



Application by Photovolt Development Partners on behalf of Solar Five Limited (the Applicant) for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Botley West Solar Farm

The Examining Authority's second written questions and requests for information (ExQ2): Issued on 30 July 2025

Responses are due by Deadline 4: 22 August 2025

The following table sets out the Examining Authority's (ExA's) written questions and requests for information – ExQ2. If necessary, the examination timetable enables the ExA to issue a further round of written questions in due course. If this is done, the further round of questions will be referred to as ExQ3.

Questions are set out using an issues-based framework derived from the initial assessment of principal issues provided as **annex C** to the Rule 6 Letter dated 28 March 2025. Questions have been added to the framework of issues set out there as they have arisen from representations and to address the assessment of the application against relevant policies.

Column 2 of the table indicates which interested parties (IP) and other persons each question is directed to. The ExA would be grateful if all persons named could answer all questions directed to them, providing a substantive response, or indicating that the question is not relevant to them for a reason. This does not prevent an answer being provided to a question by a person to whom it is not directed, should the question be relevant to their interests.

Each question has a unique reference number which starts with 2 (indicating that it is from ExQ2) and then has an issue number and a question number. For example, the first question on Planning Policy is identified as 2.1.1. When you are answering a question, please start your answer by quoting the unique reference number.

You should respond to the questions by using the **Have your say** function on the [project page of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website](#) and selecting 'Responses to Examining Authority's Second Written Questions (ExQ2)' when asked.

If you are responding to a small number of questions, you can submit your answers by choosing 'Make a comment' and entering your answers in the 'Your comments' box. If you are answering a larger number of questions you should download a copy of the Microsoft Word version of the document, enter your answers and save the document using an appropriate file name. You can then submit the completed document by selecting 'Upload files'.

Microsoft Word version: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/EN010147-001467>



Abbreviations used:

AADT	Average Annual Daily Traffic	DIO	Defence Infrastructure Organisation
ALC	Agricultural Land Classification	DL	Deadline
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	EA	Environment Agency
AP	Affected Persons	EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System	EM	Explanatory Memorandum
BMV	Best and Most Versatile	ES	Environmental Statement
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain	ExA	Examining Authority
BoR	Book of Reference	FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
CA	Compulsory Acquisition	FTE	Full Time Equivalent
CA Guidance	Planning Act 2008: guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land	Gd	Grade
CA Regulations	The Infrastructure Planning (Compulsory Acquisition) Regulations 2010	GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
CNL	Cotswolds National Landscape	GVA	Gross Value Added
CoCP	Code of construction practice	Ha	hectares
CPRE	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England	HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling
CROW	The Countryside and Rights of Way Act	HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicles
dB	Decibel	HIA	Heritage Impact Assessment
DBA	Desk-Based Assessment	HRA	Habitats Regulation Assessment
dDCO	Draft Development Consent Order	IAQM	Institute of Air Quality Management



IP	Interested Parties	OCTMP	Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan
ISH	Issue Specific Hearing	OFH	Open Floor Hearing
km	Kilometre	OHA	Oxfordshire Host Authorities
LIR	Local Impact Report	OLDP	Outline Layout and Design Principles document
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority	OLEMP	Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
LRN	Local Road Network	OOMP	Outline Operational Management Plan
LSE	Likely Significant Effects	OSMP	Outline Soil Management Plan
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	OSSEP	Outline Skills Supply Chain and Employment Plan and Employment
m	Metre	OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
MRA	Mineral Resource Assessment	OWSI	Outline Written Scheme of Investigation
MW	Megawatt	PA2008	The Planning Act 2008
NE	Natural England	PC	Parish Council
NGET	National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc	PCS	Power Converter Stations
NHLE	National Heritage List England	PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
NPA2017	Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017	PIR	Passive Infrared Sensor
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework	Project webpage	Project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website
NPS	National Policy Statement	PRoW	Public Rights of Way
NPS EN	National Policy Statement Energy Suite	R	Requirement in the dDCO
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project	RAF	Royal Air Force
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council	RR	Relevant Representation



RVAA	Residential Visual Amenity Assessment	TP	Temporary Possession
s	Section of Parliamentary Legislation	USI	Unaccompanied Site Inspection
SAC	Special Area of Conservation	VWHDC	Vale of White Horse District Council
SF6	Sulphur Hexafluoride	WFD	Water Framework Directive
SM	Scheduled Monument	WHS	World Heritage Site
SOCG	Statement of Common Ground	WODC	West Oxfordshire District Council
SoR	Statement of Reasons		
SoS	Secretary of State		
SPA	Special Protection Area		
SRN	Strategic Road Network		
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest		
SU	Statutory Undertaker		
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems		
tCO2e	Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent		

The Examination Library

References in these questions set out in square brackets (for example [APP-010]) are to documents catalogued in the Examination Library. The Examination Library can be obtained from the following link: [Exam Library](#). It will be updated as the examination progresses.

Citation of questions

Questions in this table should be cited as follows:

Question reference: issue reference: question number, for example ExQ2 2.1.1 – refers to question 1 in this table.



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ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
Q2.1 General and cross-topic questions		
Planning Policy		
2.1.1	Applicant	<p>West Oxfordshire Design Guide</p> <p>In response to Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 Action Point 8 you provided the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 5 – Settlement Types [REP1-040]. Whilst this document was not requested, it has led the Examining Authority (ExA) to consider other parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide that may be relevant to this application and how the project has sought to comply with these guides. Please provide a document that outlines how the project has responded to and will comply with the following parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Part 2 – Geology and Landscape2) Part 11 – New Development and Context3) Part 13 – Biodiversity and Protected Species
Planning Permissions		
2.1.2	Applicant Blenheim Palace (Dominic Hare)	<p>Application 25/01510/OUT</p> <p>The representation from Begbroke and Yarnton Green Belt Campaign [REP2-059] raises that the Blenheim Estate has submitted an application for 500 dwellings, affecting the Order land within the central section. Due to the application being submitted in 2025, it does not appear in the Environmental Statement (ES) Cumulative Effects Chapter 20 [APP-057] but appears to be important and relevant to the project at hand.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Explain what is known about this application and, through the use of maps and diagrams, explain the interaction between that proposed housing scheme and the solar farm project.2) Provide a cumulative impact assessment. <p>Set out what, if any, changes to the application are required to mitigate the effects on the housing scheme and vice versa.</p>
2.1.3	Applicant	<p>Cumulative developments and battery storage</p> <p>In response to ExQ1.3.5 [REP2-050], you have stated that Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) would be provided off-site elsewhere and point to an area to the west of the southern site in the cumulative assessment chapter [APP-057]. Having reviewed [APP-057], it appears that ‘battery’ appears 3 times in the course of ES Chapter 20 and, in each case, is associated with a proposed solar farm development. At a cursory glance, it would appear that those solar farm developments are providing BESS to be self-sufficient and manage their own electricity output.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Is it therefore incorrect of the applicant to point to those other BESS facilities as potentially servicing the proposed development?2) Has the applicant engaged those promoters with a view to connecting the Botley West Solar Farm to battery storage?
Legislative Framework		
2.1.4	Applicant	<p>The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape</p> <p>The Cotswold National Landscape Board (CNL) [REP2-068] and the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) [REP2-050, ExQ1.1.6] consider there is insufficient information to verify the applicant’s conclusions in terms of impacts on the CNL, both in terms of viewpoints and detailed consideration of the individual special qualities. The ExA request that a specific topic paper / technical note is provided to evidence the conclusions made in this instance and to demonstrate that there would not be any impediment to the active function upon the local authorities under s85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (as amended). This should include representative viewpoints to verify the assertions made.</p>
Design		
2.1.5	Applicant	<p>Design principles</p> <p>Despite requests for information, the response to ExQ1.1.10 [REP2-025] effectively states that there are no design details before the Examination, with all to be assessed under Requirement 5 of the Development Consent Order (DCO) post-consent. The lack of design details at this stage leads the ExA to the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The OHA have considered that an independent design review process would be beneficial [REP2-050, ExQ1.1.12]. Since no design information has been offered to the Examination under ExQ1.1.10 [REP2-025], the ExA also see the merit in having such a review

