly in relation to Construction Compound One adjacent to Sywell Wood.</p> <p>Mr Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, referred to Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [APP-046] which contains an assessment of disturbance through noise and vibrations where it is likely to arise from construction or decommissioning on each ecological receptor, including Ancient Woodland and the species inhabiting it.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked how the Applicant provided for protection of Sywell Wood specifically, as part of Ancient Woodland, as it is located next to the Green Hill C BESS area.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed the attendance of Paul Gregory to discuss BESS fire safety measures and mitigation. Ms Brodrick noted that the fire safety measures proposed have been considered appropriate for all receptors – both human and ecological. The Applicant will confirm the details of the assessment of impacts from a BESS fire on ancient woodland.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: Please refer to the response outlined in Appendix A of this document in regard to potential BESS impacts on Sywell Wood.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, referred to trenchless techniques such as horizontal directional drilling, which the Applicant has indicated will be used where micro-siting is not possible, and asked how these methods avoid impacts on trees and hedgerows.</p> <p>Mr Lowe, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that any impacts on Arboricultural are to be avoided by siting HDD entry and exit points more than fifteen meters away from the arboricultural features, as set out in Environmental Statement Appendix 19.2 Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171]. 15 metres is the maximum root protection area for a non-veteran tree. Trenchless solution depths must exceed one metre when passing underneath retained trees in order to avoid tree roots which typically exist within the upper 600mm of soil, as set out in [APP-171].</p> <p>Post Hearing Note:</p> <p>As outlined in section 7.14 (horizontal directional drilling) of Environmental Statement Appendix 19.2 Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [APP-171] the entry and exit points for trenchless solution machinery must be located outside the RPAs of retained trees. Fifteen metres is the maximum RPA for a non-veteran tree. Whereas the Buffer Zones for ancient and veteran trees were calculated separately by multiplying the stem diameter of the tree by 15 or by adding 5m to the maximum canopy spread, whichever was larger.</p> <p>Prior to trenchless solution (e.g. HDD) machinery being brought into the Cable Route Corridor, adjacent trees will be protected with post and rope tree protection fencing to create a Construction Exclusion Zone around the trees for the duration of works in the area. Trees immediately in front of or behind the trenchless solution obstacle (road, river etc) will also be trenched under in order to minimise tree impacts.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked whether the hedgerows in the Order Limits have been assessed in accordance with the “important hedgerows” provisions in Hedgerows Regulations 1997.</p> <p>Mr Poole, on behalf of the Applicant confirmed a survey was carried out to identify any important hedgerows and understands that the important hedgerow status has been provided for in each of the plans in Environmental Statement Figure 3.2 Important Hedgerows [APP-192] and</p>



Agenda Item	Comment
	<p>Hedgerow and Tree Protection Order Plan Revision B [EX3/GH2.11_B]</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, sought clarification on whether the assessments identifying important hedgerows were included in the documents referenced by Mr Poole.</p> <p>Mr Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, responded that he did not believe the raw survey data had been provided. The Applicant agreed to provide a summary explaining how the assessment of important hedgerows was carried out and by whom.</p> <p><i>Post Hearing Note: The following summary confirms how the survey and determination of important hedgerows was carried out.</i></p> <p><i>Determination of whether a hedgerow should be classified as 'Important' is based on a number of criteria including assessment of its likely historic value, ecological value, and landscape value. The criteria used to determine the 'Importance' of hedgerows are detailed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, and are split into Archaeology and History criteria (Criteria 1-5) and Wildlife and Landscape criteria (Criteria 6-8).</i></p> <p><i>Suitably competent ecologists at Clarkson &amp; Woods Ltd. assessed all hedgerows within the solar Sites and the Cable Route Corridor (where accessible) in relation to the 'Wildlife and Landscape' criteria in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Data pertaining to these criteria were collected during the ecological walkover surveys completed across the Sites and Cable Route Corridor, as well as a desk-based review of other datasets.</i></p> <p><i>Field data were collected during the extended UKHab walkover surveys, which recorded information relating to hedgerow structure, species composition (including woody species counts in accordance with the Hedgerow Regulations criteria), the presence of associated features (such as banks, ditches and hedgerow trees), the presence of gaps, and any indications of protected or notable species being present.</i></p> <p><i>These data were supplemented by a desk-based study utilising Ordnance Survey mapping, satellite imagery, and relevant open-source environmental datasets to determine the connectivity of hedgerows and the presence of adjacent bridleways and footpaths.</i></p> <p><i>It is worth noting that the assessment of a hedgerows Importance follows a nested structure, whereby only a subset of criteria may need to be passed for a hedgerow to be classified as Important. Where Importance could be determined solely from ecological field survey data (for example, a hedgerow where 7 woody species were recorded), no further desk-based assessment was conducted and no other criteria were assessed, as the feature had already met the criteria to be classified as Important.</i></p> <p><i>An assessment of historically significant hedgerows was undertaken by the historic environment team at Lanpro. The assessment examined records held on the Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record (HER), the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE) and the Historic England National Heritage List for England (NHLE). The holdings of the Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire Archives, together with on-line repositories for historical maps, plans and relevant documentary sources were consulted in accordance with guidelines laid down by the ClfA (2020). Online mapping resources and GIS-based web mapping services were also consulted including current and historical satellite imagery from Google Earth and Bing Aerial. GIS data produced as part of the Northamptonshire Mapping Programme (NCC 2013) was downloaded from the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), which also hosted GIS data produced as part of A GIS aided study of agriculture and landscape in Midland England (Williams et al. 2011). Numerous site visits were undertaken between 2024 and 2025 to verify the results of the desktop study.</i></p> <p><i>The resulting classification of hedgerows as 'Important' or 'Not Important' has therefore been derived from a combination of desktop studies, field survey evidence, professional judgement by competent ecology and heritage professionals, and supporting desk-based data, in full accordance with the requirements of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.</i></p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked how the Applicant will address the potential for post-construction pollution to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA following the post-construction identification of increased pollution levels at the Gwent Levels SSSI following the Llanwern solar plant development.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, restated that impacts from pollution during construction have been assessed in Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-033] with relevant mitigation measures detailed in the Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy Revision A [REP1-139] and Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan Revision A [REP1-131] and have been considered appropriate and proportionate for the scheme.</p>
3.3 Effects for water environment and food risk	<b>Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) safety and drainage</b>



