OXFORDSHIRE
STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

Applicant's Responses To Local Impact Report

Appendix 1 - Email from Natural England

Document Reference: 11.6A

On behalf of
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

October 2026

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EMAIL CORRESPONDANCE RECEIVED FROM NATURAL ENGLAND

From: [redacted]
Sent: 20 August 2026 14:36
To: Mark Jackson

Subject: Re: RE: 2026-73336-EPS-AD1 Ardley Strategic Rail Freight Interchange - Quick Question seeking advice

Hi [redacted]

CC NEWLS Escalations Mailbox, All

RE: 2026-73336-EPS-AD1 Ardley Strategic Rail Freight Interchange - Quick Question seeking advice

Further to my email of below, I've spoken to one of our technical leads for bats, and they have confirmed that we would likely favour the use of an underpass here rather than hop-overs. However, as you've referenced in your email of below, the evidence base around the use of alternatives to hop-overs as part of mitigation strategies to address impacts to bats as a result of road schemes is limited, particularly so for Barbastelles given their rarity. The O'Malley et al. (2025) paper that you've cited is certainly the key one that we would refer to here, as it highlights the key risks around hop-over use that we would also typically raise where their use is proposed, but there is also some discussion of such risks in Berthinussen & Altringham (2012) and in some recent guidance from EUROBATS.

With respect to underpasses and culverts and their effectiveness, again, the evidence base is limited; however, if your proposals for the over-large box culvert are such that its placement will maintain the existing commuting routes that the bats are using along the brook, rather than requiring the bats impacted and likely to use the underpass to divert from their "normal" flightlines, then using the culvert as an alternative to hop-overs would appear to be an appropriate approach here. It may be worth considering some further and more targeted monitoring as part of the proposals here though, specifically to assess the bats' use of the underpass should it ultimately be used.

Hopefully this response provides some useful direction and reassurance here, and will assist in your addressing the Council's concerns. If, though, you and your client need further direction on this once the Examination begins and the ExA have questions on this topic, then we can potentially pull in advice from one of our bat ecology specialists in case they have any additional thoughts.

Best regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Principal Officer (Principal Adviser) – National Delivery
Wildlife Licensing – Chargeable Advice and Strategic Casework
Natural England Wildlife Licensing Service
EA Trentside Offices, Lady Bay Bridge,
West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5FA

From: [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2026 10:29
To: Mark Jackson
Subject: Re: RE: 2026-73336-EPS-AD1 Ardley Strategic Rail Freight Interchange - Quick Question seeking advice

Morning [redacted],

You're very welcome, and apologies for missing your call again just now; I was in a meeting away from my desk.

I'll get a response over to you before COP today on this; I think our general view is that we would favour underpasses and culverts over the use of hop-overs given the collision risks associated with the latter, but I'm just seeking a steer from one of our technical leads for bats to confirm this.

Best regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Principal Officer (Principal Adviser) – National Delivery
Wildlife Licensing – Chargeable Advice and Strategic Casework
Natural England Wildlife Licensing Service
EA Trentside Offices, Lady Bay Bridge,
West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5FA

From: [redacted]n
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2026 10:04
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: RE: 2026-73336-EPS-AD1 Ardley Strategic Rail Freight Interchange - Quick Question seeking advice

Hi [redacted]
Thank you for your email regarding GCN licence application 2026-73716-EPS-MIT, we appreciate your help with this.

Sorry was just calling within regards to the below email and the OxSRFI application (2026-73336-EPS-AD-1 which is currently at Relevant Representations stage. We just wanted to know if Natural England have an opinion on the use of hop-overs as a suitable mitigation approach and if an alternative approach such as an over-large box culvert underpass sufficiently large to offer an alternative crossing point would be a sufficient alternative.

The Council has requested further evidence against the use of hop overs, given this is a method of mitigating fragmentation impacts they are familiar and comfortable with.

Any assistance on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards,

[redacted])
Principal Ecologist

FPCR | environment & design

Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby, DE74 2RH

Masterplanning & Urban Design | Environmental Assessment | Landscape | Ecology | Architecture | Arboriculture

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 10 August 2026 15:47
To: [redacted]

Subject: RE: 2026-73336-EPS-AD1 Ardley Strategic Rail Freight Interchange - Quick Question seeking advice

Good Afternoon,

I'm just emailing to get your opinion and seek your advice following a comment that has cropped up at the Relevant Representations stage of the OxSRFI application?

The District Council Ecologist has raised a query regarding the proposed mitigation provision for bats at the point where the Middleton Stoney Relief Road would cross the Gagle Brook corridor and associated tree belt (approx. grid ref: SP 539 241, proposed road location and landscaping shown in the screengrab below). The woodland corridor is used by generally low numbers of barbastelle, among other species, with no evidence recorded indicating regularly used flightlines or use by a maternity or other significant roost (a trapping study was undertaken).

Please see the link to the Bat Report for his reference: https://nsip-documents.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/published-documents/TR050008-000540-Document%206.6C%20-%20ES%20Appendix%206.3%20Bat%20Survey%20Report%20Rev%20C.pdf
Given the Annex II status of barbastelle and the species' close association with woodland, potential impacts to barbastelle are given particular consideration within the proposed mitigation strategy. This takes into account recent evidence that dense or overlapping canopies can result in an increased collision risk for barbastelle at road crossings[1], resulting in a recommendation that grassland be established up the supporting embankments at the road crossing rather than, for example hop-overs (see paras 5.55-5.59 in the linked report). The route of the brook at this point would be maintained within an over-large box culvert underpass sufficiently large to offer an alternative crossing point for bats beneath the road (internal dimensions 6m(w) x 3.5m(h)).

The Council has requested further evidence against the use of hop overs, given this is a method of mitigating fragmentation impacts they are familiar and comfortable with.

We are only aware of the O'Malley 2025 study promoting the use of alternatives to hop-overs at road crossing points therefore would be very interested to know if Natural England have an opinion on the matter, or are aware of any corroborating or contradictory evidence regarding their effectiveness or otherwise for Bb?



[1] O'Malley, K.D., Schofield, H.W., Wright, P.G.R., Hargreaves, D., Corcoran, A.J. and Mathews, F. 2025. Increasing canopy cover elevates vehicle collision risk for barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*) at roads. Scientific Reports (2025) 15:37011.

Any assistance you can provide with regards to the above would be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards,

[redacted])
Principal Ecologist

FPCR | environment & design

Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby, DE74 2RH
[redacted]

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