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>process in place at detailed design stage to ensure the principles of good design are adhered to in whatever design choices are made. Provide a Requirement in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) to account for this design review process.</p> <p>2) The representation of Mr Ford submitted at Deadline (DL) 3 [REP3-103] in response to ExQ1.1.14 references “<i>GOV.UK Guidance – Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Good Design. Updated 16th April 2025</i>” following on from which Mr Ford asks a series of questions about how the design ambition for the project has been attended to by the applicant. The ExA request detailed answers to be provided.</p> <p>3) NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.6.1 requests reasons to be provided as to why certain elements of design have not yet been finalised. Provide the reasons in relation to those aspects highlighted in ExQ1.1.10 [REP2-025].</p>
2.1.6	Applicant	<p>Security by design</p> <p>Interested parties (IP) continue to raise the issue about security and the potential for theft or damage of solar infrastructure. NPS EN-5, paragraph 2.4.4, states: “<i>the functional performance of the infrastructure in respect of security of supply and public and occupational safety must not thereby be threatened.</i>” Demonstrate to the ExA that positive and proactive measures are being secured by design in the dDCO to ensure the proposed development, and the energy it would produce, would be safe and secure.</p>
2.1.7	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Lighting</p> <p>You have made a request at DL3 [REP3-072] that passive infrared sensor (PIR) motion sensor lighting should be omitted. Can you explain why and state where you consider this request is best secured?</p>
2.1.8	Applicant	<p>Horlock Rules</p> <p>NPS EN-5, paragraphs 2.9.18 and 2.9.19, require applicants to take several factors into account when designing and locating substations. For the project main substation, and the 6no. secondary substations, set out how the Horlock Rules have influenced the project.</p>
2.1.9	Applicant	<p>Solar panel mounting support mechanism</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges the applicant’s response to EXQ1.1.19 at [REP2-025] and the plans supplied and have some follow-up questions. For both sheets of plans (labelled Q1.1.7 for sheet 1 and Q1.1.19 for sheet 2):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The plans show single and double leg supports that appear to be for the same side-on section. Explain in what conditions/instances a single leg support would be used instead of a double leg support. 2) For sheet 1 (Q1.1.7), explain how many supporting legs (and corresponding number of piles) there would be on a mounting table of 26 panels for both single and double leg options. 3) For sheet 2 (Q1.1.19), explain how many panels would be on a single-row mounting table, and how many supporting legs (and corresponding number of piles) there would be on a mounting table of panels for both single and double leg options. 4) ES Chapter 6 [APP-043], Table 6.3, Operational Development Parameters, shows the indicative total number of piles as 780,000 to 1,600,000. This is a huge range that is not fully explained either in this document, or in the response to EXQ1.1.19 or the plans provided. Provide a detailed explanation for this range.
2.1.10	Applicant	<p>Hours of working</p> <p>In response to the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072], the applicant reports the working hours as being 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, which has fed into the construction programme [REP2-026, page 45]. The ExA are concerned that works, particularly at noise sensitive times, could be disruptive. It is therefore requested that the applicant considers a separate subset of hours within which the noisiest activities could take place (i.e. 7.30am to 6.00pm), but other non-intrusive works (start-up, shut down, deliveries etc) could take place within the 7am to 7pm period. Provide a response with reasons for the position taken and make any amendments to relevant management plans as necessary.</p>
2.1.11	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Hours of working in the operational stage</p> <p>The Outline Operational Management Plan (OOMP) [REP3-032] states that: “<i>Routine inspections and maintenance would be carried out as required during daylight hours, seven days a week. Emergency maintenance would be carried out as and when needed.</i>”</p> <p>Given the wide scope of maintenance activities defined in the dDCO, allowing for the replacement of large parts of the project (but not the whole project at the same time), it would seem inappropriate to allow reconstruction works on a Sunday, particularly when the impact of</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:																																								
		working on a Sunday does not form part of the ES. The applicant and the OHA are requested to liaise with each other on suitable wording in the OOMP so as to avoid such effects occurring. Included in this should be a consideration of what constitutes an ‘emergency.’																																								
2.1.12	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Proposed construction hours Following the question raised at ISH1 regarding construction hours being undertaken on a Saturday afternoon, the applicant responded at [REP1–019] by stating: ‘ <i>This is required to minimise the overall Construction programme period</i> ’. What concerns, if any, do the OHA have with regards to the applicant’s proposed construction hours. In particular, what do you envisage would be the potential impact these additional construction hours proposed by the applicant would have on local residents, in comparison to the construction hours you expect and have stated in the post-hearing submission under agenda item 3i [REP1 -071].																																								
2.1.13	Applicant	Promised documents Throughout the DL2 submissions, but particularly in the responses to written questions [REP2-050], the applicant promises additional information and documentation: <table><tr><td>NPPF compliance table with updated local policy context (revised Planning Statement)</td><td>Deadline 6*</td></tr><tr><td>Technical note on SF6 switchgear optionality</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Health and socioeconomics to be reflected in SoCG with the Councils</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Financial accounts up to December 2024</td><td>In due course</td></tr><tr><td>Archaeology concordance tables</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Archaeology trial trenching results</td><td>Deadline 5</td></tr><tr><td>Work No.6 in the dDCO to refer to education facility</td><td>Deadline 6*</td></tr><tr><td>Bat survey data and technical note</td><td>As soon as analysis complete</td></tr><tr><td>Draft habitat licences (to Natural England, not to Examination)</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Revised ES Chapter 10 and Flood Risk Assessment</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Flood buffer zones to be incorporated into the Outline Operational Management Plan</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Bentonite breakout plan added to Outline Code of Construction Practice</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>ES Chapter 11 resubmitted to address paragraph 11.9.19 issues</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Revised Outline Skills and Employment Plan committing to measures in [APP-129]</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Groundwater monitoring details</td><td>Deadline 3</td></tr><tr><td>Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (including watercourse units...offered at Deadline 3)</td><td>Deadline 4</td></tr><tr><td>Revised Tree Protection Protocol</td><td>To be submitted</td></tr><tr><td>Consider improvements and upgrades to existing PRoW and ensure the dDCO allows for this</td><td>To be submitted</td></tr><tr><td>Thermal turbulence modelling with regards to radar interference (offered at Deadline 3)</td><td>To be submitted</td></tr><tr><td>Revised Glint and Glare Assessment</td><td>Deadline 4</td></tr></table> Of those listed above, those highlighted in grey have not yet been received. The ExA request these to be submitted at DL4 in the Examination timetable. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are exempted on the understanding they would come in at a future deadline.	NPPF compliance table with updated local policy context (revised Planning Statement)	Deadline 6*	Technical note on SF6 switchgear optionality	Deadline 3	Health and socioeconomics to be reflected in SoCG with the Councils	Deadline 3	Financial accounts up to December 2024	In due course	Archaeology concordance tables	Deadline 3	Archaeology trial trenching results	Deadline 5	Work No.6 in the dDCO to refer to education facility	Deadline 6*	Bat survey data and technical note	As soon as analysis complete	Draft habitat licences (to Natural England, not to Examination)	Deadline 3	Revised ES Chapter 10 and Flood Risk Assessment	Deadline 3	Flood buffer zones to be incorporated into the Outline Operational Management Plan	Deadline 3	Bentonite breakout plan added to Outline Code of Construction Practice	Deadline 3	ES Chapter 11 resubmitted to address paragraph 11.9.19 issues	Deadline 3	Revised Outline Skills and Employment Plan committing to measures in [APP-129]	Deadline 3	Groundwater monitoring details	Deadline 3	Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (including watercourse units...offered at Deadline 3)	Deadline 4	Revised Tree Protection Protocol	To be submitted	Consider improvements and upgrades to existing PRoW and ensure the dDCO allows for this	To be submitted	Thermal turbulence modelling with regards to radar interference (offered at Deadline 3)	To be submitted	Revised Glint and Glare Assessment	Deadline 4
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2.1.14	Applicant	Concrete slabs The ExA are concerned regarding the answer to ExQ1.1.15 [REP2-050]. It states that the applicant cannot commit to cable burial at 1.5m depth below ground level, albeit that is the aim. However, it goes on to say that if burial cannot be achieved to the depth (i.e. shallower) then																																								

