



CONSULTATION TEMPLATE RESPONSE FROM LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY PLANNING ADVICE

COUNTY, DISTRICT OR BOROUGH	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
APPLICATION NUMBER	26/00313/EAS
ADDRESS	Land West Of The Poultry Farm Desford Lane Ratby Leicester
DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	Solar Farm of up to 5MW
PLANNING CASE OFFICER	Sullivan Archer
DEPARTMENT	Ecology
PLANNING ECOLOGY OFFICER	Sue Hooton
DATE OF COMMENTS	14 May 2026
ECOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS REVIEWED:	
Desford Solar Farm Extension EIA Screening Report (LUC, April 2026)	
SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:	
No comment	☒
No objection (for recommended conditions or informatives- see below)	☐
Recommend Refusal	☐
Holding Objection - Further information required	☐
REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:	
We have reviewed the Desford Solar Farm Extension EIA Screening Report (LUC, April 2026) relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and identification of appropriate mitigation measures and mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. Baseline Information: The site comprises of approximately 47 acres (c. 19 hectares) of arable land (not including the existing solar farm which has been operational since 2016) with mature hedgerows of varying heights and occasional mature trees along the field boundaries. The internal field boundaries are also bordered by hedgerow of varying heights and non- designated mature woodland is situated to the north of the western most arable field, partially to the north of the western solar field and to the west of the north-eastern arable field. Potential Impacts: The extension site lies within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Botcheston Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as this is approximately 760 m to the west of Site. Natural England as a statutory consultee on this EIA screening application is expected to provide comments for any likely	

significant effects or information needs. Ratby Burroughs Ancient Woodland lies approximately 880 m to the north and Martinshaw Wood Ancient Woodland approximately 1.3 km north-east of Site and both are irreplaceable habitats.

This proposed project is not predicted to result in impacts on designated sites both statutory (SSSI) or non-statutory (LWS). The desktop assessment will be prepared in consultation with the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre and these records inform the survey requirements. Protected and Priority species likely to be present and affected will need to be considered adequately. Records from new or updated surveys undertaken should be shared with the record centre.

The ecological appraisal will address mitigation measures where necessary which will be detailed in a CEMP and these will support measures embedded into the final design of the proposed solar panels and associated infrastructure to avoid sensitive ecological receptors. The design will incorporate a 15 m root protection zone on all trees – we advise that this needs to include the adjacent woodland - to prevent damage to them or their roots. We are satisfied that adherence to these design principles mean that all infrastructure will be placed within arable and pasture land which are habitats of limited value to nature. The habitats of elevated value to nature, namely the trees, scrub and hedgerows, will be retained as far as practicable and offset from the Proposed Development. The applicant has stated that should hedgerow and/or tree removal be required, this will be suitably compensated for in line with the requirements for Schedule 7A so we advise that all hedgerows are assessed under the Hedgerow Regulations to ensure appropriate mitigation including avoidance measures are in place before considering compensation measures.

We highlight that impacts from de-commissioning are not referenced and these need to be assessed as part of the development as well as the construction and operational phases.

No ecological surveys and assessment have been provided to support the EIA screening opinion in relation to protected species. The ecological report submitted will need to be considered the potential impacts on all the relevant protected and Priority species as this is necessary for the Local Planning authority to demonstrate they have met their s40 biodiversity duty. Survey and assessment should meet the requirements of both Natural England Standing Advice.

We note that cabling will be laid along the southern edge of the Site to connect the energy channelled through the inverters to the existing substation which is part of the existing Desford Solar Farm. This should avoid impacts on ecological features and we welcome the statement that there will be infra-red CCTV cameras directed within the Site at all times.

Therefore, although impacts on protected species cannot be established at this stage, it is unlikely that the development would, with mitigation, result in any significant ecological effects on any European Protected Species or UK protected species. Any potential impacts to protected or Priority species which may be present within the Site, such as Badger and Skylark will be suitably assessed through further survey work and either avoided, minimised or compensated for as part of the design.

Conclusion:

We therefore consider that given its location, this type of development does/not, with mitigation, have the potential to result in significant ecological impacts.