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<p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [APP-107], [REP1-023], [REP1-053], [REP1-143].</p> <p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to water environment and flood risk matters, including:</p> <p><i>a) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) safety and drainage</i></p> <p><i>b) Off-site flood risk in Grendon</i></p> <p><i>c) Off-site flood risk in Lavendon</i></p> <p>The ExA will invite interested parties (IPs) to comment on the applicant's position in respect of water environment and flood risk effects.</p> <p>The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect of the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.</p>	<p>Joshua Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant, explained the design for the BESS drainage and firewater containment is set out in the <b>Flood Risk Assessment [REP1-053]</b>, the <b>BESS Annex J [REP1-057]</b>, the <b>Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan [REP1-143]</b> and the <b>OCEMP [REP1-131]</b>. The updated <b>hydrology chapter [REP1-023]</b> summarises the full Scheme position.</p> <p>For the BESS site, the Environment Agency Flood Map for planning shows parts of the area within which the BESS is proposed in Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3. However, to understand the actual flood behaviour on Site, the Applicant carried out detailed site specific hydraulic modelling which is reported in the <b>BESS Hydraulic Modelling Technical Note [REP2-052]</b> submitted at Deadline 2 and <b>Annex J [REP1-057]</b>.</p> <p>The modelling reflects the actual ground levels, the shape of the watercourses and the way overland flow-paths behave. It shows that the proposed BESS platforms sit outside areas of significant flood depth or hazard, including with consideration of climate change.</p> <p>The BESS operates as a dry facility. It does not use process water. The drainage system inside each BESS compound is lined, sealed and isolated from the ground. Under normal conditions, it remains dry. The only water that could enter it is rainfall or, in an emergency, firefighting water.</p> <p><b>Annex J [REP1-057]</b> also looks at a reasonable worst case. This is assessed as a fire occurring at the same time as a 1 in 10 year rainfall event. Even under that scenario the drainage behaves as a sealed containment area and keeps all water within the compound.</p> <p>In practice the system is designed to a much higher standard. The lined subbase will be sized for the 1 in 200 year rainfall event plus a 40% allowance for climate change. The storage volumes in <b>Annex J [REP1-057]</b> (and <b>Annex E [REP1-055]</b> in relation to Green Hill C) exceed the capacity needed for rainfall and firewater at both BESS locations.</p> <p>The system is also isolatable. Automatic shut off valves close on heat or smoke detection. Any water held in the system is then tested and discharged safely, or removed from the Site, under the arrangements set out in the <b>outline Battery Safety Management Plan [REP1-143]</b>. These measures ensure physical containment, automatic isolation and controlled discharge.</p> <p><b>Off-site flood risk in Grendon</b></p> <p>Joshua Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that Grendon Brook runs along the eastern boundary of the BESS1 area, and an ordinary drainage ditch at BESS2 flows northwards into the River Nene, which is located to the north of the Grendon substation. Given this local hydrological network and the wider influence of the River Nene system, Site specific hydraulic modelling was undertaken to assess the interaction between the Scheme and these watercourses. The hydraulic modelling is detailed in the <b>BESS Hydraulic Modelling Technical Note [REP2-052/8.2.2]</b> submitted at Deadline 2 and in <b>Environmental Statement Appendix 10.11 Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Annex J Green Hill BESS [REP1-057]</b>.</p> <p>Mr Rigby noted that the modelling shows that the Scheme layout avoids areas of significant flood hazard and therefore the Scheme as proposed does not alter floodplain behaviour. There is no displacement of flood storage. There is no measurable change to flood levels or routing on the Brooks, or downstream. Modelling shows that parts of Station Road and adjacent access tracks can flood. However, this reflects existing baseline behaviour and is not caused or worsened by the Scheme.</p> <p>Mr Rigby confirmed that during construction these conditions will be managed through the <b>Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (Revision A) [REP1-145]</b>. The OCTMP sets out weather dependent controls, temporary routing and safe working procedures. As is standard for rural construction sites. They ensure construction access does not increase flood risk and does not affect the water environment.</p> <p>For operation, the BESS and substation do not rely on continuous access during bad weather. The containment and drainage systems work independently of access conditions and access can be managed around adverse weather.</p> <p>Taking all this together, the Scheme is neutral in terms of flood risk in Grendon.</p> <p><b>Off-site flood risk in Lavendon</b></p> <p>Mr Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Applicant has also carried out a separate hydraulic modelling study for Lavendon as set out in the Hydraulic Modelling Technical Note Lavendon <b>[REP2-053/8.2.3]</b>. The work was commissioned to understand the specific flood mechanisms affecting the village and to test whether measures at Green Hill G, or close to it, could reduce the flood risk that Lavendon currently experiences.</p> <p>The modelling shows that flooding in Lavendon is caused by several converging flowpaths from the north, northeast and east. Only some of these pass through or are generated from Green Hill G.</p> <p>As a result, the potential measures tested within Green Hill G, such as small bunds or offline storage, produced negligible reductions in flood depth in Lavendon. They did not change the flood extent or the number of properties affected.</p> <p>This confirms two things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. the Scheme does not increase flood risk in Lavendon; and</li><li>2. on-Site measures at Green Hill G cannot meaningfully reduce the existing flood risk in the village.</li></ol>



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	<p>However, the modelling does provide a clear evidence base that may help any future catchment scale work by the other interested parties.</p> <p>In summarising the Applicant's position, Mr Rigby explained that across all locations the evidence in <b>ES Chapter 10 Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage [REP1-023]</b>, the <b>Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report [REP1-053]</b>, the <b>Annexes (particularly Annex J [REP1-057] and Annex E [REP1-055])</b> and the <b>Technical Notes [REP2-052] and [REP2-053]</b> demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The BESS is safe and fully contained.</li><li>• The Scheme does not increase flood risk in Grendon or Lavendon.</li><li>• Construction access will be managed safely under the CTMP.</li><li>• All embedded mitigation is secured through the DCO Requirements.</li></ul> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, turned to the interested parties for comment.</p> <p>Richard Humphreys KC, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, asked the Applicant how emergency access to the BESS would be maintained if Station Road were flooded, given the existing flooding issues on that road.</p> <p>Mr Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant, responded that the access does not flood during a one in 10 year predictive flood event. Therefore, the likelihood of a fire (already a low-risk occurrence) coinciding with a storm in excess of the one in 10 year storm is considered de minimis.</p> <p>.</p> <p>In response to comments made by Michael Griffiths relating to flooding, Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant advised that the Applicant would respond at Deadline 4 to Mr Griffith's written submissions made at Deadline 3. In addressing the assertion that sequential testing has not been carried out, Ms Brodrick advised that this is set out in Appendix B to the Planning Statement <b>[REP2-043]</b>.</p> <p><b>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant's response to the Engineering Report: Assessment of Surface Water Runoff from Proposed Green Hill Solar Farm (Green Hill G) [REP1-215] is set out in the Applicants Response to Deadline 1 Submissions, under section 3.1 Stop Green Hill Solar (SGHS-001 to SGHS-013) [REP2-050].</b></p> <p>Mr Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that whilst <b>Annex I – Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy – Green Hill G [APP-107]</b> states the area had not experience historic flooding, this does not mean that the site had not flooded. The Applicant has used the relevant data from the Environment Agency and anecdotal evidence at public hearings to underpin the assessment. The statement in this report is that there is no recorded flooding on Green Hill G, which the Applicant believes is correct.</p> <p>Mr Rigby noted that historic flooding in Lavendon is acknowledged. Flooding on sites adjacent to water courses will always occur. The purpose of the assessments reported in the <b>Environmental Statement Chapter 10 Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage (Revision A) (Clean) [REP1-023]</b> and the <b>Flood Risk Assessment [REP1-053]</b> is to set out how the Scheme will not exacerbate the existing flooding.</p> <p>Mr Rigby advised that it is commonly asserted that solar panels are hard-standing, however this is to ignore the fact that the underlying ground will remain and will be improved as permeable grassland. The baseline at Green Hill G is as an agricultural site. With regard to the geology on the site, the Applicant relies on surface water calculations which are nationally recognised. The baseline conditions remain the baseline conditions, and will not be affected by the Scheme. If there is an existing surface water runoff from a site, this will not increase as a result of the Scheme due to the embedded mitigations.</p> <p>Mr Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant addressed the surface water issue raised by Mr Griffiths and explained that areas usually considered high and moderate risk areas, are assessed by the Applicant to be low risk due to the inclusion of embedded mitigation. Mr Rigby explained that usually, surface water follows topographical low points and there are additional offsets from ordinary and main rivers and surface water flow routes which means the risk is low.</p> <p>Mr Rigby, on behalf of the Applicant, also confirmed hydraulic modelling for Lavendon was undertaken and was submitted at Deadline 2 <b>[REP2-053]</b>.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, noted that the Applicant was waiting for a response from the Environment Agency as to the nature of the modelling and whether the Environment Agency was satisfied with the level of detail provided by the Applicant. When a response has been received, the Applicant will set out the position in an update to the Statement of Common Ground with the EA. The EA has also requested some further information in relation to certain flood risk activities.</p> <p>The Applicant's position is that if the Environment Agency is satisfied with the level of detail provided by the Applicant, that should be satisfactory for the Secretary of State to make a decision.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked whether underdeveloped buffer zones of a minimum of nine meters will be maintained adjacent to field drains around field GF13.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed the standard nine metre offset is secured, but the location in the documents would be confirmed in writing.</p> <p><b>Post Hearing Note: The Concept Design Parameters and Principles (Revision A) [REP1-151/7.17A] confirms in Table 1 that the Work No. 1 will be offset</b></p>