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>concrete slabs would be laid to protect the cables. The laying of concrete slabs could have implications for drainage, soil quality (including Best and Most Versatile land (BMV)), agricultural activity (ploughing, mole-digging) in the vicinity of the cables and for ultimate decommissioning practices. The ExA request:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Limits of deviation for cable burial to be formally sought and specified in the dDCO to a minimum depth. 2) Information regarding any known or likely areas where the geology indicates difficulty in achieving the 1.5m burial depth. 3) A worst-case scenario assumption as to the percentage of the cable corridor that may require protection by covering. 4) An assessment of the consequential impacts (across all ES topics) during construction, operation and decommissioning of laying concrete slabs as cable protection. 5) Amendments to Work Nos. 4 and 6 to make reference to slabs being laid.
2.1.15	Defence Infrastructure Organisation	<p>Position statement and mitigations required</p> <p>Please set out clearly the position regarding the proposed development and the potential for interference with military assets. The statement should set out whether there is any impediment or infringement caused by the proposed development on national security or the ability for national defences to operate and function effectively. If there are concerns and issues about impacts, what mitigation measures are required from the proposed development?</p>
2.1.16	Applicant	<p>Defence Infrastructure Organisation</p> <p>The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) made representations [AS-042] and [REP1-082] relating to glint and glare, changes in wildlife patterns, and interactions with Primary Surveillance Radar equipment. The response you gave in [REP2-027] only focuses on glint and glare, offering no other comments on the DIO's written representation. Provide bespoke responses on the topics raised by the DIO in respect of all the DIO's interests.</p>
2.1.17	Applicant	<p>Funding decommissioning</p> <p>In your response to ExQ1.1.16 [REP2-025] you have stated: <i>"the infrastructure has asset value, which provides a financial incentive to decommission."</i> Provide evidence that at the end of the project life, the asset value will be greater than, if not at least equal to the cost of decommissioning.</p>
Q2.2 Air Quality and Emissions		
Air Quality Management		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Impacts on Human Health		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Q2.3 Assessment of Alternatives		
Strategic Alternatives		
2.3.1	Applicant	<p>Evidence the assertion</p> <p>Table 5.1 of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 5 [APP-042] states that <i>"A site selection exercise was undertaken, including land outside the Oxfordshire Green Belt"</i>. Whilst that comment may be relevant to the location of the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) substation, there is no direct reasoning or rationale submitted as to why the majority of the solar farm has to be located in the Green Belt as well. Provide the evidence underpinning this assertion as paragraphs 5.6.7 to 5.6.9 basically state that a site without any impact on the Green Belt was not available.</p>
2.3.2	Applicant	<p>NPS EN-5, paragraph 2.2.10</p> <p>NPS EN-5 refers to the duty placed on applicants under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989. Evidence how this Act and the principles within it have been addressed in the project. Demonstrate how paragraph 2.2.10 has been met.</p>
2.3.3	Applicant National Grid Electricity Transmission	<p>Substation availability</p> <p>From evidence submitted to the Examination thus far, it appears that most existing National Grid substations are at capacity or oversubscribed in terms of customers, giving rise to a need for new substations (such as the one to service the proposed development and</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		other projects in the area). A number of Interested Parties (IP) have commented that there are significant energy projects approved that are in a queue waiting for grid improvements before they can be connected; this, they say, reduces the urgent need for the proposed development because there is more energy than there is demand for the foreseeable future. The urgent need is actually for grid infrastructure. What do you say in response to this?
Project Alternatives		
2.3.4	Applicant	<p>Cable corridor</p> <p>In response to ExQ1.3.10 [REP2-025], it is stated that any formal request to remove residual optionality (for the cable routing options) from the Order limits is unlikely until the outstanding surveys and agreements are concluded, which is expected in the post-consent phase. Explain:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Who would be notified of the cable routeing decision outcomes and when. 2) How would the discarded options be managed post-consent (i.e. for example is it just a case of not exercising Compulsory Acquisition powers)? 3) Have any surveys or investigations to date indicated a potential preference in cable corridor routeing? <p>Should the optionality, or at least the decisions in relation to the optionality, be subject of a Requirement that would secure a choice of cable routeing that subsequently prevents other options from also being pursued?</p>
2.3.5	Applicant	<p>Evidence the assertion</p> <p>Table 5.1 of [APP-042] states: <i>“The layout has been designed to avoid minimise direct or indirect effects on valuable flora and fauna.”</i></p> <p>However, Natural England (NE) raised significant concern about the lack of bat surveys and detail regarding bats in the ES, suggesting there may be areas of design refinement to allow bat commuting and foraging. This leaves the Examining Authority (ExA) wondering whether the layout was fully informed by impacts to flora and fauna. Explain how bats and bat activity (breeding, commuting, foraging etc) influenced the layout of the proposal.</p>
2.3.6	Applicant	<p>Minimum buffers</p> <p>In terms of project choices, why did the applicant choose to provide minimum buffers (to rivers, watercourses, ancient woodland etc) as opposed to providing greater margins given the sensitivity of these features?</p>
2.3.7	Applicant	<p>Co-location vs remote battery energy storage</p> <p>Referring to [REP2-122], in which the IP has queried the applicant’s rationale for selecting remote battery storage, can the applicant provide details on the comparison of the two options: ‘co-location verses remote battery energy storage’. The comparison is to focus on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) maximum potential electricity generated by panels 2) electrical energy inputted to the grid/ used 3) minimising the potential discarding of unused electricity <p>Should there be a difference in efficiency (electrical energy generated vs energy used) between the two options, the applicant is required to equate this to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.</p>
2.3.8	Applicant	<p>Cable corridor</p> <p>In response to ExQ1.3.10 [REP2-025], it is stated that any formal request to remove residual optionality (for the cable routing options) from the Order limits is unlikely until the outstanding surveys and agreements are concluded, which is expected in the post-consent phase. Explain:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Who would be notified of the cable routeing decision outcomes and when. 2) How would the discarded options be managed post-consent (i.e. for example is it just a case of not exercising Compulsory Acquisition powers)? 3) Have any surveys or investigations to date indicated a potential preference in cable corridor routeing? <p>Should the optionality, or at least the decisions in relation to the optionality, be subject of a Requirement that would secure a choice of cable routeing that subsequently prevents other options from also being pursued?</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.3.9	Applicant	Evidence the assertion Table 5.1 of [APP-042] states: “ <i>The layout has been designed to avoid minimise direct or indirect effects on valuable flora and fauna.</i> ” However, Natural England (NE) raised significant concern about the lack of bat surveys and detail regarding bats in the ES, suggesting there may be areas of design refinement to allow bat commuting and foraging. This leaves the Examining Authority (ExA) wondering whether the layout was fully informed by impacts to flora and fauna. Explain how bats and bat activity (breeding, commuting, foraging etc) influenced the layout of the proposal.
2.3.10	Applicant	Minimum buffers In terms of project choices, why did the applicant choose to provide minimum buffers (to rivers, watercourses, ancient woodland etc) as opposed to providing greater margins given the sensitivity of these features?
2.3.11	Applicant	Co-location vs remote battery energy storage Referring to [REP2-122], in which the IP has queried the applicant’s rationale for selecting remote battery storage, can the applicant provide details on the comparison of the two options: ‘co-location verses remote battery energy storage’. The comparison is to focus on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) maximum potential electricity generated by panels2) electrical energy inputted to the grid/ used3) minimising the potential discarding of unused electricity Should there be a difference in efficiency (electrical energy generated vs energy used) between the two options, the applicant is required to equate this to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.
General Considerations for Alternatives		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Q2.4 Climate Change		
Assessments and Calculations		
2.4.1	Applicant	Commentary of case law Could the applicant provide comment in light of the recent cases of R (on the application of Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) v Surrey County Council [2024] UKSC 20 and Friends of the Earth Ltd and South Lakeland Action on Climate Change v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC 2349 (Admin), and whether these cases have any implications for the assessments of greenhouse gas emissions?
2.4.2	Applicant	Baseline data In Table 4 of the applicants Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 summary [REP1-019] (Baseline Climate Data (1991-2020) for Oxford Climate Station), it states the monthly mean wind speed in miles per hour (mph). Can the applicant provide the maximum wind speed recorded during this period in mph.
2.4.3	Applicant	Climate change resilience Referring to Table 14.6 in ES Chapter 14 [APP-051] provide further detail and justification for scoping out risks to the proposed development from climate change. If the scoping out relies on the fact that either the likelihood of extreme weather events is extremely low (or defined as minor exposure, as in Table 3 of ISH1 summary [REP1-019]), or the impacts from events such as high winds are insignificant, provide evidence on how such conclusions were reached.
2.4.4	Applicant	Carbon sequestration Can the applicant provide a response to the following statement made by Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) in their written summary of oral submissions for ISH1 [REP1-071]: “ <i>Further consideration is required of the Outline GHG Reduction Strategy [APP-216] which makes no mention of the potential for increased carbon sequestration on the site.</i> ”.
2.4.5	Applicant	Maximum design parameters In Table 3 of the applicants ISH1 summary [REP1-019], the embedded mitigation measure for the hazard of increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather states: “ <i>Panels and mounting systems are designed in accordance with BS 62584-1 specification which</i>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<i>ensures a safe design for winds up to 90 mph</i> ". Given wind speeds greater than 90 mph have been recorded across the UK in the past, what assurance can the applicant provide that the proposed panels and mounting systems will either not be subjected to wind speeds greater than 90 mph or will be designed to withstand higher wind speeds.
2.4.6	Oxfordshire Host Authorities National Grid Electricity Transmissions Environment Agency	Justification for SF6 The applicant has amended the Outline Layout and Design Principles document to give reasons for not fully adopting an SF6-free development. Do you accept those reasons?
Impacts of Climate Change		
2.4.7	Applicant	Lessons learned Can the applicant signpost the Examining Authority (ExA) to where they have provided a response to action point 24 at ISH1 [EV5-010] with regards to lessons learned and how the design standards of their proposed development may differ to those solar farms mentioned in action point 24, resulting in a lower risk of such extreme weather incidents.
2.4.8	Applicant	Mounting structure integrity The applicant's response to ExQ1.1.18 [REP2-025] states: ' <i>mounting structures (frames) for the Botley West Solar Farm are designed for a service life of minimum 40 years.</i> ' What specific engineering process and procedures will the applicant have in place to ensure the integrity of the mounting structures is maintained throughout the life of the proposed development and has not been reduced due to extreme weather events.
Q2.5 Compulsory Acquisition		
Overarching Case		
2.5.1	Applicant	Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker The submission and content of the Blenheim Estate Ownership Commentary document at Deadline 3 (DL3) [REP3-068] is noted by the Examining Authority (ExA). The Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker submitted at DL3 [REP3-008] lists the following Trustees: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Blenheim Trustees Company No. 1 Limited 2) Blenheim Trustees Company No. 2 Limited 3) Vanbrugh Trustees Limited 4) Vanbrugh Trustees No 2 Limited Whilst the interests held and plot references are given within the tracker, please provide a detailed explanation of the differences between each Trustee. Furthermore, having regard to [REP1-098], the ExA request a flowchart of the companies that make up the Blenheim estate and which arm is responsible for what and who benefits from the project financial arisings. This includes explanation of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) The Blenheim Estate 6) Vanbrugh Unit Trust 7) Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation 8) Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund What is the legal method by which funds, and how much, will transfer directly to Blenheim Palace for the purposes of maintenance of the World Heritage Site (WHS), who will administer these funds and how is it secured? Explain how the Blenheim Maintenance Fund, a recipient of the lease monies, is related to these companies.
2.5.2	Applicant	Funding availability The ExA notes the response to ExQ1.5.26 and ExQ1.5.27 [REP1-025], including the statement that EY London Energy & Infrastructure Corporate Finance team consider that the scheme should be able to achieve a sufficiently high internal rate of return to attract third party debt and equity investors. However, the ExA, and ultimately the Secretary of State (SoS), need to be satisfied that Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) will have adequate funds available for proposed development. Currently the ExA has concerns as to whether the availability of funding would be an impediment to the implementation of the proposed development, should development consent be granted.

