



Ecological Constraints Report

Studley Solar Farm, Atworth, Melksham

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PREPARED FOR
Melksham Calne Green Limited

ISSUED:
29th August 2025

PROJECT NUMBER
2024-07-546400

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Key Details

Client Name	Melksham Calne Green Limited
Site Address	Studley Solar Farm, Atworth, Melksham
Antea Group UK Contact	Pete Morrell
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Antea Group UK ('Antea') was instructed by Melksham Calne Green Ltd (the 'Client') to prepare an Ecological Constraints Report for land at the proposed Studley Solar Farm, Atworth, Melksham (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). The proposed solar farm received conditional planning consent in June 2022 (PL/2021/08690), with ecological surveys undertaken in 2021 to inform it, which are now considered out of date. This report is aimed at providing the Client with the initial findings of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Water Vole Survey and Badger Walkover Survey undertaken by Antea in July 2024, and further walkover in September 2024. The purpose of this Report is to provide an update on the current ecological constraints at the Site, and assess whether the mitigation measures proposed under the consented scheme remain valid in the context of the proposed revised layout.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Site Survey

A Site walkover, based on a UK Habitat Classification Survey was undertaken by Peter Morrell on 17th – 18th July 2024 to verify and update the findings of the previous surveys undertaken by Avian Ecology in 2021. This also included a badger survey of the Site and land within 30 m of the Site where access allowed, and water vole survey of the field boundary ditches. The Site was assessed for its potential for, or signs of, protected and notable species and for widespread invasive plants. A further Site visit was undertaken in September 2024.

Limitations

Dense vegetation, particularly associated with the unmanaged boundary hedgerows, limited the detectability of badger activity in certain areas, however, where this was the case observations of any evidence of badger entering the perimeter of the vegetation was sought.

Unmanaged bankside vegetation restricted access and observations of certain stretches of the water vole survey area, particularly the western extent of Section 1. However, this section was dry at the time of the survey and the suitability of these areas was considered sub-optimal. This limitation has been considered in the conclusions of this report.

The baseline conditions described in this report were accurate at the time at which the survey was undertaken. Should at least two years pass by, and/or conditions on-Site/Site usage change prior to the commencement of works, an update survey should be undertaken.

3.0 ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

Table 1 below summarises the key ecological constraints for the Site based on a review of previous third-party reports submitted with the planning application, and the PEA undertaken by Antea. Ecological opportunities and recommendations for enhancements are covered under a separate report.

Table 1 - Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

Baseline Summary	Further Survey Required	Constraints and/ or Opportunities
Habitats		
Habitats at the Site were consistent with those reported in the submitted Ecological Assessment Report (Avian Ecology, 2021), with the exception of two fields where the use has changed from arable to grassland. A lack of management of the boundary hedgerows has resulted in their expansion, and the boundary ditches and ponds supported reduced water levels, with sections that were dry. The cable route, extending northwards from the north-eastern corner of the Site followed the edge of an arable field before joining a hardstanding access track.	No	Where possible hedgerows and trees are to be retained and protected. This will be informed by the Arboricultural Survey Report, and Arboricultural Method Statement prepared for the Site. The boundary ditches and ponds are to be retained and protected in conjunction with the associated tree and hedgerow protection. Standard environmental best practice regarding dust suppression and pollution prevention will be applied during construction. Further details of protection measures are to be detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP): Biodiversity.
Birds		
Vegetated habitats across the Site provide opportunities for arboreal and ground nesting birds, as well as foraging opportunities. Previous Breeding Bird Surveys (Avian Ecology, 2021) recorded a breeding assemblage typical of farmland habitats, with modest numbers of notable species. All breeding species were recorded within the field boundary vegetation. The habitat composition remains largely unchanged from the previous surveys and provides resources for a typical farmland bird assemblage. As such no update surveys are considered necessary.	No	Standard mitigation regarding timing of works or watching brief should be applied to Site clearance. Where possible, clearance of suitable nesting habitat should be undertaken before early March or after late August in order to avoid the main bird nesting season. This includes clearance and/or continued management of the arable/grassland to limit its suitability prior to commencing works. Should this not be possible then habitats should first be checked by a suitably experienced ecologist and appropriate mitigation applied. These mitigation measures are to be detailed in the CEMP: Biodiversity.

Amphibians and Reptiles		
Conditions at the Site remain comparable to the findings of the Ecological Assessment Report (2021), although overall water levels were reduced with one former pond (previously referred to as Pond 8) being completely dry and with no evidence of aquatic vegetation. Previous surveys concluded great crested newts to be likely absent from the Site and given the current suitability of the ponds on-Site and immediately adjacent to the Site boundary, this is likely to remain so. Given the limited water, heavy overshadowing, and lack of aquatic and marginal vegetation, the ponds and field boundary ditches are not considered optimal to support other species of amphibian, however, the hedgerow bases and bankside vegetation provide suitable terrestrial habitat, and their presence cannot be ruled out. The Site overall offers limited suitable habitat and connectivity for reptile species, being dominated by arable and modified grassland. However, the boundary hedgerows and ditch network offer limited resources, if present in the local area. No evidence of reptiles was recorded during the 2024 PEA.	No	The higher value habitats for amphibian and reptile species (if present) e.g., hedgerows, ponds and ditches will be retained and protected during construction, with only minor localised works required for fence installation, drainage outfall and access. Any works required to suitable habitats should follow a precautionary method statement with regard to amphibians and reptiles. This should include sensitive timing of works (April – October, inclusive and during suitable weather conditions), and under a watching brief by a suitably experienced ecologist. Further details are to be provided within the CEMP: Biodiversity.
Bats		
Conditions at the Site remain comparable to the findings of the Ecological Assessment Report (2021). Several mature trees occur within the field boundary hedgerows, containing features suitable to support roosting bats such as deadwood, limb breakouts and ivy cover. None of the trees identified as containing features suitable to support roosting bats are anticipated to be directly impacted by the development proposals.	No	All trees are to be retained and protected at the Site in accordance with BS 5837 (2012), which will also provide an offset for construction activities and minimise the risk of disturbance of any roost (if present) resulting from noise and vibration. It is understood that only small-scale security lighting (motion sensitive or used only as required when personnel are present) will be necessary during the operational phase of the development, however, limited lighting may be required during construction at certain times of year. In this event, lighting should be kept to the minimum required and should be

