

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Drovers Solar Farm (EN0110013)

Response to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions (ExQ1)

Deadline 1 – 2nd June 2026

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This document provides Breckland District Council's ("the Council") response to the Examining Authority's (ExA) First Written Questions (ExQ1).

1.2 The responses should be read alongside:

- The Council's Relevant Representations (RR)
- The Council's Local Impact Report (LIR)
- The evolving Statements of Common Ground (SoCG)

1.3 The Council has responded only to those questions directed to it or where it considers it appropriate to do so.

1.4 The Council's responses focus on matters within its remit as Local Planning Authority and draws upon internal officer input where available. Where the matters raised fall outside the Council's technical expertise, appropriate reliance is placed on the advice of the relevant statutory consultees.

2.0 First Written Questions and the Council's Responses

2.1 The following section lists the questions directed to Breckland Council and its responses in the order of the document issued by the Examining Authority on 13th May 2026.

4.0 Climate Change

ExQ1 Q4.0.1 – Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Impact Assessment Methodology

Question

Are BDC and NCC content with the methodology, assumptions and limitations used in the Lifecycle GHG impact assessment?

Response

The Council does not benefit from in house specialist expertise in lifecycle greenhouse gas assessments and therefore defers to Norfolk County Council in its role on climate change matters.

The Council has not identified greenhouse gas emissions as a principal issue in its Relevant Representations or Local Impact Report.

5.0 Compulsory Acquisition, Temporary Possession and Land

ExQ1 Q5.0.8 – Possible Impediments

Question

Do BDC or NCC have any concerns about whether potential impediments to the development been properly identified and addressed? Are they aware of any matters within or outside the scope of the dDCO that may have a bearing on whether the development could become operational, or may not be satisfactorily resolved, including in relation to acquisitions, consents, resources, or other agreements?

Response

The Council is not aware of any land or rights being required in addition to those identified within the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) that would prevent the development from becoming operational.

The Council has not identified any specific impediments beyond those matters set out in the application documentation and therefore does not raise any additional concerns at this stage.

7.0 Draft Development Consent Order (DCO)

7.5 Schedule 2 - Requirements

ExQ1 Q7.5.6 – Requirement 18 (Skills, Supply Chain and Employment)

Question

Could the councils confirm if they are content with the wording for R18 regarding the Skills, supply chain and employment?

Response

The Council confirms that it is content with the wording of Requirement 18 relating to skills, supply chain and employment and has no further comments.

10.0 Land and Soil

ExQ1 Q10.0.9 – Decommissioning of Underground Cables

Question

Policy Compliance Document [APP-044] refers to paragraph 2.10.68 of NPS EN-3 stating that the nature and extent of decommissioning of a site can vary and generally it is expected that underground cabling will be dug out to ensure that prior use of the site can continue.

In relation to the decommissioning of underground cables, the outline Decommissioning Strategy [APP-190] states that currently, the most environmentally

acceptable option is leaving the cables in situ, as this avoids disturbance to overlying land and habitats and to neighbouring communities.

(i) Do the parties have any comments on the applicant's suggested approach and whether it strikes an appropriate balance between the potential magnitude and duration of impacts during decommissioning and the longer-term implications for future site use?

(ii) Should the oDS [APP-190] require the underground cables and ducting to be removed?

Response

The Council notes the Applicant's position that leaving underground cables in situ may reduce the short-term environmental impacts associated with their removal, including disturbance to soils, habitats and local receptors.

From a planning perspective, the Council considers that a balancing exercise is required between:

- the short-term environmental impacts of decommissioning works; and
- the longer-term implications for the future use of the land, including agricultural use.

The Council does not hold detailed technical expertise in relation to underground infrastructure and therefore defers to Norfolk County Council and other relevant consultees on the technical implications of this approach.

However, the Council considers that the acceptability of this approach will depend on whether the long-term use of the land, including agricultural use, would be materially constrained. Please refer to the LIR for further detail on the Council's significant concerns in this regard.

13.0 Noise and Vibration

ExQ1 Q13.0.1 – Noise and Vibration Assessment

Question

Further to the comments regarding noise in its RR [RR-011] BDC is asked to please state whether it agrees with the assessment methodology set out in ES Chapter 10 Noise and Vibration [APP-059]. If not, please explain where you disagree and why. Where applicable please cross refer to relevant submissions.

Response

The Council has consulted its Environmental Health Officer in relation to the submitted Noise and Vibration Assessment.

The Council confirms that it agrees with the assessment methodology, which is considered to be appropriate and consistent with relevant guidance.

ExQ1 Q13.0.3 – Equality Impact Assessment (Noise and Vibration – The Splashes Campsite)

Question

Paragraph 7.4.10 of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) [APP-182] determines that in relation to the noise and vibration effects at The Splashes Campsite (Traveller Site), no additional equality specific measure is appropriate or required.

(i) Could the applicant provide more detail on the assumption regarding the “very short duration of works” quoted in paragraph 7.4.8, EqIA?

(ii) How would the applicant secure the specific restrictions in the dDCO, as identified in paragraph 7.4.7, EqIA, ie these activities would be temporary, of short duration, and confined to normal working hours, with no evening or night-time activity expected?