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	<p>by a minimum of 8m, or 9m in the areas of West Northamptonshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council. This includes any field drains in field GF13 within Green Hill G.</p> <p>The 8m and 9m buffer has been incorporated into the design of the Scheme with all infrastructure associated with the Scheme located outside of the buffers. Buffers are measured from the bank top of the watercourse. The buffers have been used to create a set of design parameters in which above-ground infrastructure has been located and so has been incorporated through design.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel member, noted concerns raised by Stop Green Hill that mole or land drains could be damaged which could increase the risk of surface water flooding and asked what measures will be taken to prevent this.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, in addressing issues raised in relation to drainage, confirmed that mitigation measures will depend on which element of the Scheme is being referred to. Within the solar PV sites, there are drainage mitigation measures for areas of hardstanding land that would need to operate in combination with any existing field drainage. There are commitments in the construction methodology to try to avoid damage to existing drainage, and to repair any damage caused. Ms Brodrick explained that for the cable route corridor, the mitigation will depend on the construction methodology used. It may be necessary to drill below existing drainage in order to protect it, whilst in other areas where installing the cable can be carried out via open cut trenching, mitigation measures will be put in place and the current drainage system restored as part of completion and restoration of the site post-construction.</p> <p><b>Post Hearing Note:</b> Mitigation measures relating to existing drainage (including land and mole drains) are secured through the <b>OCEMP [REP-131]</b> (Table 3.4 and Table 3.14), supported by the <b>Outline Soil Management Plan [APP-550]</b> which outlines measures for soil management and field drainage to avoid water logging in Section 5, and the <b>Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy [REP1-053]</b>, specifically section 3.2 and 4. These documents commit to proportionate measures to avoid unnecessary damage to existing drainage where encountered during construction, together with appropriate protection, temporary controls, and reinstatement or repair of any drainage affected by construction activities. For the Cable Route Corridor, mitigation is construction-method and location specific, with trenchless installation used where required to avoid impacts, and open cut sections reinstated as part of completion and restoration.</p> <p><b>BESS Fire Safety</b></p> <p>In response to comments made by Professor Dobson relating to BESS safety, Ms Brodrick on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the approach taken to BESS safety is consistent with other NSIPs with co-located energy storage. Battery storage safety is dealt with by Requirement 6 in Schedule 2 to the <b>Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C]</b>. The <b>Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan (Revision A) [REP1-143/7.7A]</b> must be approved by the relevant planning authority before any works on BESS can occur and the Plan must be substantially in accordance with the outline plan. The relevant planning authority must consult North Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue and the Environment Agency before the Plan is finalised.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick agreed with Professor Dobson that the DCO Application is limited in detail about the specific kind of BESS technology to be used, but this is consistent with other DCO applications and allows developers to use the technology which is most up to date at the time of construction. The footprint of BESS is secured in the DCO application, but the specific information on spacing will be provided at the detailed design phase.</p> <p>Paul Gregory, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) may be located on Green Hill BESS and Green Hill C. Measures to ensure the safety of the BESS, including in relation to fire risk, are included in the <b>Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan [REP1-143]</b> and secured by Requirement 6 of Schedule 2 to the <b>Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C]</b>.</p> <p>The <b>Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan (OBSSMP) [REP1-143]</b> has been prepared to prevent and fully mitigate the risks from a BESS failure event. The Safety Objectives are listed in Section 2.4 of the OBSSMP.</p> <p>The Applicant has ensured site design is fully compliant with National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance and has worked closely with Northamptonshire Fire &amp; Rescue Service (NFRS) to address some site specific operational and access requirements for NFRS.</p> <p>Section 5 of the OBSSMP covers all requisite firefighting considerations including, fire breaks, firefighting water containment, firefighting water supply requirements, all aspects of Emergency Planning including ERP and RM plans, and summaries of Plume Study consequence modelling to validate BESS site locations.</p> <p>The Applicant and NFRS have signed a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) <b>[REP2-063]</b> which demonstrates that the Applicant has followed all key BESS safety guidance and has fully assessed fire, explosion, toxic emission, and flood risks. The SOCG confirms the Applicant commits to the prioritising the following four key safety areas identified by NFRS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Guidance for design of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) sites</li><li>2. BESS Safety Standard commitments for the Scheme.</li><li>3. BESS area firefighting provisions and expectations for NFRS involvement.</li><li>4. NFRS site access and operational control requirements</li></ol> <p>The Applicant has worked with NFRS to ensure that emergency access routes are appropriate for NFRS appliances to operate in all weather conditions. Access</p>



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	<p>roads will be maintained to ensure vegetation does not impede vehicle access.</p> <p>The Applicant has agreed appropriate vehicle passing places with NFRS on all BESS area access roads.</p> <p>The Applicant confirms that at the detailed design stage NFRS welfare areas and incident observation areas for the BESS areas will be fully agreed and accommodated for the scheme.</p> <p>Mr Gregory referenced paragraphs 4.1.24 - 4.1.29 of the <b>Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan Revision A [REP-143]</b> which cover key BESS enclosure design feature including Ingress Protection (IP) ratings. At the detailed design stage, the Applicant will only select a BESS design with an appropriate IP rating for the Green Hill BESS and Green Hill C BESS sites.</p> <p>The OBSSMP stipulates that the Applicant at detailed design will only select a BESS system that as mandated under NFPA 855 (2026 Revision) must have undertaken Large Scale Fire Testing (LSFT) as part of UL 9540A tests and / or 3rd party full scale destruction testing. This testing involves burning the full BESS system to validate safe equipment spacing and performance test active and passive mitigation systems integrated into the BESS design. The objective of the test is to evaluate the thermal exposure impacts from a developed BESS enclosure, to determine propagation risk to adjacent BESS or equipment. Testing also defines the length of burn, duration of Peak Heat Release Rate, maximum burn temperatures, etc.</p> <p>The detailed design phase of the Scheme will consider the lifecycle of the battery system from installation (during the construction phase of the Scheme) to decommissioning. At the detailed design stage, the selected BESS will have undertaken Large Scale Fire Testing (LSFT) to fully inform inputs for risk assessment tools which will be utilised together with detailed consequence modelling to provide a comprehensive site operations and emergency response safety audit. LSFT of the selected BESS design is conducted to establish minimum equipment spacing distances (no fire propagation to adjacent BESS or infrastructure) and site specific consequence modelling will provide a clear, evidence-based case for the final BESS area installation plans at the detailed design phase and will be agreed with NFRS.</p> <p>The Applicant will also commission site specific heat flux and flame tilt consequence modelling to account for site topography and wind conditions to establish final equipment spacing distances for the Scheme.</p> <p>The Applicant confirms that in line with NFCC and NFPA 855 guidance that in all BESS failure scenarios NFRS are only expected to take a defensive firefighting strategy i.e. observation and only applying boundary cooling if necessary. The BESS area water supply system for NFRS allows for ease of access in all weather conditions and ensures that firefighters do not have to operate within a smoke plume.</p> <p>Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) can only be drafted when based upon a specific BESS design. Key safety content requires that all equipment within the BESS area is defined, battery system operating limits and test data are fully defined, and the BESS failure protection system is defined. Incident response tactics requires significant test data and rigorous consequence modelling from the specific BESS design to develop safe protocols for incident response.</p> <p>Section 5.4.4 of the OBSSMP stipulates that the ERP will follow NFCC and NFPA 855 (2026) guidelines and stipulates the minimum content that an ERP must contain, including:</p> <p><i>"Emergency procedures for all credible hazards and risks, including building, infrastructure and vehicle fire, wildfires, impacts on local respondents, impacts on transport infrastructure."</i></p> <p>Section 6.1.8 of the OBSSMP stipulates:</p> <p><i>"Emergency Response Plan(s) covering construction, operation and decommissioning phases will be developed once a construction team, and an operator have been appointed. These plans will be developed in consultation NFRS and other local emergency services to include the adequate provision of firefighting equipment onsite and ensure that fire, smoke, and any release of toxic gases from a thermal runaway incident does not significantly affect site operatives, first responders, and the local community."</i></p> <p>This is secured through Requirement 6 of Schedule 2 to the <b>Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C]</b>.</p> <p>As recommended in National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) draft revised guidelines (2024) the Applicant commissioned a Plume Analysis study BESS Fire Emissions Modelling Report <b>[APP-167]</b> to assess the environmental impact of a BESS thermal runaway incident to sensitive receptors within a 1 km radius of the potential BESS areas (Green Hill BESS and Green Hill C), to assess the potential to cause air quality impacts during a BESS fire. Concentrations of carbon monoxide (CO), formaldehyde, hydrogen chloride (HCl), hydrogen cyanide (HCN), hydrogen fluoride (HF), ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulates, were modelled using Atmospheric Dispersion Modelling Software (ADMS) to determine the effects of BESS fire emissions on human health. In line with NFCC recommendations, a high-level visibility assessment has also been undertaken using the modelled particulates results to determine the effect of BESS fire emissions on visibility to the local road network.</p> <p>The BESS Fire Emissions Modelling concludes that there are no significant impacts on sensitive receptors. Nonetheless, at the detailed design stage the Applicant will commission a BESS system and site specific Plume Analysis study to assess the environmental impact of a site incident to sensitive receptors within a 1 km radius. The effects within 1km will be the same or greater than effects at 5km due to the way gas disperses and in accordance with guidance. Toxic gas emissions to sensitive receptors must be below relevant public health exposure limit guidelines when the battery system of a BESS is fully consumed (burnt out), production of Particulate Matter (PM) and a visibility impact assessment on any transport links within a 1 km radius of the BESS area will also be</p>