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		Please provide additional detail to confirm adequate funding would be available in order to commence development and for any compulsory acquisition to take place within the timescales set by the Order.
2.5.3	Applicant	Botley to Eynsham and Eynsham to Hanborough cycle schemes The response by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to ExQ1.5.20 in respect of Third-Party Land is noted by the ExA [REP2-050], as are the comments made by the applicant at DL3 in respect of this issue [REP3-065]. However, please confirm whether any rights granted over highway land or third-party land adjacent the highway would jeopardise the dedication of land as highway or the delivery of the B4044 path in its entirety.
2.5.4	Applicant	Change Request 2 and land retention A response to this question may be provided at Deadline 4 (DL4) or can be included in the environmental information to accompany the second change request application. The change request includes two large reductions in land at Bladon. The first relates to complete removal of the land from the Order limits and re-drawing of the boundary as a consequence. The second relates to retention of 17.6ha of land within the Order limits, but the land to be used for biodiversity net gain as opposed to the installation of solar arrays. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Government's 'Guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land' advises that the SoS needs '<i>to be satisfied that the land to be acquired is no more than is reasonably required for the purposes of the development</i>' (paragraph 11). Given the project was already stated to provide up to 80% net gain, why is this 17.6ha of land needed to be acquired to deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG)? 2) If it is not needed or essential to deliver BNG, is there a compelling case for compulsory acquisition? 3) What is the actual tangible benefit to the applicant of retaining this land in the Order limits as opposed to re-drawing the boundary to exclude such land entirely? 4) Would the land not be better served being kept in its current agricultural use?
2.5.5	Applicant West Oxfordshire District Council	Land retention at Church Hanborough As noted above, the SoS needs to be satisfied that the land to be acquired is not more than is reasonably required of the purposes of development. Applicant - The ExA notes that land to the southeast of Church Hanborough, Field 2.116 and the northern section of Field 2.115 is contained within the Order limits and is, according to the landscape, ecology and amenity plan [AS-022], available for community food growing. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What consultation has been undertaken to ensure that this area is the most appropriate for community food growing? 2) If it is not needed or essential to provide space for community food growing, is there a compelling case for compulsory acquisition? 3) What is the actual tangible benefit to the applicant of retaining this land in the Order limits as opposed to re-drawing the boundary to exclude such land entirely? 4) Would the land not be better served being kept in its current agricultural use? West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) – This area is within the Church Hanborough Conservation area, do you feel that community food growing would be an appropriate use of this land having regard to heritage objectives.
2.5.6	Applicant	Decommissioning At paragraph 2.1.1 of the Outline Decommissioning Plan (ODP) [APP-236] it is stated that " <i>The land within the Project Site Boundary will be returned to the respective landowners and to its original use after decommissioning</i> ". The ExA acknowledge that the content of commercial agreements is usually confidential in nature. However, the ExA consider it would be useful to have sight of an extract of the Heads of Terms being sought with landowners which confirms the wording of such a return clause.
2.5.7	Applicant	Permanent acquisition The applicant is seeking the permanent acquisition for the freehold of land and permanent acquisition of new rights. Given that the proposed development is considered temporary by the applicant, please provide a detailed explanation as to why the acquisition of permanent rights and land is justified for a temporary development.
2.5.8	Applicant	Proportionate land take

