

Planning Inspectorate
National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House (2 The Square)
Temple Quay
Bristol
Avon
BS1 6PN

Reference: OR-0004371/02
Customer reference: EN0110013

22 July 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Drovers Solar Farm - Examining Authority Questions 2

We have reviewed the Examining Authority's (ExA) Second Written Questions (dated 02 July 2026) and our comments are provided in the table appended to this letter.

Yours faithfully


Planning Specialist
Contact: NIteam@environment-agency.gov.uk

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:	
7.4 Schedule 2 – Requirements			Environment Agency Comment
Q7.3.4	The applicant - Parts (i) & (ii) Environment Agency – Part (iii)	Article 49 - Maintenance of drainage works (i) Could the applicant provide a more detailed justification as to why these provisions are necessary in this particular dDCO in the circumstances of the proposed development, particularly given ES Chapter 11 [AS-019] notes in paragraph 11.6.23 that the soils are free-draining and there are no extensive under-field drainage schemes within the Order limits. (ii) Could the applicant confirm whether its approach has been accepted in any previously made DCOs. (iii) Could the EA comment on whether it considers these provisions are necessary.	iii) We do not consider these provisions necessary, as the draft Development Consent Order already sets out that under section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the drainage authority would be the land drainage board. We note that ordinary watercourses run through the site. The responsibility for managing these falls with the Internal Drainage Board (IDB), and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) (in regards to flood risk specifically). Our concerns regarding the ordinary watercourses on site relate to surface water quality. The Environment Agency (EA) is the primary environmental regulator responsible for protecting water quality and reducing in all inland rivers and coastal waters across England, regardless of their classification of designated "main rivers", or "ordinary watercourses" (smaller streams, ditches, and drains). However, the IDB will remain responsible for maintaining ordinary watercourses, and for consenting to any works on ordinary watercourses.
8. Flood Risk, hydrology and water resources			Environment Agency Comment
Q8.0.1	Environment Agency (EA)	Groundwater impact assessment update In response to ExQ1 Q8.0.3, the EA [REP1-086] stated that it was an acceptable approach for the applicant to update ES Chapter 12: Water Resources [APP-061] at D2 to reflect further discussions between the EA and the applicant on the use of groundwater models. It also states in its response, that provided adequate post-consent monitoring are secured and based on the proposed measures set out in the oCEMP [REP2-023], it concurs with the applicant's Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment (REP2-012) that significant risks to the WFD Groundwater body can be adequately mitigated. Based on the updated ES Chapter 12 [REP2-010] submitted at D2, the updated WFD assessment at D2, and the Technical Information Note – Groundwater Elevation Methodology document [REP2-029], could the EA confirm whether it: (i) considers its concerns with groundwater flow and level information and the adequacy of the groundwater impact assessment have been addressed. (ii) remains in agreement with the findings of the applicant's WFD assessment conclusions regarding likely WFD compliance impacts on groundwater bodies impacted by the proposed development.	(i) We are content that our concerns about the Applicant's groundwater flow and level data review and associated impact assessment have largely been addressed by the updated materials submitted at D2. We hold residual concerns that groundwater conditions could locally be shallower than indicated by modelling. However, the Applicant has committed to pre-construction groundwater monitoring within the CSA and the refinement of foundation design based on these data should this be the case. (ii) We remain in agreement with the conclusions of the Applicant's WFD Assessment regarding likely WFD Compliance impacts on groundwater bodies impacted by the proposed development.