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	<p>included. The Emergency Response Plan (ERP) produced at the detailed design stage (template outlined in Section 5.4.4) will incorporate all necessary emergency response procedures and actions based upon thermal runaway test data supplied by the BESS system provider.</p> <p>Volumes of toxic gases and heavy metal particulates that can be emitted during thermal runaway are often partially contained within the BESS enclosure (modules, racks, interior structure of BESS enclosure) and not vented into the external environment. The EPRI white paper "The Evolution of Battery Energy Storage Safety Codes and Standards (2023)" notes: 'While laboratory testing identifies toxic compounds that are released by burning Li ion batteries, these may be consumed internally, combusted, or may react to form other non-toxic compounds before being released to the environment. In recent events where batteries have burned in this fashion, fire services have announced that nearby air-quality monitoring has shown the air quality to be at safe levels.'</p> <p>Mr Gregory noted Professor Dobson's concern regarding toxic material from the Moss Landing fire and confirmed that this is not relevant to the Scheme. The type of battery at Moss Landing would not be used on the Scheme.</p> <p><b>Post hearing note:</b> Professor Dobson's reference to the Moss Landing fire is not relevant to the Scheme because BESS fires involving air cooled, pouch cell systems battery systems skew BESS global failure data. Air cooled, NMC chemistry pouch cell systems will not be considered for the Scheme for safety reasons, batteries that may be selected do not contain nickel, manganese, or cobalt separator materials. These NMC battery systems were involved in 31 from 91 BESS failure events listed in the EPRI database. In 31 BESS failures recorded in South Korea between 2017-21 these systems were integrated in 18 (58%) BESS failures but only accounted for 30% of total BESS systems installed. Confirmed global BESS failures listed on the EPRI database (outside of South Korea) integrating these battery systems are 12 significant failure incidents at facilities in Drogenbos (Belgium), McMicken (AZ, USA), Carnegie Road Liverpool, 3 failures at Moss Landing (CA, USA), and 2 failures at Valley Center (CA, USA).</p> <p>Section 2.5 of the OBSMP lists the guidance documents and testing and safety standards considered by the Applicant have been used to inform the design of the scheme, which are BESS safety specific and include global or relevant UK guidance or standards.</p> <p>Sections 4.1.16 - 4.1.23 of the OBSMP details how the illustrative layout of the BESS area is fully compliant with NFCC guidance and NFPA 855 (2026) safety requirements. Large Scale Fire Testing (LSFT) of the selected BESS design to establish minimum equipment spacing distances and site specific consequence modelling will provide a clear, evidence-based case for the final BESS area installation plans at the detailed design phase and will be agreed with NFRS. An independent Fire Protection Engineer specialising in BESS will validate all UL 9540A, LSFT, and / or third party test and site specific consequence modelling data which has been provided. The Applicant emphasises that the OBSMP contains clear and precise information regarding the key BESS safety standards, safety codes, quality standards, and testing that will be required for the selected BESS design. Section 4 – Safe BESS design, provides comprehensive information including:</p> <p>4.1.1 The BESS will be designed to address prevailing industry standards and good practice at a time of design and implementation. BESS system and components used to construct the facility will be certified to UL 9540 (2023) and/or BS EN IEC 62933-5-2 (2020) standards (or any future standards which supersede this).</p> <p>4.1.2 As a minimum, the battery system will have completed unit or installation level UL 9540A (5th Edition) testing, the BESS enclosure will have completed large scale fire testing (LSFT) to demonstrate that loss will be safely limited to one BESS enclosure without the intervention of Fire Fighters. UL 9540A heat flux test data can establish safe distances between BESS enclosures and ESS equipment but will not be conclusive if full propagation of the battery system does not occur in the test.</p> <p>4.1.3 NFPA 855 (2026) currently provides the most comprehensive guidelines for BESS design and site installation specifications. BESS design structural integrity will be demonstrated through full-scale destruction performance testing and / or by integrating rigorously tested NFPA 69 (explosion prevention) and NFPA 68 (Explosion protection through deflagration venting) features. NFPA 855 (2026 revision) mandates that Large Scale Fire Testing (LSFT) which is full scale burn testing of the BESS system to validate safe equipment spacing, must be conducted and the BESS selected at detailed design must as a minimum have completed this testing under the UL 9540A test program or an accredited 3rd Party LSFT test program i.e. CSA, DNV, TUV SUD, etc. Richard Humphreys KC, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, noted there had been no reference to consultation with the Health and Safety Executive in devising the BESS Safety Plan.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, noted the work done in relation to BESS safety has been set out in detail by Mr Gregory and further work will be done as part of the discharge of Requirement 6 in relation to the <b>Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan</b> (Revision A) [REP1-143/7.7A] and as part of the detailed design stage. Ms Brodrick also noted that the Works Plans [REP1-007/2.4B] state where BESS is to be located and if they are to be located outside these parameters, the Applicant would need to apply to amend the Development Consent Order. Ms Brodrick confirmed the Health and Safety Executive had been included as a consultee for the Scheme but had not submitted any representations during scoping or following submission of the application.</p> <p><b>Post hearing note:</b> Please refer to the Applicants response to Action Point 3 within the Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 3 and Responses to Action Points [EX3/GH8.1.21] in regard to not including the Health and Safety as a consultee on the detailed Battery Storage Safety Management Plan.</p>
3.4 Effects for Landscape (including Design and Glint and Glare)	<p><b>Progress on discussions regarding viewpoints and photomontages</b></p> <p>Chris Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, noted a series of 'representative and specific viewpoints' are shown on Figures 8.10 [APP-308] to 8.10.5 [APP-313]. Verified photography and photomontages are shown on Figure 8.14.1 [APP-334] to Figure 8.14.NN13 [APP-400].</p>





