

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Jessica Cracknell (Ecologist)
Date:	10/11/2025 27/05/2026 09/07/2026 updated comments
Application number:	PL/2025/05830
Proposal:	The construction and operation (including maintenance) of a 49.9MW solar farm to include ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays, electrical substations, grid balancing infrastructure, cabling, BESS (49.9MW capacity), communications tower, other associated infrastructure and areas for biodiversity net gain (BNG) enhancement and landscape mitigation
Site address:	Land at Flaxlands Farm, Royal Wootton Bassett, Swindon, SN4 8DY
Case officer:	Oliver Phippen

Recommendations:

	No Comment
	Support
	No objection
X	Condition (no objection subject to conditions)
	Objection - further information required
	Objection in principle
	HRA completed

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date information requested & Further information required	Satisfactorily addressed (Document & Date)
1	Protected/priority species, ancient woodland, protected sites and priority habitat	CP50, WCA 1981, NPPF 2023, Hab. Regs.	10/11/2025 27/05/2026 Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy/Plan, to include (see comments in main text): - Proposed ecological enhancements and mitigation - Suitable buffers proposed around features/habitats of importance	YES 09/07/2026 (information on enhancements to be conditioned) Ecological Buffer Zones. 01 June 2026. AMPYR. Rev. 1.
2	Impacts on Flaxlands Manor County Wildlife Site (CWS)	CP50, NPPF	10/11/2025 Removal of PV arrays from CWS or evidence of no adverse impact on the CWS including (but not exclusively): - Detailed botanical survey under optimal conditions. - Update impact assessment.	YES 27/05/2026 - Concept Design. 12 February 2026. AMPYR. Rev. R14; - Flaxlands Solar Farm Planning Responses: Natural England and Local Planning Authority.

			Compensation strategy	February 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989.
4	Nesting birds	NPPF 2024, CP50.	10/11/2025 A plan showing the mitigation area to be managed as a compensatory skylark nest site	YES 27/05/2026 (further information to be conditioned) Flaxlands Solar: Outline Skylark Mitigation Plan. April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989.
5	Great Crested Newt (GCN)	Habs Regs, WCA, CP50	10/11/2025 27/05/2026 Submission of GCN DLL IACPC	YES 09/07/2026 Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate. 12 June 2025. District Level Licensing Enquiry Number. DLL-ENQ-WILT-00124.
6	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)	10/11/2025 27/10/2026 Submission of statutory metric calculation with the correct baseline habitats, and associated plan and condition assessment sheets.	YES 09/07/2026 - The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. 23 April 2026. Iteration 1. SBM_Flaxlands_KM_2.2_030726; - Habitat Condition Assessments. July 2026. Habitat Condition Assessments_020726; - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. 03 July 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989. Rev. 3.
7	Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP).	Habs Regs, NPPF, CP50	10/11/2025 Amendment of Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP) in response to comments.	YES 22/05/2026 Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP). April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989.
8	Construction Ecology Management Plan (CEMP)	Habs Regs, NPPF, CP50	10/11/2025 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) must be submitted to demonstrate how construction will avoid ecological impacts and ensure compliance on site.	To be conditioned 22/05/2026 - Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989; - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report. June 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989; - Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP). April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989.

The outstanding document(s) listed above are needed to enable the council's ecology team to consider all the relevant impacts and benefits of the proposed scheme. The council's ecologists will provide a further response once all the above information has been submitted via the case officer.

Please Note: When resubmitting a revised document, ALL changes must be highlighted to enable review.

Thank you for consulting Ecology, I have reviewed the application and supporting documents against OS Maps and aerial photography of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory sites and existing records of protected species.

The following submitted documentation was reviewed to inform this response:

- Ecological Buffer Zones. 01 June 2026. AMPYR. Rev. 1;
- Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate. 12 June 2025. District Level Licensing Enquiry Number. DLL-ENQ-WILT-00124;
- Flaxlands Solar Farm Planning Responses: Natural England and Local Planning Authority. June 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Flaxlands Solar: Outline Skylark Mitigation Plan. April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Flaxlands Solar Farm Planning Responses: Natural England and Local Planning Authority. February 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. 23 April 2026. Iteration 1.SBM_Flaxlands_KM_2.2_030726;
- Habitat Condition Assessments. July 2026. Habitat Condition Assessments_020726;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. 03 July 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989. Rev. 3;
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report. June 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- National Vegetation Classification Survey. August 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Roosting Bats Report. November 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Roosting Bats Report Addendum. January 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Bat Activity Report. December 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Breeding Birds Survey Report. September 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Reptile Survey Report. November 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index Assessment and eDNA Survey Report. August 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Otter and Water Vole Survey Report. October 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP). April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment. May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Concept Design. 12 February 2026. AMPYR. Rev. R14.