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>At DL3, in response to a submission by Deborah Mackin [REP2-098], the applicant [REP3-064] states that “<i>The current red line boundary is intentionally broad to allow for flexibility during this process, but all final alignments will be confirmed in consultation with affected parties and designed to minimise disruption</i>”.</p> <p>The ExA wishes to draw the applicant’s attention to Paragraph 10 of ‘Planning Act 2008 – Guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land’ which states “<i>The Secretary of State must ultimately be persuaded that the purposes for which an order authorises the compulsory acquisition of land are legitimate and are sufficient to justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected.</i>”</p> <p>If an intentionally flexible and broad approach has been adopted by the applicant in respect of land take, please confirm how compliance with paragraph 10 of the above guidance is to be adhered to.</p>
2.5.9	Applicant	<p>Funding</p> <p>The ExA notes the responses made by the applicant to both Layla Morgan MP and Begbroke and Yarnton Green Belt Campaign in respect of both funding and the selling of other solar projects [REP3-064] and [REP3-065]. With particular regard to the comment made by the applicant that it is “<i>funding the project up to Decision stage from its own resources...</i>”, if the proposed development receives consent, please confirm whether it is the intention to sell the Project post-consent?</p>
Statutory Undertakers		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Individual Affected Persons		
2.5.10	Applicant	<p>Engagement and communication</p> <p>The ExA notes at DL2 several submissions have commented on a lack of engagement and communication in respect of potential land issues and the applicant has responded at DL3 [REP3-064] to the majority of these submissions. The ExA acknowledges the scale of the proposed development but is keen to ensure effective engagement for all parties. Please advise if there are any specific barriers facing the applicant in respect of continuing to undertake meaningful engagement and communication.</p>
Crown Land and Special Category Land		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Q2.6 Cultural Heritage		
General		
2.6.1	Diane Berry	<p>Clarification required</p> <p>In section 7 of your Relevant Representation (RR) [RR-248] you state “<i>the remains of the barn where my Great Uncle lived will be cleared away and lost forever, local history destroyed</i>”. In their response to RR [REP1-020] the applicant has stated that no historic farm buildings would be demolished.</p> <p>Please identify the location of this barn (grid reference, field and plot number, or what 3 words reference, along with a photograph) and whether it has any know designation, either as a curtilage building to a heritage asset, or a non-designated heritage asset.</p>
2.6.2	ICOMOS-UK	<p>Variation in suggested omissions maps between Deadline 1 and Deadline 2</p> <p>The following is a list of field numbers (as seen in [APP-131]) that you had suggested for omission at Deadline1 (DL1) [REP1-103], either in part or whole, but are not suggested for omission in your DL2 submission [REP2-071 – REP2-074].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field 1.14 (northern part) • Field 2.28, south of Burleigh Farmhouse • Field 2.40 <p>Please explain these discrepancies.</p>
2.6.3	Applicant	<p>Suggested omissions by ICOMOS-UK</p> <p>The Examining Authority (ExA) posed question EXQ1.6.11 [PD-008] to ICMOS-UK which asked why they had suggested additional removal of panels and how this impacted on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Site (WHS). In their response [REP2-</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>069], ICMOS-UK stated that that omitting areas that were considered to be oppressive to local villages would sustain the general quality of the rural landscape that provides context to Blenheim Palace. They further explained that in the 18th century, the parkland and rural landscape were perceived holistically around grand houses and that the quality of the landscape outside the park remains relevant to the contemporary understanding of the WHS.</p> <p>In your response to EXQ1.6.12, [REP2-025] which asked you to comment of the additional omissions suggested by ICOMOS-UK you reiterated your position regarding the OUV of the WHS and intervisibility, but did not comment on the proposed omissions. Your submission [REP3-065] again ignores the response from ICOMOS-UK. Provide a detailed response to ICOMOS-UK's position and suggestions for the wider removal of panels that would sustain the context of the Blenheim Estate.</p>
2.6.4	Historic England ICOMOS-UK	<p>Settings of historic towns</p> <p>In Green Belt policy, one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. Taking into account the applicant's potential proposed change request [REP2-045], do you consider there to be any continuing conflict with this purpose of the Green Belt?</p>
2.6.5	ICOMOS-UK	<p>ICOMOS-UK position</p> <p>ICOMOS provided a technical review (Appendix 1 of [RR-0398]) which concluded: <i>“(ICOMOS) considers that the proposal will likely have an adverse impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property and advises that the proponent consider alternative locations for this development to avoid these negative impacts on the Blenheim Palace World Heritage property.”</i></p> <p>The ICOMOS-UK position, as outlined in [RR-0413] (superseded by [REP2-070]) and [REP1-103]), fundamentally differs from this technical review in that you do not consider that there would be a direct impact on the OUV, but expands on the potential impact on the wider landscape, including areas suggested for omission that would protect the wider setting.</p> <p>How should the ExA reconcile the different positions of ICOMOS and ICOMOS-UK.</p>
2.6.6	Stop Botley West	<p>Community Impact Report</p> <p>Figures 6.1a and 6.1b of [REP2-081] show an archaeological excavation site and a fragment of pottery. Please identify these figures in relation to the project site, or indicate if they are not related to this site.</p>
2.6.7	Historic England	<p>Cumulative impacts</p> <p>At Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 [EV5-004] the ExA asked whether you felt that, if taken together, the impact on multiple heritage assets could increase the overall level of harm of the project from less than substantial to substantial. Your response was that you only considered heritage assets individually.</p> <p>Whilst it is appreciated that each case is determined on its merits, the ExA has experienced a different approach taken by Historic England (HE) to cumulative impacts on multiple heritage assets on other projects and would like you to expand on the reasons for not considering this in relation to this particular project.</p>
2.6.8	Applicant	<p>Aerial views</p> <p>Taking into account the responses to EXQ1 on this subject, the ExA is minded to consider that on balance, aerial views such as those experienced by air travellers for business or pleasure are a factor in the consideration of the wider setting of the WHS and other numerous heritage assets as they provide the context in which the historic landscape can be viewed and appreciated.</p> <p>It is noted in your response to ExQ1.6.9 [REP3-065] that you will be addressing aerial views in the next revision of ES Appendix 7.5, Settings Assessment and the ExA welcomes careful consideration of this issue.</p>
2.6.9	Applicant	<p>Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Hanborough (Grade I)</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with HE's assessment [REP1-086], which they confirm in [REP3-081], that whilst the project would not disrupt views of the church spire or impact its landmark qualities, it would erode the character of the church within its traditional open agricultural setting. In addition, HE note that the proposed development would be in place for nearly two generations and would establish the principle of built form of an industrial character in land from which the church is experienced. As such, they conclude that the magnitude of harm is low adverse, resulting in minor or moderate harm to the significance of the church.</p> <p>In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on HE's assessment and provide more detailed reasonings for your position.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.6.10	Applicant	<p>Church of St Peter, Cassington (Grade I)</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with HE's assessment [REP1-086], which they confirm in [REP3-081], that the church spire is seen against a backdrop of agricultural fields which provide a strong visual relationship between the landscape and the church that contributes to the appreciation and understanding of the origins of this rural parish church and its close connection with the landscape. HE note that the proposed development would change the character of those fields behind the church spire from agricultural to semi-industrial, which would erode the church's traditional agricultural context due to the ordered rows of solar panels making it slightly more difficult to appreciate the silhouette of the spire when compared to the existing backdrop of patchwork fields, thus disrupting its landmark qualities. In addition, HE note that the proposed development would be in place for nearly two generations and would establish the principle of built form of an industrial character in land from which the church is experienced. As such, they conclude that the magnitude of harm is low adverse, resulting in moderate to major harm to the significance of the church.</p> <p>In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on HE's assessment and provide more detailed reasonings for your position and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
2.6.11	Applicant	<p>Church of St Michael, Begbroke (Grade II*)</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with HE's assessment [REP1-086], which they confirm in [REP3-081], that while views towards the church tower from the north are, in part, screened by trees, from these fields the church can be seen within its countryside setting which contributes to its significance as a rural place of worship. HE also stated that from within the fields the church can be seen alongside the former St Philip's Priory and Church (both grade II listed), and together these have group value in being a focal point in the landscape and gives the viewer the sense that they are approaching an important ecclesiastical complex.</p> <p>HE state that the proposed development would signal a hardening of the setting of the church, and the experience would change from a rural character to one that is semi-industrial, and whilst views of the church tower would not be physically impacted by the development, the ability to experience the church within its traditional agricultural context on this approach would be eroded. In addition, HE note that the proposed development would be in place for nearly two generations and would establish the principle of built form of an industrial character in land from which the church is experienced. As such, they conclude that the magnitude of harm is low adverse, resulting in minor or moderate harm to the significance of the church.</p> <p>In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on HE's assessment and provide more detailed reasonings for your position and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
2.6.12	Applicant	<p>Hordley House, Wootton (Grade II*)</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. From the Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) undertaken and the evidence provided to the Examination to date, the ExA considers that there is an historic relationship between the land to the southwest of Hordley House to the junction at Samsom's Farm that contributes to the significance of Hordley House as part of a wider, planned, historic landscape. The applicant is asked to explore this further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
2.6.13	Applicant	<p>Shipton Slade (Grade II)</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, from the USI's undertaken and the evidence provided to the to the Examination to date, the ExA considers that the farmland to the north and west provides the historic context and setting of Shipton Slade Farm and whilst the buildings have been converted to residential use, this context and historic association remains important to the significance of the group. The applicant is asked to explore this further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
2.6.14	Applicant	<p>Upper Whitley Farm</p> <p>In the Oxford Host Authorities (OHA) response to ExQ1.6.29 [REP3-072] Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) have stated that they consider your statement that "<i>No element of the Project, including the project substation, would be visible in views to or from the listed building</i>" to be incorrect. Your assessment of viewpoint 51 in the Environmental Statement (ES) chapter 8 [APP-045], which represents the closest point to Upper Whitley Farm, indicates that there would be views of the substations. The ExA are minded to agree with VWHDC's</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		position. In light of the proposed changes to the project design set out in Change Notification 2, the ExA request that the applicant to explore the relationship between the project and Upper Whitley Farm further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, including photomontages.
2.6.15	Applicant	<p>Burleigh Farmhouse (Grade II)</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. From the USI's undertaken and the evidence provided to the to the Examination to date, the ExA agrees with the assessment that the most affected area of the setting would be the fields to the east, which still provides historic context to the working farm. The applicant is asked to explore this further and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
2.6.16	Applicant	<p>Hall Farmhouse, Begbroke (Grade II)</p> <p>It was noted at para 7.2.59 in the OHA Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072] that the setting and potential impact of the project on Hall Farmhouse and The Old Rectory had not been assessed and in your response [REP2-026] you stated that further information would be available within Rev 1 of the settings assessment [REP2-014]. This document does not provide any additional assessment of either of these buildings. From the USI, the ExA considers that the project would lie within the setting of Hall Farmhouse and its associated dwellings and requests that an assessment of the potential impacts are provided.</p>
2.6.17	Applicant	<p>Begbroke Conservation Area</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with the assessments of ICOMOS-UK [REP2-069] and [REP2-070] and the OHA LIR [REP1-072] that indicate that the development has the potential to result in harm to the setting of the conservation area. Furthermore, in relation to the ICOMOS-UK representations, they have suggested a 200m buffer to the north of the village. The applicant is asked to explore this further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
2.6.18	Applicant	<p>Cassington Conservation Area</p> <p>The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. The OHA's responses to EXQ1.6.1 [REP2-050] note the Cassington Design Code and the emphasis it places on the character of the landscape that surrounds the village and how this defines its setting. The ExA notes that this document has not been referred to in the ES Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. In addition, ICOMOS-UK suggest in their representations [REP2-069] and [REP2-070] that panels should be removed from the north of Cassington in order to provide "breathing space" to the village; a view that is shared by several interested parties (IP). The applicant is asked to explore this further and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.</p>
Archaeology		
2.6.19	Applicant	<p>Trial trenching results, Sansoms Platt</p> <p>It is noted that in their submission [REP2-056], HE is still concerned about the level of impact assessed and the potential for the area of nationally important archaeological remains to be greater than the area currently scheduled.</p> <p>It is also noted in your response to EXQ1.6.45 [REP2-025] that the results of trial trenching will be available at DL5. However, in [CR1-003] you state that the trial trenching was commenced in August 2024. In their responses to EXQ1.6.35, both Oxford County Archaeology Service (OCAS) [REP2-050] and HE [REP2-056] have indicated that they are awaiting this important information in order to be able to more fully assess the potential impact on archaeological site. In addition, OHA second response to EXQ1.6.45 [REP3-072] notes concerns regarding the timing of this submission in relation to the Examination period.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Please explain the delay in getting these results published and, if possible, commit to submission at DL4 instead of DL5. 2) In the updated settings assessment [REP2-014] paragraph 1.9.7 alludes to some of the results being available. If it is not possible to bring the full submission forward, please provide a more detailed initial summary of results at DL4 and whether you consider they are likely to result in any changes to the proposed buffer zones. <p>The ExA appreciate that the conclusions in the ES Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014] have been made without the benefit of the trial trenching results and expect that this document will be updated following publication of the results to ensure that the effects are accurately reflected.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.6.20	OCAS Historic England	Sansom's Platt protection In HE's RR [RR-0398] it is indicated that the scheduled area is accepted to be the site of a Roman Settlement associated with Akeman Street and may extend beyond the existing scheduling boundary. In light of the trial trenching results possibly not being available until DL5 and given your existing knowledge of this and other similar sites, please provide a plan suggesting what you might consider to be a suitable buffer zone to protect the potential remains in this area.
Q2.7 Draft Development Consent Order		
Interpretation and Articles		
2.7.1	Applicant National Grid Electricity Transmission	Associated Development By virtue of Work No.2, following on from Work No.1, the National Grid (NGET) substation is classed as being associated development in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO). The Examining Authority (ExA) refers to the published guidance note which, in summary, states there needs to be a direct relationship between associated development and the principal development; that the associated development should not be an aim in itself but should be subordinate to the principal development; that development should not be treated as associated development if it is only necessary as a source of additional revenue for the applicant, in order to cross-subsidise the cost of the principal development; and, that the associated development should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the principal development. The ExA questions whether, given that NGET is looking to reinforce the network in this area and provide a new substation to act as a connection space for a variety of customers (not just the project), the NGET substation is actually an aim of itself and whether it could truly be considered as associated development. Explain your position with reasons.
2.7.2	Applicant	Disapplication The Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) disagree with the disapplication of s23 Land Drainage Act 1991. Can the applicant explain clearly what the benefit to the project would be by modifying s23 in the manner proposed by the dDCO and what the impediments to the project would be if the existing legislative provisions were retained intact.
2.7.3	Applicant All local authorities (including parish councils)	Council organisation and administration The ExA is aware of a wider Government push for local government reorganisation that may involve the merge or split of local authorities and the transfer of powers/ responsibilities/ functions between any newly created offices. To that extent the ExA would ask the local authorities to provide an update on the current thinking regarding such reorganisation and indicate the direction of travel that is likely, and also ask the applicant to 'future proof' the DCO so that any successors to the current local government structure are accounted for (for example, if Oxfordshire County Council is named in the Order as a discharging authority, if the Council ceases to be called as such or its roles split, that the newly formed entities would remain a discharging authority).
2.7.4	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Amendments to the DCO Table 20 of the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072] lists the amendments, clarifications and modifications requested by the OHA to the dDCO, including new requirements. The applicant provided a rebuttal [REP2-026, page 53ff] agreeing to some corrections and disagreeing on others. In respect of those matters of dispute that remain between the parties, please set out why the Secretary of State (SoS) should consider the changes you have suggested and what material difference those amendments would make to the smooth running, understanding or practical application of the DCO.
2.7.5	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities National Highways Environment Agency	Consultation The applicant has commented at [REP3-065] that National Highways would be consulted on the final Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) because of an amendment to a paragraph within the outline Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) [ExQ1.7.20]. In a similar vein, the applicant says the Environment Agency would be consulted on the whole CoCP because of a paragraph written into the flood risk assessment [ExQ1.7.27]. This appears to be an unusual and non-standard approach to securing consultation and the ExA strongly suggest the consultees are named on the face of the dDCO. The applicant should update the dDCO accordingly or the consultees (named in this question) should provide written confirmation that the applicant's current approach is acceptable.
2.7.6	Applicant	New Article proposed Oxfordshire County Council proposed a new Article 16A be added into the Order at [REP3-072]. What is your position?