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<p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [APP-042], [APP-045], [APP-052], [APP-078], [APP-079], [APP-082], [APP083], [APP-155] to [APP-165] (inclusive), [APP-193] to [APP-195] (inclusive), [APP-198] to [APP-200] (inclusive), [APP-202] to [APP-209] (inclusive), [APP-212] to [APP-216] (inclusive), [APP-219], [APP-220], [APP-259] to [APP-4288] (inclusive), [APP-308] to [APP-400] (inclusive), [APP-560], [APP-572], [AS-001], AS-002], [REP1-029], [REP1-031], [REP1- 039] to [REP1-042] (inclusive), [REP1-107] to [REP1-116] (inclusive), [REP1-137], [REP1-151], [REP2-005] to [REP2-042] (inclusive) and [REP2- 054].</p> <p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to landscape, design and glint and glare matters since ISH1, including:</p> <p>a) <i>Progress on discussions regarding viewpoints and photomontages, and</i></p> <p>b) <i>Progress on the matters under discussion detailed in the draft Statements of Common Ground and any remaining areas of disagreement, including the assessment of likely effects</i></p> <p>The ExA will invite IPs to comment on the applicant's position in respect of landscape, design and glint and glare matters.</p> <p>The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect to the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.</p>	<p>There are a total of 64 viewpoints covering the Study Areas for the Sites and the Cable Route Corridor. A total of 13 additional viewpoints have been included and photography undertaken as a result of Section 42 Consultation.</p> <p>MKCC advised in its Response to ExQ1 <b>[REP1-170]</b>, question 16.0.3, the location of additional viewpoints and photomontages. Email correspondence was sent to MKCC on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025 confirming, as summarised in reference MKCC-012 within the Applicant's Responses to Deadline 1 Submissions <b>[REP2-050]</b>, that the Applicant will undertake winter photography of the additional viewpoints requested and create the photomontages as requested.</p> <p>The Applicant received a response from MKCC confirming the precise locations of the desired additional viewpoints on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> December. Photography is scheduled for completion in December, and the Applicant aims to submit the photomontages by Deadline 4 or 5.</p> <p><b><i>Post Hearing Note: Photography of the viewpoints requested by MKCC took place on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2025. The photomontages are being created, and remain on track for submission by Deadline 4 or 5.</i></b></p> <p><b><u>Progress on the matters under discussion detailed in the draft Statements of Common Ground and any remaining areas of disagreement, including the assessment of likely effects</u></b></p> <p>Mr Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, noted that the Applicant discusses the SoCG at regular monthly meetings with the Host Local Authorities. The most recent meeting took place w/c 24<sup>th</sup> November and all Councils are currently reviewing the Statements of Common Ground, following the <b>Applicant's Response to Local Impact Reports [REP2-049]</b>.</p> <p>The Applicant has contacted the landscape consultant appointed by WNC and NNC, and the MKCC Landscape Officer to set up a meeting to discuss the matters still under discussion and hopes that an initial meeting will take before the Christmas break. The Applicant and the Landscape representative for WNC and NNC are meeting on 19 December 2025 to progress landscape matters in the SoCGs for two authorities . The Applicant emailed the MKCC Landscape Officer requesting a meeting to progress the SoCG on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025 – MKCC have yet to respond.</p> <p>The ExA Panel turned to interested parties for comment.</p> <p>In response to comments made on behalf of North Northamptonshire Council, Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Applicant had set out at ISH1 why a 60-year operational period is considered acceptable. The Applicant has also provided examples of other schemes granted for the same duration, as referenced by Mr Grant. While acknowledging that NPS EN-3 states 40 years as the typical, Ms Brodrick noted that it also allows Applicants to seek longer periods or a consent that is not time-limited.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick further clarified that although decision letters for other projects are helpful in showing how the ExA assessed those cases, they differ because those applications initially had no time limit. In contrast, this Application has presented information for a 60-year period from the outset, ensuring the worst-case scenario has been assessed throughout. Accordingly, the Applicant's position is that the 60-year period is justified, and the critical national priority need for solar energy generation is supported by the NPS EN-1.</p> <p><b><i>Post Hearing Note: There is discussion taking place on the 17 December 2025 between Highways Officers of North Northamptonshire Council and the Applicant's team, in relation to local roads and the potential for glint and glare impacts.</i></b></p> <p>In response to comments made by Carly Tinkler, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, relating to the LVIA methodology, Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, offered to respond to Ms Tinkler's comments in writing given time constraints.</p> <p><b><i>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant will submit a response to Ms Tinkler's comments at Deadline 4, in response to any written summary of these submissions submitted by Stop Green Hill Solar at Deadline 3.</i></b></p> <p>Mr Jackson, also on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the LVIA is an iterative document that has evolved throughout the application process. Mr Jackson noted that the LVIA methodology has been discussed extensively with Mr Mills (representing West and North Northamptonshire Councils) and is now included in the Statement of Common Ground. The approach proposed by Ms Tinkler differs from the Applicant's methodology. Mr Jackson emphasised that GLVIA Volume 3, published by the Landscape Institute, provides guidance rather than a prescriptive methodology, and the LVIA for the Green Hill Scheme complies with this guidance.</p> <p>The LVIA findings do not identify significant beneficial effects on landscape character or visual amenity. Where significant beneficial effects are recorded, these relate to landscape fabric, as discussed in paragraph 7.25. Published Landscape Character Guidelines and input from North Northamptonshire officers informed the Scheme design to align with its existing character. The intention is that mitigation measures will deliver a long-term legacy benefit following decommissioning, when the solar infrastructure is removed and the land returns to agriculture, with the existing landscape framework remaining harmonious.</p> <p>Mr Jackson noted that hedgerow height was discussed at ISH1 and confirmed that, once land is returned to landowners, they will control hedgerow height as they wish. Mr Jackson acknowledged that landscape character will be significantly adversely affected by the industrialisation introduced by solar panels. The Applicant has assessed individual study areas, identifying which landscape character areas form the unique landscape in each study area, to avoid any dilution</p>





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	<p>of the significant adverse effects that may occur by only considering the effects of the Scheme as a small part of the larger landscape areas.</p> <p>Mr Jackson referred to paragraph 8.3.2.2.1 of Environmental Statement Appendix 8.3 ES LVIA Assessment Sheets (Revision A) <b>[REP1-041]</b>, which sets out the on-site assessment and each study area. Mr Jackson noted that whilst it may appear there is a blanket score across all study areas, each area has been assessed independently and fell within the same category.</p> <p>Mr Jackson confirmed that the decision to not screen PRoW and permissive paths through the Sites was discussed at ISH1. Screening has been provided alongside footpaths where appropriate, but omitted where planting would conflict with legacy landscape objectives.</p>
<p><b>3.5 Effects for Traffic and Transport</b></p> <p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [APP-151], [REP1-031], [REP1-145], [REP1-147].</p> <p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to traffic and transport matters since ISH1, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Progress on discussions with National Highways</li><li>b) Safety of accesses to the proposed development</li><li>c) HGV delivery arrangements during construction</li><li>d) Effects on public rights of way, including on promoted routes such as the Three Shires Way.</li></ul> <p>The ExA will invite IPs to comment on the applicant's position in respect of traffic and transport effects.</p> <p>The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect of the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.</p>	<p><b><u>Progress on discussions with National Highways</u></b></p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, advised that the draft National Highways Statement of Common Ground <b>[REP2-062]</b> outlined agreement on a number of matters with regards to the Transport and Traffic assessment of the Scheme. The key aspect still under discussion at that time related to the distribution of forecast construction traffic.</p> <p>Following discussions with National Highways and clarification provided to them regarding forecast construction traffic distribution, National Highways has determined that no further assessment of construction traffic impacts is required.</p> <p>Based on National Highways review, they are content with the assessment and consider that when considering the anticipated volume of construction trips affecting strategic road network (SRN) junctions, the resulting impact is not significant. Accordingly, all transport matters are now agreed with National Highways.</p> <p><b><i>Post Hearing Note: Please refer to the draft Statement of Common Ground with National Highways [EX3/GH8.3.7_A].</i></b></p> <p>Mr Morse noted there are a number of matters still under discussion that relate to the DCO powers and protective provisions and further updates on this will be provided during Issue Specific Hearing 3.</p> <p>Correspondence and meetings between the Applicant's transport consultant and highways officers of West and North Northamptonshire Councils have taken place since ISH1 and the items raised by the highways authorities in their local impact reports have been discussed with a number of aspects clarified and resolved to the satisfaction of officers as reflected in the updated Statement of Common Ground. A small number of accesses have been identified where minor adjustments to the design and/or confirmation of traffic management details would resolve identified concerns. In terms of the transport assessment, the key item raised relates to the assumptions made over shuttle bus services for construction workers. A clarification note has been prepared for submission at Deadline 3 and this will set out the reasons for shuttle services and how other solar projects have used shuttle services to reduce traffic and parking requirements.</p> <p><b><i>Post Hearing Note: Please see the Transport Technical Note Shuttle Bus Service Supporting Document [EX3/GH8.2.6].</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The items raised by Milton Keynes officers have been responded to as part of the Applicant's response to Local Impact Reports [REP2-049].</i></b></p> <p><b><u>Safety of accesses to the proposed development</u></b></p> <p>Mr Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, explained the indicative designs for proposed access points have been prepared and designed to accommodate the forecast size and type of vehicle each access may accommodate.</p> <p>The key safety feature of junction visibility is considered through the design. Visibility considerations are based on the posted speed limit or requirements informed by recorded traffic speeds. For some access points, this requires clearance of vegetation including the trimming of hedgerows or lower hanging branches of trees.</p> <p>Where visibility is not achievable to the design standards, the DCO allows for suitable traffic management measures to be implemented during the construction phase which may include temporary traffic signals, reduced speed limits and advance signage. During the operational phase, some accesses with limited volumes of traffic will operate with departures from standard for visibility.</p> <p>Access points have been discussed with the highway authorities and indicative traffic management at a number of access points identified. Updated drawings will be provided in the Transport Assessment appendices to be submitted at Deadline 3.</p> <p><b><i>Post Hearing Note: Please refer to ES Appendix 13.2 Transport Assessment Revision A [EX3/GH6.3.13.2_A].</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The detailed design of each access point will be produced and agreed with the highway authority prior to their implementation. The review will include the provision of Road Safety Audits to inform the design.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The technical approval of the detailed design of each access would be required by the relevant highway authority prior to construction and this could be secured either through the detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan or in an agreement entered into under Article 15 (Agreements with street authorities) of the Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C].</i></b></p> <p><b><u>HGV delivery arrangements during construction</u></b></p>