The development covers an area of approximately 89ha consisting of agricultural fields bound by hedgerows, with some scattered trees. There are several areas of ancient woodland adjacent to the site, to the west, north, east and between the two parcels. There are several ponds on site and areas of running water. The PV layout retains the majority of hedges and mature and veteran trees and in some locations provides buffers along features recognised as of value to biodiversity. Measures to mitigate impacts on biodiversity and provide enhancement that have been incorporated into the development are welcomed.

Please see previous consultation responses dated:

- 27/05/2026: Jessica Cracknell, WC Ecologist, Comment No: WC-26-05-376473
- 10/11/2025: Jessica Cracknell, WC Ecologist, Comment No: WC-25-11-354613

North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The development lies within the outer zone of influence (4.2 – 9.4km) for the North Meadow National Nature Reserve (NNR)/Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) component of North

Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC, notified as an exceptional example of lowland meadow with a very high proportion of the surviving UK population of snake's head fritillary.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. This concluded that due to the development site lying more than 8km from the SAC boundaries there is no mechanism for adverse effect on it or its qualifying features. In addition, given the nature of the development, not residential, there is no mechanism for adverse effect from increased recreational visits. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application will not result in any mechanism for adverse effect on the conservation objectives of the SAC and subsequently is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Flaxlands Manor County Wildlife Site (CWS)

The site is located within an ecologically sensitive landscape, supporting a mosaic of habitats of high value, including priority habitat lowland meadows, ancient woodland and designated county wildlife sites. Features within the site are adjacent to and or functionally linked to these sensitive habitats contributing to landscape-scale ecological networks. Flaxlands Manor CWS includes 15.53 hectares of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority habitat lowland meadows. The development includes the placement of solar arrays in four fields (approximately 21 hectares or 70% of the CWS). The CWS is designated for a series of neutral pastures and hay meadows.

Priority habitats are considered to be features of nature conservation value by Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy which states *"development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term"*. There is also an expectation that *"All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development"*.

~~The proposed layout of PV arrays is considered extremely likely to result in unacceptable losses of priority habitat Lowland Meadows through direct loss of grassland during both construction and due to operational impacts specifically as a result of changes in management and shading. The development will result in damage and disturbance to the CWS and as such in conflict with CP50 of Wiltshire's Strategy which states that 'Damage or disturbance to local sites will generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts:~~

- ~~• cannot reasonably be avoided~~
- ~~• are reduced as far as possible~~
- ~~• are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest~~
- ~~• where appropriate compensation measures can be secured through planning obligations or agreements.'~~

~~It is strongly advised that all the PV arrays are removed from the CWS and any Priority Habitat Lowland Meadow in order to make the scheme acceptable in terms of ecology.~~

The application has been amended to remove PV arrays from within the Flaxlands Manor CWS, which addresses the previous concerns regarding direct impacts to the County Wildlife Site. A range of mitigation and protection measures are proposed, including the retention of key habitats, implementation of buffer zones, and construction safeguards which will be secured by condition. The Outline LEMP also sets out a programme of habitat enhancements within the CWS with proposals for lowland meadow habitats, and neutral grassland retained, enhanced or created across the wider site.

Ancient Woodland

Frith Copse CWS, Cowleaze Copse, Flaxlands Wood and Morris's Copse CWS are areas of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland bordering the Site. Ancient woodland must be adequately buffered in accordance with Government guidance, which states that *"proposals should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres from the boundary of the woodland."* The submitted LEMP confirms that "the existing hedgerow network that defines the scale and pattern of fields will be largely unchanged, as will existing blocks of woodland," and that the following buffers are incorporated into the design: 30 m from ancient woodland, 15 m from existing woodland and tree groups, 10 m from hedgerows, and protection of individual trees within their Root Protection Areas (RPA). These measures are welcomed and the **proposed buffers and mitigation are shown within the provided Ecological Buffer Zones Plan.**

Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 50 states *"All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development"*. The ancient woodland to the north and south of the site is also designated as County Wildlife Sites, with regard to such sites Core Policy 50 states *"Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment."* The ancient woodland buffers should therefore incorporate native scrub and grassland planting to enhance foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

Veteran Trees

There are several trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order in the western part of the site, with a couple veteran trees identified in Appendix C: Tree Protection Plan of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989). Paragraph 193(c) of the NPPF 2024 states *"development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists"*. There is an expectation that all veteran and nearly veteran trees will be retained and protected by the development. Veteran trees must remain within habitat corridors and must not be isolated by development.