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
Requirements		
2.7.7	Applicant	Grampian requirement The applicant previously stated [REP2-025, ExQ1.3.3] that the requirement was not needed and not necessary, particularly since there were ‘paid securities’ that the connection agreement in October 2028 would be honoured. NGET’s response [REP2-076, ExQ1.3.6] states the substation would not be built and ready until late 2029 (assuming a smooth process through the planning system). The ExA request re-consideration of this matter and draft wording, on a without prejudice basis, of such a requirement.
2.7.8	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Replacement panel requirement The OHA requested a clause within the dDCO stating that if 30% or more of the solar arrays were to be replaced at one time, a new CTMP should be produced [REP2-050]. The applicant has responded at [REP3-065] that panel replacement would be phased over 5 years. It is unknown whether that means 20% per year. Could both parties give consideration as to how this level of replacement could be written into the dDCO, whether as a definition (under maintain) or as an additional to a Requirement etc. Explain with reasons.
2.7.9	Applicant	Requirement 9 At [REP3-072] the OHA noted that the applicant indicated that they would work in collaboration with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to develop a detailed Surface Water Management Strategy and that such a collaboration would be secured via the DCO. Please confirm and amend, if necessary, as to where Requirement 9 secures approval by the relevant LLFA.
Schedules		
2.7.10	Applicant All local authorities	Schedule 12 The applicant has amended schedule 12 of the dDCO, removing the words “within the Order limits” [REP2-027]. The applicant justifies this as being the means by which hedgerows that straddle the Order limits could be removed in full if necessary. Local authorities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are your views on this amendment? 2) Are you content that the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) would provide suitable and satisfactory mitigation/ replacement planting for any hedgerow lost that falls outside the Order limits? 3) Are the hedgerows affected suitably surveyed or protected (by the need for surveys and environmental mitigation/ protection measures) in the ES and the DCO? Applicant <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) The result of the change to Schedule 12 appears to re-draw the Order limits around these hedgerows without seeking the additional land or rights to do this. It would seem unfair for the landowners (whose land the hedgerows fall upon) to be affected in this way without any compensation for the rights lost or the loss of features on their land. Provide a legal note as to why this change is acceptable with regards to the relevant compulsory acquisition guidance and legislation or revert back to the previous wording accordingly.
2.7.11	Applicant All local authorities	Paragraph (6) of Schedule 16 At [REP1-005], the applicant updated Schedule 16 of the dDCO with text regarding ‘anticipatory steps’ to discharging requirements before the Order is made. The applicant cites some examples where such text has appeared before, saying there is precedent. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The ExA notes all the examples given are highway projects. Can the applicant confirm whether any energy-based projects, including the most recent for solar schemes, contain such provisions? 2) Can the applicant explain what the benefits are of having this clause within the Order and whether there really is an impediment to the project that needs overcoming in this way? Do the local authorities have any practical or operational concerns regarding the inclusion of this provision?
2.7.12	Applicant	Schedule 16 additional sub-paragraph The ExA consider it may be useful for members of the public, should development consent be granted, for there to be a clear audit trail of the processes and procedures that take place on the path to commissioning the proposed development. In this vein, particularly with the