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	<p>Mr Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the HGV routes have been identified, and are summarised in <b>Transport and Access Routes Supporting Document [REP1-167]</b> and <b>ES Chapter 13 Transport and Access [REP2-003]</b>. These routes lead to access points associated with the Scheme, indicative designs of which are presented in the <b>Transport Assessment [APP-151 to APP-153]</b> and have been designed to accommodate the size of vehicle expected to use each access.</p> <p>At each Site within the Scheme and across the Cable Route Corridor, HGVs will be scheduled in accordance with the construction programme defined by the contractor. All HGV movements will be required to be booked into the delivery management system to control the flow of HGV movements on the highway network and manage HGV deliveries outside of network peak hours.</p> <p>Tables 4.1 and 4.2 of the <b>Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (Revision B) [EX3/GH7.9_B]</b> identify the HGV routes to be used for each access, in addition to the turning movements permitted. Measures proposed to monitor compliance of the HGV routes are set out in section 5.13 of the <b>oCTMP [EX3/GH7.9_B]</b>. Banksman or CCTV will record the direction the HGVs access the site from. The vast majority of accesses have restricted turning movements for HGVs relating to HGV routes as defined in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 of the oCTMP <b>[EX3/GH7.9_B]</b>. Members of the public will also be able to report any instances of non-compliance via a telephone number.</p> <p><b><u>Effects on public rights of way, including on promoted routes such as the Three Shires Way.</u></b></p> <p>Stephen Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, noted a summary of the Applicant's approach to the assessment of effects on public rights of way was prepared for Issue Specific Hearing 1 in October 2025 but was not presented orally. A written summary was thereafter provided in section 3.4 of GH8.1.6 <b>Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 1 and Responses to Action Points [REP1-162]</b>.</p> <p>The management of traffic movements generated by the Scheme that might interact with PRowWs, including those used for promoted long-distance recreational routes, is detailed in GH7.10_A Outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan Revision A <b>[REP1-147]</b>. The measures apply during the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Scheme.</p> <p>The likely effects on the use of and desirability of PRowWs has been assessed in <b>ES Chapter 17: Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation [APP-054]</b> supported by the detailed <b>ES Appendix 17.1: Tourism and Recreation Receptor Tables Revision A [REP1-079]</b> wherein an assessment of the likely effect on each individual PRowW anticipated to be directly and indirectly affected by the Scheme was undertaken within a 2 km Study Area. The Study Area includes all PRowWs within the Order Limits, and any location within 2 km of the Order Limits' extents. The assessment concludes no significant effects to any individual PRowW at any phase of the Scheme, and therefore no significant effects to the overall PRowW network in the 2 km Study Area surrounding the Scheme.</p> <p>Long-distance recreational routes and "promoted routes" have been assessed within a wider 5 km Study Area, with their likely peak impacts based on the PRowWs that they are routed along. Due to their importance to tourism at a regional or national level, they have been considered more sensitive to changes. This has resulted in the following residual significant effects (which are temporary and moderate adverse in effect) where these long-distance routes cross the Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buckinghamshire Way;</li><li>• Milton Keynes Boundary Walk;</li><li>• Nene Way;</li><li>• Northamptonshire Boundary Walk;</li><li>• Northamptonshire Round;</li><li>• Three Shires Way;</li><li>• Via Beata; and</li><li>• Waendel Walk.</li></ul> <p>All of the effects are assessed to occur at construction, whilst the Northamptonshire Round route also has effects that are significant during the peak replacement scenario.</p> <p>The assessment has considered one of the International Waendel Walk routes which has been identified as likely to be affected due to direct impacts from the construction of Green Hill F, the Green Hill BESS site, and cabling works. The Applicant has committed to mitigation measures to limit the impacts to users of this route, noting that the route is only available for use annually as part of the Waendel Walk. These measures include, where feasible and safe, the retention of permissive access from Easton Way into Green Hill F. The Applicant team has been in communication with Wellingborough Town Council following ISH1 to ensure that the proposed mitigation is suitable and meets the Town Council's needs as event organisers for the International Waendel Walk. These measures are secured through the <b>Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan Revision A [REP1-131]</b> which is secured by Requirement 13 in Schedule 2 to the <b>Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1_C]</b>.</p> <p>The ExA Panel turned to interested parties for comment.</p>



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	<p>The Applicant notes that Gary Grant, Counsel for North Northamptonshire Council, confirmed that matters are being progressed through the Statement of Common Ground and that there was no further comment to be made at this stage. West Northamptonshire County Council and Milton Keynes County Council confirmed the same.</p> <p>Keith Burrell stated there had been little consultation with Holcot and Walgrave about potential traffic issues arising from access routes, including at rush hours.</p> <p>In response to comments made by Keith Burrell relating to access routes, Mr Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, referenced the <b>Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan Revision A [EX3/GH7.9_B]</b> which specifies the routes HGVs must take to and from the Sites, including Green Hill B. The construction route does not go through Holcot; the route leaves the A43 and goes straight to Green Hill B and would not go through the centre of the village. Mr Morse also confirmed that access to the Site will be restricted during rush hours and school drop off times, as set out in the <b>outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [EX3/GH7.9_B]</b>.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, referenced <b>ES Chapter 13 Transport and Access [REP2-003]</b> and the Transport Assessment <b>[APP151 to APP-153]</b> which address HGV and construction worker movements and provide transport routes for both. A detailed construction worker movement plan would also need to be submitted. Consultation on proposed construction worker routes did take place and, following ISH1, the Applicant prepared the Transport and Access Routes Supporting Document <b>[REP1-167]</b> to provide clarity.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick explained the <b>Consultation Report (Revision A) [REP1-017]</b> sets out all events held during the consultation process and included consultation with Holcot Parish Council. Ms Brodrick explained that the reason there isn't a prohibition on worker movements is because there could be someone from Holcot village who is working on the Scheme, so the Applicant is unable to specify that no worker movements would go through the village. Ms Brodrick noted that HGV movements are controlled and, as Mr Morse had noted, further information on shuttle bus provision for construction workers would be provided by the next deadline.</p> <p><i><b>Post Hearing Note:</b> Please refer to the Transport Technical Note Shuttle Bus Service Supporting Document [EX3/GH8.2.6].</i></p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, noted the <b>Transport Assessment [APP151 to APP-153]</b> states that during construction banksmen will be deployed at each access whenever construction vehicles are entering or leaving to ensure safety and to overcome visibility issues where it is below guidance. However, the <b>Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan Revision B [EX3/GH7.9_B]</b> and <b>Outline Operational Traffic Management Plan (Revision A) [REP1-157]</b> both state banksmen will only be located at crossing points. Do these two plans require amendment so that banksmen will be present at all accesses during all construction and replacement periods.</p> <p>Kirsty McMullen, on behalf of the Applicant, explained the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan Revision A <b>[REP1-145]</b> has been updated and will be submitted at Deadline 3 to remove any discrepancies between the two plans and confirm there will be banksmen at each access. In monitoring compliance with HGV routes, the Applicant will need to monitor the direction of entry into the site. In most cases, HGVs will only enter in one direction, therefore monitoring will be through banksmen or CCTV, and this is being discussed further with the Highways Authority. It was noted that temporary traffic management measures may be required and these will be implemented through Article 16 (Traffic regulation measures) of the <b>Draft DCO [EX3/GH3.1_C]</b>.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, referenced the Applicant's approach of monitoring HGV movement during construction using delivery time slots and banksmen and asked who will monitor the direction of arrival of the HGVs. Delivery time slot length is not provided and could lead to staff monitoring HGV entries for lengthy periods of time. Ms Beeby asked how realistic it was that this would happen.</p> <p>Kirsty McMullen, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that this has been reviewed and the <b>Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan Revision B [EX3/GH7.9_B]</b> was amended, taking on board such comments. Delivery management systems are electronic systems whereby hauliers and contractors book slots to distribute the numbers of HGV arrivals throughout the day. Given the low level of HGV movement forecasted across each site, there will be limited numbers of HGVs within each hour, and they would be monitored through the electronic management system rather than banksmen.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked if the HGV arrival records are to be subject to scrutiny and whether there would be a requirement for the records to be kept.</p> <p>Kirsty McMann, on behalf of the Applicant, responded that it had not been requested that the HGV arrival records be provided to the relevant planning authority, but this could be provided for. The records to be kept and shared with the relevant highway authority would need to be agreed in the detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan to be approved by the relevant planning authority prior to construction.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked how long PRow closures, including promoted routes such as Three Shires Way, would last for during construction.</p> <p>Mr Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that there is no fixed time limit for closures. Any closure would be kept as short as practicable to complete the necessary works where a PRow or long-distance route is affected by construction, as set out in the <b>Outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan (Revision B) [EX3/GH7.10_B]</b>. The plan explains the reasons closures may be required and the mitigation measures to avoid them such as providing alternative land within order limits to provide a diversion even for a temporary basis.</p> <p>Ms Beeby, ExA Panel Member, asked if the Applicant would provide signage as to any PRow closures and diversions, including relevant contact details for any</p>