Hedgerows

A network of boundary hedgerows within the site provides important commuting and foraging routes for bats, forming key ecological corridors that connect habitats both within the site and to the adjacent CWS and areas of ancient woodland. Hedgerows identified as being of high value to commuting and foraging bats (Figure 11 of the Bat Activity Report. December 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989) will be safeguarded by a minimum 15 m no-works buffer, while suboptimal hedgerows will be protected by a minimum 10 m no-works buffer. These buffers are necessary to maintain hedgerow functionality and to preserve dark corridors essential for continued bat movement.

Where vegetation removal is required for access, clearance will be restricted to the minimum necessary. Should gaps be created during construction, temporary flightlines will be installed and maintained until permanent connectivity is reinstated in accordance with the Bat Activity Report. Further mitigation includes strengthening existing commuting routes through gap planting and reduced cutting, habitat enhancement, and creation of replacement corridors. These measures will ensure that hedgerows and associated bat flight routes are appropriately buffered and retained. **All proposed buffers and mitigation are shown within the provided Ecological Buffer Zones Plan.**

Where access requires vegetation removal, works will be minimised. Any gaps will be bridged with temporary flightlines until permanent connectivity is restored. If permanent gaps >5 m are unavoidable, additional planting and replacement corridors will be provided. These measures ensure continued bat movement and **are shown within the provided Ecological Buffer Zones Plan.**

Bat Species

The Ecological Impact Assessment acknowledges that the Proposed Development has the potential to cause degradation of approximately 42.2 ha of grassland habitats in use by foraging bats and concludes that the residual effect would be moderate adverse. The site doesn't lie in a bat SAC consultation zone and no confirmed bat roosts were identified within the site; however, the submitted Bat Activity Report identifies that the site supports a nationally important bat assemblage including foraging and commuting Annex II species lesser horseshoe and barbastelle. The majority of bat activity is reported to be associated with the Ancient Woodland surrounding the site, specifically Frith Copse CWS, Cowleaze Copse CWS, Flaxlands Wood CWS and Morris's Copse CWS specifically the hedges connecting these woodlands. As well as the Flaxlands Manor CWS priority habitat lowland meadows. The latter hedge corridor is recognised as Key Bat Habitat of high value for commuting bats, as well as the hedgerows connecting the ancient woodlands to one another in the assessment.

The proposal should aim to minimise impacts on foraging habitats by protecting and maintaining the habitats that support the nationally important bat assemblage identified onsite. Key foraging features such as ponds, woodland, and scrub should be appropriately buffered, retained, and, where possible, enhanced to strengthen habitat connectivity and quality. **All proposed buffers and mitigation are shown within the provided Ecological Buffer Zones Plan.**

Lighting

The habitat within the proposed development site has been found of high value to roosting, foraging and commuting bats. An increase in artificial lux levels can deter bats which could result in roost abandonment and/or the severance of key foraging areas. This will likely result in a significant negative impact upon the health of bat populations across the region. Artificial light at night can have a substantial adverse effect on biodiversity. Any new lighting should be for the purposes for safe access and security and be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication GN01:2021, 'Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (ILP, 2021), and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals. Due to the likely presence of photophobic bats, lighting restrictions will be required during construction and operation, this could be secured via condition.

Nesting Birds

The submitted Breeding Bird Survey Report identifies that the site supports six breeding pairs of Skylark. [The Flaxlands Solar: Outline Skylark Mitigation Plan \(April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989\)](#) identifies that, following amendments to the site layout, skylark territories 3 and 5 will be retained within the development proposals, resulting in four identified territories (1, 2, 4 and 6) [being directly impacted by the scheme](#). As Skylark listed as a species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, they are considered a Priority Species. The proposals will result in the loss of suitable nesting habitat, and while areas of open grassland are to be retained within and around the solar arrays, these are unlikely to fully compensate for the loss of open fields currently used by breeding skylark. A Skylark Mitigation Strategy must be submitted to confirm how the loss of breeding habitat will be mitigated and to demonstrate that there will be no net loss of local skylark nesting resource.

