

17/06/2024



To Whom It May Concern;

RE: Ecological Appraisal of Substation Site associated with Stoneshallow Solar Farm, Barlestone, Leicestershire.

This letter is to confirm that Oonagh Nelson BSc (Hons) MCIEEM AssocRICS, attended the proposed substation site which will link to Stoneshallow Solar Farm via the B585 on 16th April and 28th May 2024 to conduct 'pre-start' ecological survey effort in relation to the proposed commencement of construction activities.

Various surveys were undertaken, as an update to previous ecological assessments at the site. These included a badger and skylark survey, a desk-based study of designated sites and a general site walkover appraisal, to see if site conditions had changed since the previous Ecological Appraisal survey which had been carried out in 2021 (RPS, Ecological Appraisal Report, ECO01685 , November 2021).

Skylarks:

The 2021 survey recorded a single skylark territory within the substation plot. However, no ground-nesting birds, including skylark were recorded onsite at the time of the 2024 survey visit (28th May 2024). The field had been recently cultivated and so any ground nesters will likely have been displaced. The bare soil does not currently offer a suitable nesting habitat for this species. It is considered unlikely that vegetation shall establish sufficiently before the end of the nesting bird season (march to September), to allow skylarks to attempt any late-season nesting at this site. There are unlikely to be any constraints with regards to skylarks for the remainder of the 2024 nesting season. However, should works to the substation be delayed into the Spring of 2025, then a resurvey for skylarks should be undertaken.

Breeding Birds:

The 2021 survey effort recorded territories of skylark as detailed above, yellowhammer and dunnock within the substation plot. A small section of hedge will be removed to facilitate connection of the substation to the solar farm via a cable which runs along the B585. Provision for a targeted nesting bird check of this section of hedge has been accounted for in the preparation of this update of the EA. The nest check shall be timed no more than 24 hours in advance of the hedge removal, with a date TBA.

Badgers:

The substation plot (entire field) was subject to a thorough badger survey on 16th April 2024. No evidence of badger field signs (paths, snuffle holes, latrines or setts) was noted. This corroborates the absence of findings in the 2021 survey effort. There are therefore no obvious constraints with regards to badger at the substation site.

Otter and Great Crested Newts:

There is no suitable terrestrial habitat linkage for which either otter or great crested newts could utilise for ranging between aquatic habitats. The nearest pond is located 475m to the southwest of the site boundary and

no permanently wet ditches occur at the site or in close proximity to the site. There are therefore no obvious constraints with regards to otter or great crested newts at the substation site.

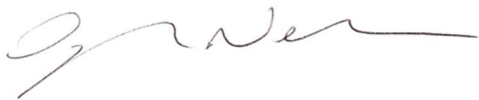
Designated Sites:

There have been no changes to statutory or non-statutory wildlife sites on or near the substation plot since 2021. There are therefore no obvious constraints with regards to designated sites (statutory or non-statutory) at the substation site.

There are no obvious constraints to the development of the substation plot for the remainder of 2024. Images showing site conditions as of 28th May 2024 are shown below and overleaf.

Should you require any further information in support of this, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind Regards



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