



Lead Ecologists Consultation Response	
Date:	Wednesday, 08 May 2024
Planning Ref:	24/00384/FUL
Description:	Installation and Operation of a Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (Output upto 40 MW), With Associated Works, Equipment, Infrastructure and Landscaping

### On-site Habitats

The core of the site appears to be intensively managed arable land with some hedging and some plantation woodland. As noted by the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) none of the habitats on site appear to be of particular merit, however there are a variety of woodland types and the River Poulter on the site boundary and these habitats and the ecotones may be of particular importance to a variety of species.

### Protected Species

I agree with the submitted EIA in that at present the core of the site appears to offer negligible value to protected and notable species, but that the woodland edge will be of particular importance to bats and likely also a variety of bird species. It is recommended in the EIA that bat boxes are erected in retained trees and this would be a welcome addition due to the absence of any Potential Roost Features noted during the surveys.

Whilst the sites current value to reptile species is likely negligible, these species are widely recorded in the local area and are likely to utilise the woodland edge habitats. The proposals are likely to greatly enhance the sites potential for use by reptiles for foraging but there are no further enhancement suggestions for these species. Several well-placed and maintained (de-vegged) rock piles in the proposed boundary scrub areas would provide valuable and missing opportunities in the local landscape. Grass cuttings could be retained on site in a single location to provide habitat for invertebrates and reptiles.

The applicant's ecologist has advocated for specific access for brown hare, it would be my view to exclude all large mammals from the site in favour of ground nesting birds the EIA purports will benefit from the proposals. The chosen palisade fencing will however likely give access to brown hare without any special features. It is also likely that fox [REDACTED] will have free access to the site and therefore grassland management at the site should seek to retain a longer sward throughout the bird nesting season.

### Protected Sites

There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites on or connected to the site such that the proposals would have a significant negative impact upon them.

Natural England will need to be consulted due to the site falling within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone, although it is noteworthy the proposals seek to replicate some of the habitats present within Clumber Park SSSI.



## Biodiversity Net Gain

The site is subject to the general Biodiversity Gain Condition (as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended))<sup>1</sup>.

I am satisfied the baseline submitted is an accurate representation of the habitats currently present on site. Additionally, I am satisfied that the proposals put forward for enhancement are achievable and will result in significant onsite gain.

## Summary/Suggested Conditions

At present the core of the site consists of several intensively managed arable fields which offer negligible value to protected or notable species of wildlife. Because of the habitats present on site biodiversity net gain will be easily achievable and the new habitats will attract species present in the wider area to utilise the site more readily.

I have no objections to the proposals for the site providing the following conditions are imposed:

In the interest of preserving the quality and function of surrounding woodland for wildlife a condition on lighting e.g. A lighting plan will be submitted and agreed with the LPA prior to commencement of works to ensure there are no detrimental effects on the surrounding habitats and species from excessive lighting within the proposed development. Where lighting is necessary, the design will include mitigation such as downward facing, directional lighting, timers etc.

In the interest of species likely already present in the area and the absence of observed features for roosting, rest and/or hibernation, the provision of features for species on or close to the site e.g At least #4 bat boxes will be erected on or near to the site in retained trees in suitable locations, whilst #4 large rock and log piles will be provisioned in boundary areas to provide habitat for reptiles within one year of development commencing and evidenced to the LPA.

In the interest of all fauna that may use the newly created habitats on site informed management practices will be utilised e.g. To ensure the protection of ground nesting birds and, provide opportunities for invertebrates and reptiles, the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will specify a mowing regime that is takes these species into account and retains sward length for as much of the year as possible whilst allowing the function of the site.

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<sup>1</sup>Legislation.Gov.uk (2024) Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Available at: [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/1990) (Accessed 16 April 2024).