~~The area designated for BNG on the Concept Design (Concept Design, 25 April 2025, AMPYR, Rev. R11) was excluded from the red line of the Breeding Bird Survey and thus was not surveyed for nesting birds. Additional survey work is necessary to confirm that the proposed skylark mitigation area is suitable for nesting, whether it already hosts existing skylark territories, and whether it can satisfactorily support the birds that would be displaced by the development. This mitigation area must be clearly shown on a plan and managed specifically for skylark nesting habitat. All mitigation located outside the red line boundary must be secured by legal agreement.~~

~~It is noted that a skylark mitigation strategy is being prepared. This must be shared with the ecology team prior to determination for assessment~~

To compensate for loss of habitat for the ground nesting birds of conservation importance, an area of land, in the south of the site, will be used to create suitable breeding habitat for Skylark. The compensation areas must be demonstrated to be of a sufficient size and quality to support the four displaced skylark territories, in addition to the two territories already associated with retained mitigation fields. Compensation as detailed in Flaxlands Solar: Outline Skylark Mitigation Plan (April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989), plans is acceptable and must be secured with the permission if approval is forthcoming. Further detailed information will be required as part of the Skylark Mitigation Strategy including, plans identifying the location and extent of all skylark compensation areas; updated breeding bird surveys, and a detailed habitat management and monitoring plan.

Great Crested Newt (GCN)

The Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index Assessment and eDNA Survey Report concluded that GCN are present within seven of the ponds identified onsite. The report recommends that applicant seeks to enter the District Level Licensing (DLL) scheme due to the confirmed presence of GCN within the suitable waterbodies on the site. GCN are a European Protected Species and must be considered within the planning process.

The applicant has applied to Natural England to license this proposal under the Great Crested Newt District Licensing Scheme. The application to the LPA includes the signed and countersigned Impact Assessment Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC), including at ANNEX 3 the location plan of the development. The Location plan corresponds with the red line boundary of the application.

Water Vole

Water vole field signs were recorded at Pond 2 and Watercourse 2, confirming low-level presence. The recommendations in the Otter and Water Vole Survey Report are supported. A minimum 10m buffer should be maintained from all watercourses and waterbodies, with pollution prevention measures implemented through the CEMP. A Natural England licence may be required should works extend to in-channel or bank-side areas. Should works be delayed by more than 18 months, an updated water vole survey will be required prior to commencement.

Reptiles

AECOM undertook reptile presence/absence surveys across two fields, using artificial refugia during 2024/2025; no reptiles were recorded. However, suitable habitat is present, and the site is therefore assessed as being of local value for reptiles. A precautionary method of working must be undertaken including a sensitive (phased) vegetation clearance methodology between March and October, under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. Ecological enhancements, including the creation of reptile refuges and hibernacula, are proposed; these measures should be included within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and shown on the requested Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy/Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) this application is required to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Biodiversity Gain Plan condition will automatically apply if approval is forthcoming.

A completed statutory metric calculation (23 April 2026. Iteration 1) confirming the baseline and predicted post- development biodiversity units of Site has been submitted (including the condition assessment sheets and maps). The Biodiversity Metric has been updated following a review of the

baseline habitat data. As stated within correspondence dated 03/07/2026, standard trees within on-site hedgerows had previously been recorded separately as individual trees but are now included within the associated hedgerow habitats. As a result, the baseline habitat value has reduced from 429.32 to 422.52 area habitat units.

Information in the completed on-site baseline habitat tabs is accepted as accurate based on the information submitted. The pre-development (baseline) situation is summarised below.

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	422.52 Habitat units
	80.80 Hedgerow units
	0.41 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	Yes
Has any habitat degradation of occurred?	No

If planning permission is granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan confirming how the development will meet the biodiversity gain objective must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of the development.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must be accompanied by a completed Biodiversity Metric with the following issues addressed:

- The trading summaries must be satisfied.
- The calculation assumes that land surrounding and between the solar arrays can support 'Grassland – other neutral grassland' of medium distinctiveness and good condition. Given the shading, management restriction and panel maintenance regimes it is extremely unlikely that the proposed grassland type and condition can be achieved. Unless justification supported by evidence demonstrating that grassland of higher biodiversity value can actually be established, or the calculations must be revised to reflect a more appropriate habitat type, condition and distinctiveness.
- The proposed Biodiversity Net Gain site is located within the designated Flaxlands Manor County Wildlife Site (CWS), classified as neutral pastures and hay meadows habitat and priority habitat lowland calcareous grassland. Given the location of the proposed BNG site, the proposed BNG habitat must align with the objectives of the designated CWS.