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	<p>queries.</p> <p>Mr Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, responded that notices would be displayed before closure or diversion as part of the mitigation measures under the <b>outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan (Revision B) [EX3/GH7.10_B]</b>. Mr Flynn assumed contact details of site operators would be included in these notices.</p> <p><b>Post Hearing Note:</b> The <b>outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan (Revision B) [EX3/GH7.10_B]</b> confirms that notices of closures and diversions will include the contact details of the relevant Site Manager and Community Liaison Manager.</p>
4. Any Other Business	<p>In response to comments made Mr Humphreys KC, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar relating to heritage and BMV land, Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed that the Applicant had not been notified of Mr Humphreys intention to raise issues on other topics. As such, the Applicant's experts on these issues were not present. Ms Brodrick noted that Mr Humphreys KC would prepare a written summary by Deadline 3 and the Applicant would respond by Deadline 4 to these matters.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, referred to the Environmental Statement Appendix 5.1: Site Selection Assessment (Revision A) <b>[REP1-037/6.3.5.1A]</b>, which outlines the Applicant's site selection process. This was a staged approach, undertaken with regard to policy requirements in NPS EN-1 and EN-3.</p> <p>In summarising the Applicant's position, Ms Brodrick explained that while the Scheme includes BMV land, the Applicant sought to avoid such land but was unable to do so. The Applicant contends that the need for these projects, recognised in NPS EN-1 as critical national priority infrastructure, justifies the inclusion of BMV land.</p> <p>The Applicant's approach aligns with other DCOs, such as Cottam Solar Project and West Burton Solar Project, and more recent DCOs that also include significant proportions of BMV land. In those cases, the Secretary of State concluded that similar site selection processes complied with the National Policy Statements and that the urgent need for solar energy, identified in EN-1 as a critical national priority, justified the use of BMV land.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, noted the summary of ISH1 <b>[REP1-161]</b> is not a verbatim transcript. Ms Brodrick noted the Applicant would come back on the cultural heritage points raised by Mr Humphreys KC in writing but reiterated it is the NPS that sets out the policies that should apply to impacts on heritage assets and in relation to critically national infrastructure.</p> <p>In response to comments raised by Mr Burrell, Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, directed Mr Burrell to the following documents to address the points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (Revision A) <b>[REP1-131]</b> – in relation to the control of lighting during construction;</li><li>• Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (Revision A) <b>[REP1-133]</b> – in relation to the control of lighting during operation;</li><li>• Written Summary of the Applicants Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 1 and Responses to Action Points <b>[REP1-162]</b> – in relation to the potential for glint and glare to affect local aerodromes and airfields.</li></ul> <p>Robin Aitken, representing Stop Green Hill Solar, asked what level of reactive grid-forming capability is anticipated for this project, noting that NESO has raised concerns about grid stability following the Iberian failure in April 2025.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, responding to Mr Aitken, confirmed the Applicant would respond to this point in writing.</p> <p><b>Post Hearing Note:</b> The Applicant will respond to this matter if raised in Mr Aitken's written summary of his oral submission at Deadline 4.</p>





## 2 List of Actions for the Applicant and Other Parties following Issue Specific Hearing 2

Number	Responsible Party	Action	Submission Deadline	Applicant's Response / Commentary
1	Applicant	To review and clarify the location of work numbers within ancient woodland buffer zones	D3	Please refer to the Applicant's Post Hearing note under agenda item 3.2 Effects for Ecology and Biodiversity above.
2	Applicant	To produce a signposting document for the mitigation measures relating to ancient woodland to demonstrate the measures are consistent and identify any areas of inconsistency	D4	The Applicant will provide this at Deadline 4.
3	Applicant	To provide a summary of how the assessment of hedgerow importance has been undertaken	D4	The Applicant will provide this at Deadline 4.
4	Applicant	To confirm the details of the assessment of impacts from a BESS fire on ancient woodland	D4	The Applicant will provide this at Deadline 4.
5	Applicant	To confirm the buffer zone in relation to drains and where this is secured.	D3	Please refer to the Applicant's Post Hearing note under agenda item 3.3 Effects for water environment and food risk above.
6	Stop Green Hill Solar	To provide a written summary of the submissions made by Richard Humphreys KC as AOB at Deadline 3.	D3	The Applicant will provide this at Deadline 4.
	Applicant	To respond at Deadline 4.	D4	



## Appendix A: Applicants Response in Regard to Sywell Wood and Green Hill C (BESS)

- 2.1.1 In accordance with Requirement 6 in Schedule 2 to the **Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1\_C]**, the relevant planning authority must consult with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency before approving the detailed **Outline Battery Storage Safety Management Plan (OBSSMP) [REP1-143]**, ensuring that any developments as to best practice will be taken into consideration.
- 2.1.2 The **BESS Fire Emissions Modelling [APP-167]** scope also included all requested emission gases and fire particulates requested by the UK Health & Security Agency (UKHSA) in recent DCO planning hearings.
- 2.1.3 The **BESS Fire Emissions Modelling [APP-167]** concludes that there are no significant impacts on sensitive receptors. Nonetheless, at the detailed design stage the Applicant will commission a BESS system and site specific Plume Analysis study to assess the environmental impact of a site incident to sensitive receptors within a 1 km radius. Worst case BESS fire locations (i.e. locations within the BESS Site closest to sensitive receptors) have been modelled as depicted in **Figure 16.4 BESS Fire Emissions Study Area, Receptors and Modelled BESS Locations [APP-462]**, by applying this conservative approach, receptor PROW2, located adjacent to Sywell Wood, are considered to represent the worst-case exposure scenario for Sywell Wood, with any potential effects on the woodland inherently captured by the assessment.
- 2.1.4 Toxic gas emissions to sensitive receptors must be below relevant public health exposure limit guidelines when the battery system of a BESS is fully consumed (burnt out), production of Particulate Matter (PM) and a visibility impact assessment on any transport links within a 1 km radius of the BESS area will also be included. The Emergency Response Plan (ERP) produced at the detailed design stage (template outlined in Section 5.4.4) will incorporate all necessary emergency response procedures and actions based upon thermal runaway test data supplied by the BESS system provider.
- 2.1.5 The Wartsila LSFT referenced in the BESS Fire Emissions Modelling was conducted at an accredited third party test facility with test reporting by Fire & Risk Alliance LLC, who are a renowned BESS fire and explosion testing group. The Applicant strongly emphasises this is not unaccredited internal testing, but third party validated test data conducted to the most rigorous testing protocols and data capture requirements.
- 2.1.6 The BESS Fire Emissions Modelling of the selected BESS system commissioned at the detailed design stage will be conducted at approved third-party or government approved test laboratories. These facilities utilise large scale smoke hoods (cone calorimeters) capable to capture every type of battery gas & particle emitted during the thermal runaway process at module, battery rack or complete BESS enclosure level.
- 2.1.7 This equipment can measure total volume gas production (gas chromatography) and FTIR (Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy) testing (PPM) for organic compounds (toxic gases) such as: Carbon Monoxide (CO), Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), Hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>), Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), Hydrogen Fluoride (HF), Hydrogen Cyanide (HCN), Hydrogen Chloride (HCl), Hydrocarbon gases (THC content), PAHs, etc.
- 2.1.8 The equipment also integrates comprehensive particle capture by XRF (X-ray fluorescence) analysis checks for: Phosphorus, Aluminium, Nickel, Silicon, Calcium, etc. This means that heavy metal particulate emissions can be quantified and included in emission modelling if the selected battery system emits significant levels during fire testing.
- 2.1.9 Both the OBSSMP and BESS Fire Emissions Modelling have carefully risk assessed the potential for a BESS failure event to impact on the ancient woodland area (PROW 2).
- 2.1.10 As indicated in Table 9 of the BESS Fire Emissions Modelling, the predicted maximum one-hour PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations were all well below the eight-hour WEL (4mg/m<sup>3</sup>) and all other maximum one-hour concentrations were below AEGL level 2 (irreversible or other serious, long lasting health effects or an impaired ability to escape). In addition, all concentrations were below AEGL level 1 with the exception of HF, where there is an exceedance of AEGL level 1 along a PROW