The ditch network, hedgerows and trees across the Site provide suitable foraging and commuting corridors for bats.		directed away from features suitable for bats. Lighting of any required Site compound should be advised by a suitably experienced ecologist. Further details are to be provided in the CEMP: Biodiversity.
	No	
Riparian Mammals		
The results of the July 2024 survey are consistent with the previous findings for the Site. No conclusive evidence of water vole presence was recorded such that the population has either suffered an extinction event since positive field signs were recorded in June 2021, or the population occurs in very low numbers such that detectability is	No	It is understood that the majority of proposed works are situated over 5 m from the top of the ditch banks, and therefore, will not directly impact on water vole (if present) or the riparian habitats. The boundary ditches are to be protected in conjunction with the associated tree and hedgerow protection. However, limited and small-scale works are anticipated to be

reduced, or the Site forms part of a wider resource for the population and is used only during periods of population expansion. No evidence of other riparian mammals and associated activity, such as otter or American mink was recorded.		required at specific locations for the installation of a small drainage outfall pipe. As a precautionary approach, a pre-commencement inspection of the drainage outfall working footprint and appropriate buffer will be undertaken. In the unlikely event that a water vole burrow is identified to be impacted by the works, appropriate mitigation can then be applied. Standard environmental best practice measures regarding dust suppression and pollution prevention should be applied during construction. Further details are to be provided in the CEMP: Biodiversity.
Hazel Dormice		
Whilst no records of hazel dormouse were returned as part of the Ecological Assessment (Avian Ecology 2021) desk study, the field boundary hedgerows at the Site offer suitable foraging, nesting and commuting habitat for this species.	No	Boundary hedgerows at the Site are to be retained and protected, and dark corridors will be maintained. The proposed access tracks will, wherever possible, exploit existing gaps in hedgerows, with only minor removal (approximately 5 m wide). Precautionary avoidance measures must be applied during any small-scale hedgerow removal, including sensitive timing of works and pre-commencement inspections by a suitably experienced ecologist. Further details are to be provided in the CEMP: Biodiversity
Other Mammals		
Whilst no evidence was recorded, the Site provides suitable habitat for brown hare and hedgehog.	No	Standard best practice should be applied during construction with regards to preventing mammals from becoming trapped in open excavations and pipework. Access provision is proposed within security fencing to allow continued access for mammals such as brown hare and hedgehog.

		Further details are to be provided in the CEMP: Biodiversity.
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4.0 CONCLUSIONS

The update walkover confirmed that conditions on-Site remain largely comparable to those recorded within the 2021 reports. Furthermore, the proposed amendments to the layout are relatively minor which are considered to have negligible additional impacts on biodiversity. As such the mitigation proposed as part of the original consented scheme remains appropriate. Construction phase mitigation is detailed within the CEMP: Biodiversity that has been prepared for the Site.

5.0 REPORT AUTHORISATION

Prepared by:



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29th August 2025

Reviewed by:



[Peter Morrell \(Aug 29, 2025 18:07:53 GMT+1\)](#)
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29th August 2025

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FIGURES

Figure 1 – Ecological Constraints Plan

Whilst no conclusive evidence was recorded, the watercourse offers limited opportunities and connectivity for water vole. A pre-commencement check is required to confirm their presence/likely absence where works are proposed to, or within 5 m of the banks

The watercourse corridor is to be retained and protected, including maintaining an exclusion buffer of at least 5 m, and applying standard environmental best practice.

The Site offers limited opportunities for common amphibian and reptiles species. Precautionary avoidance measures are to be applied for works to hedgerow bases and banks of ditches.

Two disused badger setts have been recorded. Precautionary measures, including pre-commencement check are required

Trees with features suitable to support bats to be retained and protected

Pond to be retained and protected

The Site offers opportunities for both arboreal and ground nesting birds as well as foraging resources. Standard best practice measures required during initial clearance undertaken March-August, inclusive

Trees, woodland and hedgerow to be retained and protected in accordance with Arboricultural Method Statement

Any lighting required during construction should be kept to a minimum and directed away from suitable bat roosting habitat and foraging corridors such as trees, hedgerow and watercourses

The Site offers limited suitability for dormice, however they cannot be ruled out and as such any hedgerow clearance should follow precautionary avoidance measures

The Site offers suitable habitat for brown hare. Standard best practice must be applied regarding excavations during construction, and access maintained within any proposed fencing.

- Legend
- Site Boundary
 - Modified grassland
 - Cropland
 - Developed land, sealed surface
 - Standing open water (ponds)
 - Individual tree
 - Disused Badger Sett
 - Individual Tree with Bat Roost Potential
 - Hedgerow
 - Wet Ditch
 - Dry Ditch

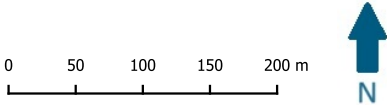


Figure Ecological Constraints Plan

Project Studley Solar Farm

Figure No	Revision	Date
1	A	24/07/2024
Drawn	Checked	Project Number
JB	CSL	2024-07-546400

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