Confirmation of how the development will achieve BNG is a post-determination matter however consideration should be given to how any proposed BNG will be secured.

The proposed BNG is considered 'significant' due to:

- i. the scale and nature of the application (major);
- ii. units required (464.77 habitat units, 88.88 hedgerow units and 0.46 watercourse units), and
- iii. the BNG proposed (including medium distinctiveness habitats of other neutral grassland, ditches and species-rich native hedgerow and very high distinctiveness habitats of lowland meadows).

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required and should be secured via condition.

In order for the council to fulfil its BNG monitoring responsibilities, a Biodiversity Net Gain On-site 30 year Monitoring Fee must be secured through a Section 111, Section 106 or Unilateral Undertaking at the time of permission with contributions secured prior to commencement. The

applicant should be directed to the Guidance Note for Completing Agreements Under S.111 of the Local Government Act 1972. Where the applicant elects to use the S111 process the fee must be paid and S111 signed by both the applicant and the council on the granting of planning permission.

In order for the council to fulfil its monitoring obligations, the BNG monitoring fee would be £12,000 plus legal fees payable on commencement of development.

Core Policy 50

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The NPPF also encourages applications to deliver measurable net gains (para 186 d). It is anticipated that all developments will deliver no net loss of biodiversity. Section 4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (June 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989) recommends the inclusion of bird boxes, bat boxes, log piles, leaf piles and hedgehog houses, insect wall, insect boxes or bee bank, as well as the retention and enhancement of boundary buffers including native tree, shrub, and wildflower margin planting. All details on exact locations and specifications must be added to all working plans (**see condition below**) and will become an enforceable part of the planning permission to avoid oversight and to ensure consistency and enforceability.

[SolarPVFarmEcologyAdviceNoteJuly2021.pdf \(wiltshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Decommissioning

A condition is required to ensure an appropriate decommissioning and restoration plan is submitted to and agreed with the council a minimum of 12 months prior to decommissioning. The condition must ensure the plan will be supported by an impact assessment based on up-to-date baseline survey and carried out according to the current guidelines. It must set out clear aims of restoration to benefit key habitats and species.

CONDITIONS:

1. Compliance with submitted documents

The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:

- Ecological Buffer Zones. 01 June 2026. AMPYR. Rev. 1;
- Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate. 12 June 2025. District Level Licensing Enquiry Number. DLL-ENQ-WILT-00124;
- Flaxlands Solar: Outline Skylark Mitigation Plan. April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. 23 April 2026. Iteration 1. SBM_Flaxlands_KM_2.2_030726;
- Habitat Condition Assessments. July 2026. Habitat Condition Assessments_020726;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. 03 July 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989. Rev. 3;
- Sections 5, 6 and 8 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Sections 3 and 4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report. June 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Sections 6 and 7, and Appendix E of the Roosting Bats Report. November 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Sections 5 and 6, and Figure 11 of the Bat Activity Report. December 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Section 7 and Figure 1 of the Breeding Birds Survey Report. September 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Sections 6 and 7 of the Reptile Survey Report. November 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;

- Section 6 of the Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index Assessment and eDNA Survey Report. August 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Sections 6 and 7 of the Otter and Water Vole Survey Report. October 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP). April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment. May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity.

2. Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)

Prior to the commencement of works, including demolition, ground works/excavation, site clearance, vegetation clearance and boundary treatment works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The Plan will align with recommendations in Sections 5 and 6 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) (May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989); Sections 3 and 4 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (June 2024. AECOM. Project No. 60727989); and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP) (April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989) and shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- a. Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing.
- b. Working method statements for protected/priority species, such as great crested newts, nesting birds, water voles and reptiles.
- c. Mitigation strategies already agreed with the local planning authority prior to determination, such as for bats, skylarks and nesting birds, and reptiles; this should comprise the pre-construction/construction related elements of strategies only.
- d. Work schedules for activities with specific timing requirements in order to avoid/reduce potential harm to ecological receptors; including details of when a licensed ecologist and/or ecological clerk of works (ECoW) shall be present on site.
- e. Key personnel, responsibilities and contact details (including Site Manager and ecologist/ECoW).