(PROW 2) when the BESS fire is located at a point closest to this location (BESS 1). This occurred when the wind direction was from the east; wind from this direction occurs 5.8% of the time, based on five years of met data. The likelihood of a fire occurring at a BESS is low, and the likelihood of a fire occurring at a BESS located close to the PROW when the wind is coming from the east is even lower. Additionally, should a fire occur in close proximity to the PROW, it is unlikely members of the public would be exposed for any significant period of time as it is expected that they would move away from a fire to ensure their safety. Modelling was undertaken using worst case parameters and the predicted concentrations are the maximum one-hourly concentrations over five modelled years. This level of HF would not endanger any trees in the woodland in these worst case conditions.

- 2.1.11 Given a potential BESS fire would be a relatively short-term incident, it is considered appropriate to compare predicted concentrations against Acute Exposure Guidance Levels (AEGs), which have higher threshold concentrations than the national air quality objectives and are relevant to short term releases. AEGs are expressed as concentrations of a substance above which it is predicted that the general population could experience, including susceptible individuals:
- Level 1 - Notable discomfort, irritation, or certain asymptomatic non-sensory effects. However, the effects are not disabling and are transient and reversible upon cessation of exposure;
  - Level 2 - Irreversible or other serious, long-lasting adverse health effects or an impaired ability to escape; and
  - Level 3 - Life-threatening health effects or death.
- 2.1.12 The occurrence of adverse health effects is not likely to occur in the general public at concentrations below the AEGs. AEGs have a range of exposure periods; ADMS modelling software uses hourly meteorological data, therefore the shortest time period that concentrations can be predicted over is one hour. As such, the 1-hour AEGs have been used in this assessment (see **Table 1**).
- 2.1.13 In accordance with Requirement 6 in Schedule 2 to the **Draft DCO Revision C [EX3/GH3.1\_C]**, the relevant planning authority must consult with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency before approving the detailed BSSMP, ensuring that any developments as to best practice will be taken into consideration.
- 2.1.14 The BESS Fire Emissions Modelling scope also included all requested emission gases and fire particulates requested by the UK Health & Security Agency (UKHSA) in recent DCO planning hearings.
- 2.1.15 The BESS Fire Emissions Modelling concludes that there are no significant impacts on sensitive receptors. Nonetheless, at the detailed design stage the Applicant will commission a BESS system and site specific Plume Analysis study to assess the environmental impact of a site incident to sensitive receptors within a 1 km radius. Toxic gas emissions to sensitive receptors must be below relevant public health exposure limit guidelines when the battery system of a BESS is fully consumed (burnt out), production of Particulate Matter (PM) and a visibility impact assessment on any transport links within a 1 km radius of the BESS area will also be included. The Emergency Response Plan (ERP) produced at the detailed design stage (template outlined in Section 5.4.4) will incorporate all necessary emergency response procedures and actions based upon thermal runaway test data supplied by the BESS system provider.
- 2.1.16 The Wartsila LSFT referenced in the BESS Fire Emissions Modelling was conducted at an accredited third party test facility with test reporting by Fire & Risk Alliance LLC, who are a renowned BESS fire and explosion testing group. The Applicant strongly emphasises this is not unaccredited internal testing, but third party validated test data conducted to the most rigorous testing protocols and data capture requirements.
- 2.1.17 The BESS Fire Emissions Modelling of the selected BESS system commissioned at the detailed design stage will be conducted at approved third-party or government approved test laboratories. These facilities utilise large scale smoke hoods (cone calorimeters) capable to capture every type of battery gas & particle emitted during the thermal runaway process at module, battery rack or complete BESS enclosure level.



- 2.1.18 This equipment can measure total volume gas production (gas chromatography) and FTIR (Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy) testing (PPM) for organic compounds (toxic gases) such as: Carbon Monoxide (CO), Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), Hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>), Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), Hydrogen Fluoride (HF), Hydrogen Cyanide (HCN), Hydrogen Chloride (HCl), Hydrocarbon gases (THC content), PAHs, etc.
- 2.1.19 The equipment also integrates comprehensive particle capture by XRF (X-ray fluorescence) analysis checks for: Phosphorus, Aluminium, Nickel, Silicon, Calcium, etc. This means that heavy metal particulate emissions can be quantified and included in emission modelling if the selected battery system emits significant levels during fire testing.

Pollutant	Level 1 (ppm)	Level 2 (ppm)	Level 3 (ppm)
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	NR*	83	330
Formaldehyde	0.9	14	56
Hydrogen Chloride (HCl)	1.8	22	100
Hydrogen Cyanide (HCN)	2	7.1	15
Hydrogen Fluoride (HF)	1	24	44
Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> )	30	160	1,100
NO <sub>2</sub>	0.5	12	20

- 2.1.20 The System Layout section (4.1.16 – 4.1.23) of the OBSMP specifies how the illustrative site layout ensures a BESS failure event will not significantly impact PROW 2 (ancient woodland) which is 65 metres from the closest BESS enclosure.
- 2.1.21 National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 855 (2026) defines basic operation Health & Safety (H&S) protocols for all BESS site designs which should be incorporated into emergency response plans:
- 2.1.22 Potential debris impact radius is defined as 100 feet (ft) or 30.5 metres (m) i.e. this is a typical explosion risk safe exclusion zone radius as modelling and previous BESS incidents typically show 25 m to be maximum radius.
- 2.1.23 Areas within 10m of BESS enclosures do not contain combustible vegetation and would not be planted with any new combustible vegetation wherever possible. Where this is not feasible a full risk assessment would be conducted, and mitigation features applied if required by the NFRS. Any other vegetation on site would be kept in a condition such that they do not increase the risk of fire on site.
- 2.1.24 LSFT of the selected BESS design to establish minimum equipment spacing distances and site specific consequence modelling will provide a clear, evidence-based case for the final BESS area installation plans at the detailed design phase and will be agreed with NFRS. An independent Fire Protection Engineer specialising in BESS will validate all UL 9540A, LSFT, and / or third party test and site specific consequence modelling data which has been provided.
- 2.1.25 LSFT measures heat flux data at a range of distance from the BESS enclosure under fire testing and will establish that a 65 metre buffer zone provides full protection from a BESS fire incident.
- 2.1.26 As outlined in the OBSMP the detailed design phase of the Scheme will consider the lifecycle of the battery system from installation to decommissioning. At the detailed design stage, the selected BESS design will have completed LSFT to fully inform inputs for risk assessment tools which will be utilised together with detailed consequence modelling to provide a comprehensive site operations and emergency response safety audit. PROW 2 together with all sensitive receptors





within a 1km radius of the BESS areas will be fully risk assessed to demonstrate that a BESS failure incident has no significant off-site impacts i.e. outside the BESS area.