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>applicant having added paragraph (6) to Schedule 16, the ExA recommend the following text is added into the dDCO (noting precedent in the A12/A120 Order 2024). The applicant's views are requested in response to this suggestion.</p> <p>Register of requirements</p> <p>24.— (1) The undertaker must, as soon as practicable following the making of this Order, establish and maintain in an electronic form suitable for inspection by members of the public a register of those requirements contained in Part 1 of this Schedule that provide for further approvals to be given by the approving authority.</p> <p>(2) The register must set out in relation to each such requirement the status of the requirement, in terms of whether any approval to be given by the approving authority has been applied for or given, providing an electronic link to any document containing any approved details.</p> <p>(3) The register must be maintained by the undertaker for a period of 3 years following completion of the authorised development.</p>
2.7.13	Applicant	<p>Schedules 1 and 5 - road widening</p> <p>Schedule 1 of the dDCO mentions road widening at Works. No 9 and then Schedule 5 of the dDCO lists alteration layouts required before these works can go ahead, referring to the B4017 Cumnor Road only [REP3-004]. However, paragraph 12.7.18 of ES Chapter 14 [APP-049] states two other roads where road widening will be undertaken. Does the dDCO cover widening of these two additional roads also, if so, where and how, if not should it do so?</p>
2.7.14	Applicant Siemens Healthcare Limited	<p>Protective Provisions</p> <p>The ExA notes an outstanding disagreement between the applicant and Siemens Healthcare Limited. Both parties are requested to consider whether the differences could be solved via bespoke protective provisions and, if so, work urgently on drafting these. In response to this question, inform the ExA what is being done, when and why.</p>
Controlling Documents for the dDCO		
2.7.15	Applicant	<p>Integrity of the Project Mitigations and Commitments Schedule</p> <p>The ExA has undertaken a random spot check of measures listed in the schedule [APP-129]. The following has been spotted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Measure 7.11 states all temporary satellite compounds would be managed as grassland if not required for solar installations. The word 'compound' appears once in the OLEMP, the word 'satellite' does not appear and, whilst grassland is prevalent throughout the document, this specific commitment listed in [APP-129] does not appear in the OLEMP [APP-235]. 2) Measure 9.28 refers to badger setts being retained with an appropriate buffer of undisturbed habitat. The OLEMP only refers to a license being obtained for disturbance impacts. The measure does not appear secured. 3) Mitigation measure 13.8 states a bespoke Horizontal Direction Drilling (HDD) method statement would be committed to in respect of HDDL3 and HDD6 in the CoCP [APP-232]. There is no such commitment listed or readily identifiable. 4) Measure 13.5 states that the requirement for operational phase noise limits will be identified in Outline Operational Management Plan (OOMP) [APP-234]. This cannot be readily discerned when reviewing the OOMP. 5) Measure 14.1 commits to tables of panels being between 1.5m and 3m apart from one another. Table 9.1 in the Outline Layout and Design Principles document does not reflect this, seemingly saying between 3m and 22m. <p>It is requested that the Project Mitigations and Commitments Schedule [APP-129] is rigorously updated and, where a commitment is said to be in a document, a cross reference should be given to the paragraph or section where such a commitment exists.</p>
2.7.16	Applicant	<p>Buffer distances to ancient woodland</p> <p>The CoCP states that there would be a 15m buffer between works and ancient woodland. The location for the entry and exit pits for HDDL3 [APP-130], albeit shown indicatively, appear very tight to the edges of these buffers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provide dimensions and distances between the HDDL3 compounds and the edges of the woodland areas. 2) Provide details of the likely depth of all occasions where HDD tunnelling would take place underneath ancient woodland and set out why such a depth would be acceptable having regard to the root protection areas and soil stability within woodland areas.