Development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors prior to and during construction, and that works are undertaken in line with current best practice and industry standards and are supervised by a suitably licensed and competent professional ecological consultant where applicable.

3. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

Prior to the start of construction, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP will align with recommendations in Sections 5 and 6 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) (May 2025. AECOM. Project No. 60727989); and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP) (April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989). The LEMP will include long term objectives and targets, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for each ecological feature within the development, together with a mechanism for monitoring success of the management prescriptions, incorporating review and necessary adaptive management to attain targets.

The LEMP shall be implemented in full and for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure the long-term management of landscape and ecological features retained and created by the development, for the benefit of visual amenity and biodiversity for the lifetime of the scheme.

4. Skylark Mitigation Strategy

No development shall commence on site (including any vegetation removal or works to existing structures), until a Skylark Mitigation Strategy has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme will align with recommendations in Flaxlands Solar: Outline Skylark Mitigation Plan (April 2026. AECOM. Project No. 60727989) and shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Details of the location, number, size and distribution of Skylark plots;
- Details of habitat management prescriptions to maintain suitable breeding conditions;
- Long-term management and monitoring arrangements.

The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved mitigation strategies.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection, mitigation and compensation

5. Ecological Enhancements

Prior to the commencement of any works, including vegetation removal and demolition, details of the number, design and locations of ecological enhancement features including bat boxes, bird boxes, reptile features and hedgehog houses and bee banks shall be submitted to the Local Authority for approval. The approved details shall be implemented for the lifetime of the development and before completion of the final works.

REASON: To provide mitigation /enhancement for biodiversity.

6. Lighting

No external light fixture or fitting will be installed within the application site unless details of existing and proposed new lighting have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The submitted details will demonstrate how the proposed lighting will impact on bat habitat compared to the existing situation.

The plans will be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Notes on the Avoidance of Obtrusive Light (GN 01/2021) and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

REASON: To avoid illumination of habitat used by bats.

7. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

No development shall commence on site until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:

- a non-technical summary;
- the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;

- the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan and schedule for implementation;
- the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- the monitoring methodology and specification of a Monitoring Pack (to include but not exclusively up to date Management Actions Logs, Habitat Condition Assessment Reports, metric calculation; and corresponding post intervention Habitat Map) which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in years 2 (two) 5 (five) 10 (ten) 15 (fifteen) 20 (twenty) and 30 (thirty) of the Maintenance Period,

has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

The created and/or enhanced habitat shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the statutory HMMP at all times thereafter.

REASON: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

8. Decommissioning

No later than 12 months before planned decommissioning of the solar park a scheme for decommissioning and the restoration of the site must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The scheme will be based on update ecological surveys and must make provision for the removal of the solar arrays and the associated above ground structures, equipment and foundations, to a depth of at least one metre below finished ground level. The scheme must include the management and timing of any works; a traffic management plan; an environmental management plan including measures to protect wildlife.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors during the decommissioning phase and to ensure compliance with legislation in respect of protected habitats and species, planning policy and best practice.

INFORMATIVES:

Bats

There is a low risk that bats may occur at the development site. Bat roosts are protected all times by the Conservation of Habitats and Species 2017 (as amended) even when bats are temporarily absent because, being creatures of habit, they usually return to the same roost site every year. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation or substitute for the need to obtain a bat licence if an offence is likely. If bats or evidence of bats is found during the works, the applicant is advised to stop work and follow advice from an independent ecologist or the applicant is advised to follow the advice of a professional ecologist or to contact Natural England's Batline through the internet.

Nesting Birds

All British birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 while birds are nesting, building nests and sitting on eggs. The applicant is advised to check any structure or vegetation capable of supporting breeding birds and delay removing or altering such features until after young birds have fledged. Damage to extensive areas that could contain nests/breeding birds should be undertaken outside the breeding season. This season is usually taken to be the period between 1st March and 31st August but some species are known to breed outside these limits.

Great Crested Newts

The scheme will be operating under a District Level Licence (DLL) for Great Crested Newts. Great Crested Newts are protected under Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which implements the EC Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist Jessica Cracknell	Date 09/07/2026
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