Response

The Council has reviewed the Equality Impact Assessment in consultation with its Environmental Health Officer.

The Council notes that the potential noise and vibration effects at The Splashes Campsite would arise from works associated with an access route. In this context, the Council highlights that occupants at the site reside in caravans or similar structures, which typically provide lower levels of acoustic attenuation than conventional dwellings. In addition, during warmer months, windows and doors are likely to be open for ventilation, which may increase sensitivity to noise.

Having regard to this, the Council considers it important that:

- works are restricted to sociable hours; and
- the duration of works is clearly defined and controlled.

Subject to confirmation of these matters, the Council agrees that a detailed noise assessment is not required, provided that:

- good construction practice is followed; and
- appropriate controls are secured, for example through a robust Construction Environmental Management Plan or equivalent method statement.

14.0 Population

ExQ1 Q14.0.1 – Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Strategy

Question

The ExA notes NCC’s comments in relation to Socio-Economic in its RR [RR-043].

Could BDC confirm if it is content with, or has any comments on, the Outline employment, skills and supply chain strategy [APP-195]?

Response

The Council defers to Norfolk County Council on detailed matters relating to the Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Strategy and has no additional comments.

ExQ1 Q14.0.4 – Proposed New Permissive Routes

Question

ES Chapter 14: Socio-Economics [APP-063], paragraph 14.7.4 includes that “In addition to this, a number of new permissive routes are proposed, of approximately 4.7km in total, which would link to the existing PRoW network within the study area to provide recreational benefits. This total number can be broken down to approximately 1.2km new offsite permissive route provision and approximately 3.5km new onsite permissive route provision (as will be secured within the outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (oOEMP) [APP/7.8] submitted as a requirement of the DCO Application.”

(ii) Could the Councils confirm if they are content with the proposed new permissive routes?

Response

The Council notes that the proposed permissive routes may provide recreational benefits within the local area.

The Council defers to Norfolk County Council in its role as Highway Authority in relation to the detailed acceptability, deliverability, and maintenance of such routes.

The Council has no additional comments at this stage.

ExQ1 Q14.0.14 – Outline Battery Safety Management Plan

Question

The ExA notes that:

- NCC has provided Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service’s comments in item (x) and Appendix 2 of its RR [RR-043].*
- The EA has provided comments on the oBSMP [APP-194] in its RR [RR-021] which includes that the oBSMP is not agreed for surface water quality or ground water protection.*

(i) Could BDC confirm if they are content with the oBSMP [APP-194] or if they have any outstanding concerns?

Response

The Council notes the dDCO lists Norfolk County Council Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency as the statutory consultees to be consulted in regard to battery safety management.

The Council does not hold specialist expertise in battery safety and therefore defers to these bodies on technical matters, including fire safety and environmental protection.

The Council considers that the acceptability of the outline Battery Safety Management Plan will depend on:

- the resolution of any consultee concerns; and
- the securing of appropriate mitigation and management measures through the dDCO.

16.0 Other Planning Matters

ExQ1 Q16.0.4 – Mitigation for Cumulative Effects from Waste in the Decommissioning Stage

Question

Regarding waste in the decommissioning phase, paragraph 16.9.147, ES Chapter 16 Other Environmental Matters [APP-065], includes:

“Together, the cumulative magnitude of impact to hazardous waste void capacity is therefore considered to be minor. Due to the receptor’s very high sensitivity, the effect is a cumulative moderate or large adverse effect, which is considered significant.”

Additional mitigation described in paragraph 16.9.148 [APP-065] includes:

“The Decommissioning Waste Management Strategy must ensure that hazardous waste handling capabilities are assessed based on up-to-date information at the time of drafting prior to decommissioning works being undertaken. Where significant cumulative effects on hazardous waste handling facilities from decommissioning of multiple NSIPs are assessed as likely to occur, a coordinated approach between site operators of those relevant NSIPs should be secured ahead of the commencement of decommissioning activities.”

The mitigation / enhancement measures and monitoring requirements, described for Waste in Table 11 Other Environmental Matters in the oDS [APP-190], would include a decommissioning waste management strategy to ensure decommissioning waste streams are sent to waste recycling and handling facilities that have sufficient capacity to handle waste arisings from the proposed development without adversely impacting upon their capacity to handle waste arisings for all other waste streams in the authority area.

(i) Could BDC advise if they have any comments or concerns regarding the proposed mitigation measures for the effects from waste, particularly for the cumulative effects during the decommissioning stage?

Response

The Council notes the Applicant's proposed approach to managing waste during the decommissioning phase, including the preparation of a Decommissioning Waste Management Strategy.

The Council defers to Norfolk County Council in its role as Waste Planning Authority in relation to the technical adequacy of the proposed mitigation measures.

From a planning perspective, the Council considers the following to be material considerations:

- the cumulative impacts arising from the decommissioning of multiple large-scale schemes; and
- the potential pressures on waste management capacity.

The Council therefore considers that a coordinated approach to decommissioning across multiple NSIPs is likely to be necessary.

3.0 Closing Statement

3.1 The Council remains committed to ongoing engagement with the Applicant, statutory consultees and other interested parties throughout the Examination process.

3.2 The Council will continue to progress matters through Statements of Common Ground and respond to further questions from the Examining Authority when required.