We therefore recommend that ecology is screened out in relation to EIA screening of this development or screened in for further assessment under EIA Regulations

However, in addition to the EIA report, it will be necessary to also provide sufficient information on non-significant impacts on protected and Priority species and habitats at submission either in a non EIA chapter or separate documentation. This is necessary in order that the LPA has certainty of all likely impacts, not just significant ones, from the development and can issue a lawful decision with any mitigation and compensation measures needed to make the development acceptable, secured by condition.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS TO BE APPLIED:

N/A

ANY RECOMMENDED INFORMATIVES TO BE APPLIED:

N/A

PRE-DEVELOPMENT HABITAT BASELINE FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

THIS IS THE MINIMUM NATIONAL ESSENTIAL INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS (PPG paragraph 11) AND MUST BE SATISFIED PRIOR TO DETERMINATION:

Confirmation that development is subject to statutory biodiversity gain condition	N/A
Pre-development Habitat Plan of existing onsite habitat (to scale)	N/A
Pre-development Habitat Value (on date of application or earlier)	N/A
Completed Metric Calculation Tool	N/A
Statement of Habitat Degradation where present (with dates and details)	N/A
Reason for proposing an earlier date if applicable (ie. degradation)	N/A
Description of Irreplaceable Habitat where present	N/A
<u>SMALL SITES METRIC ONLY:</u> "Competent person" information (ie. qualifications, skills, experience)	N/A
BNG METRIC INFORMATION missing or incorrect:	
Incomplete or incorrect cells are shown in metric (eg. habitat quantity, type or condition, strategic significance)	N/A

POST DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT ESSENTIAL INFORMATION PRIOR TO DETERMINATION.

Post-development information is **indicative only**; final proposals must be confirmed at Biodiversity Gain Plan statutory condition stage.

<u>ON-SITE SIGNIFICANT*</u> BNG is proposed (If Y, please see later table)	Choose an item.
<u>OFF-SITE APPLICANT-OWNED</u> BNG is proposed (ie. Land shown on plan within the "blue line" boundary and inserted in "offsite" tab of statutory metric)	Choose an item.
<u>PLEASE NOTE:</u> Where applicant-owned off-site or significant on-site BNG proposals are present, these should be secured and monitored for 30 years. The determining authority is responsible for monitoring for compliance.	
<u>OFF-SITE PURCHASE**</u> of BNG	
BNG units purchase from a third party to achieve 10% BNG uplift	Choose an item.
Statutory biodiversity credits	Choose an item.

PLEASE NOTE:** Where purchased BNG units are proposed, any purchased units from the national register are secured and monitored for 30 years by conservation covenant, separately from this planning application process.

POST DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS:

***TYPE OF SIGNIFICANT ON-SITE HABITAT PROPOSED:** (using the current government definition¹)

SIGNIFICANCE AS DEFINED IN PPG	POST DEVELOPMENT HABITAT TYPE PROPOSED	NUMBER OF UNITS
Medium or High Distinctiveness		
Large number of units at Low Distinctiveness		
Significant increase in Distinctiveness, Condition or Area		

Note for applicants: Please be aware that this advice is provided to the Local Planning Authority through a Service Level Agreement between the Local Planning Authority and Leicestershire County Council Ecology Team. Its purpose is to discharge the legal duties of the determining authority under The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations (2000), Regulations 4.

If you have any queries about the content, please correspond directly with the Planning Officer assigned to the planning application or discharge of condition application. We are unable to respond directly to applicant enquiries regarding the advice that we have provided to the determining authority.

The following legislation is used to assist in the assessment of planning applications:

Legislation source	Reference
National Planning Policy Framework	Paragraphs relevant to biodiversity, biodiversity net gain, ecological connectivity and protected species
Environment Act 2021	Mandatory Net Gain Biodiversity Duty Local Nature Recovery Strategy
District or Borough Local Plan and supporting SPD's	Local Plan policy
ODPM circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation	Requirement for species survey work and mitigation recommendations to be carried out prior to the determination of a planning application. Paras. 98 and 99
NERC Act 2006	Biodiversity Duty (see also Environment Act 2021) Section 41, habitats and species of Principal Importance (previously BAP)
Various International, European and National laws in relation to the protection of species and habitats	International and national site protection: Ramsar sites (from Ramsar Convention), Habitat and Birds Directives (Natura 2000 sites include SAC's and SPA's), SSSI's, National Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves. Habitats and Species protection: Habitat and Species Regulations (protected sites and species). Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended including special Schedule 1), Natural England Standing Advice. Badger Act.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-on-site-biodiversity-gains-as-a-developer#significant-on-site-enhancements>