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.7.17	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Legal agreements</p> <p>The Joint LIR [REP1-072] made reference to off-site works (biodiversity, improvements to public rights of way etc) that would need to be secured via a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended. The LIR also made reference to the availability and suitability of using a section 278 agreement under the Highways Act 1980 to facilitate works to public highways as opposed to powers sought in the dDCO.</p> <p>On the understanding that Development Consent Orders are used as ‘one stop shops’ for the consenting regime to speed up infrastructure delivery, provide express legal reasons why such different legislative routes should be pursued, and the pros and cons (implications) should development consent be granted for the project in the absence of such legal agreements.</p>
Q2.8 Ecology and Biodiversity		
Ecology		
2.8.1	Applicant	<p>Otters, voles and fish</p> <p>The Environment Agency (EA) submission at Deadline 1 (DL1) [REP1-083] is unequivocal as to the need for surveys for these species. The Examining Authority (ExA) notes the EA are supported by the Beds, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust [REP2-065, ExQ1.8.14]. The ExA finds no direct rebuttal of the EA’s comments at DL2. If not going to be carried out during the Examination, the ExA expects such surveys to be part of the pre-construction surveys the applicant would undertake, with the survey results shared with the relevant consultees to inform detailed design and the mitigation (if any) required. Either provide such surveys to the Examination or update the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) and register of commitments [APP-129] accordingly to ensure the requested surveys are undertaken and protective measures (if any are necessary) are secured.</p>
2.8.2	Applicant	<p>Confidence in assumptions</p> <p>In the response to the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP2-026, p31], you have stated that <i>“further surveys for water vole or otter are not necessary since all impacts are avoided.”</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When you have not surveyed for the presence of these species, and therefore have no understanding of their potential habitats in the area, how can you be so certain that no impacts would occur? 2) In the action of horizontal directional drilling (HDD), there is the potential for bentonite to breakout. Beds, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust [REP2-065] have advocated micro-siting should occur so as to avoid drilling underneath otter and vole habitats, so that any bentonite breakout would be managed without harming habitats. Why has the applicant ruled this out as a potential effect/ impact and what does the applicant propose to do to prevent the impact occurring as feared by the Wildlife Trust? 3) In response to ExQ1.10.4 [REP2-025], a commitment appears to be made that HDD would be at least 2m below the riverbed. At this depth, what is the potential for noise and vibration affecting the wildlife in the riverbanks and riverbed? 4) In the absence of surveys, how can the applicant be sure that its proposed flood meadow programme on the River Evenlode would not harmfully change or alter the living conditions for otters, voles and fish?
2.8.3	Environment Agency	<p>Fish and the riverbed</p> <p>The applicant, at [REP3-065], has said that HDD underneath rivers would only see vibration for a period of 2 weeks and therefore vibration impacts would be minimal. Do you accept this, or do you feel fish surveys are necessary?</p>
2.8.4	Applicant Natural England	<p>Ammonia deposition</p> <p>The ExA understand that ammonia deposition is under review between the parties. Provide an update and what steps are being undertaken to avoid, reduce or mitigate the effects.</p>
2.8.5	Applicant	<p>Bird displacement</p> <p>The applicant accepts that the impact to the wintering bird assemblage is moderate adverse and long term. The applicant states the reference to ‘temporary’ in relation to the impact refers to the future provision of further habitat.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When would the new habitat be created and ready for use by wintering birds? 2) Where would this new habitat be positioned and why has the location been chosen?
2.8.6	Applicant	Monitoring Evenlode

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		Natural England (NE) [REP2-057] requested that water quality in the River Evenlode should be monitored. It is not readily apparent to the ExA that this point has been addressed in the DL3 submissions. Please either signpost where the request has been accommodated or provide reasons as to why this has not occurred.
2.8.7	Applicant Forestry Commission	<p>Effects on woodland</p> <p>Forestry Commission - In the submission [REP2-054], you state “<i>more needs to be demonstrated to ensure that relevant Government policy, legislation and guidance is being met.</i>” The ExA note that paragraph 5.4.32 of NPS EN-1 requires applicants to mitigate fully the direct and indirect effects of development on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees or other irreplaceable habitats during both construction and operational phases. The ExA would like to enquire as to which elements of legislation and which elements of the National Policy Statements are considered not currently being met and which direct/ indirect effects you feel are not reasonably covered/ mitigated for by the project. Please specify the exact Acts, clauses and paragraphs, along with reasoning to explain the perceived breaches, deficits or conflicts in each case.</p> <p>Applicant - The ExA requests your early views on the alleged potential non-compliance with NPS EN-1.</p>
2.8.8	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Farmland bird strategy</p> <p>Please outline what is envisaged in such a strategy, why you consider it necessary to secure, why it is needed in respect of national policy and what the implications would be if the project was granted development consent without such a strategy in place.</p>
2.8.9	Applicant Natural England	<p>Skylarks</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) and Cassington Parish Council (amongst others) note that the skylark plots to be provided are only intended to provide foraging areas. There is an alleged loss of nesting/ breeding skylark habitat by the proposed development that the interested parties (IP) consider to be adverse. The OHA suggest some 60ha of off-site land needs to be secured and maintained to support some 228 skylark territories. Provide comment on the request and the need for such mitigation.</p>
2.8.10	Applicant	<p>Monitoring commitments</p> <p>Table 9.10.1 in the revised Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 9 [REP2-012] sets out the monitoring commitments in respect of ecology. For some of the entries, it reports cleanly “Requirement in DCO”. The ExA note no such specific requirements for monitoring exists on the face of the dDCO.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) If the monitoring measures are to be secured on the face of the DCO, as firmly stated by Table 9.10.1, make the necessary amendments and provisions to make the requirement into force. 2) If the monitoring commitments are meant to be part of the OLEMP, specify this clearly in ES Chapter 9 and within the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [APP-129], clearly demonstrating where such measures are secured. 3) In Appendix C of the OLEMP [REP2-019], it states hedges should be managed to a minimum height of 3m and would be monitored to ensure this height. Can you explain how the density of planting would be monitored and managed to ensure that visual screening is achieved? (for example, a 3m tall hedgerow which is very sparse might provide very little screening).
2.8.11	Applicant Natural England Environment Agency	<p>Monitoring mitigation</p> <p>Applicant – What would happen if ecological monitoring found that a greater adverse effect was being had on a species (i.e. bats, breeding bird assemblage) than the ES envisages? What would the mitigation options be and where are they secured? Would panels be removed to lessen the impact?</p> <p>Natural England / Environment Agency – Please provide your comments on this matter and what monitoring would achieve without effective mitigation options being tabled or understood at this point in the DCO process.</p>
2.8.12	Natural England Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Biodiversity metric</p> <p>In the applicant’s rebuttal of the local impact report [REP2-026, page 37] the applicant provides reasoning for not applying a temporal multiplier to the biodiversity metric. Do you disagree and, if you do, what are the implications for the ExA’s and the SoS’ assessments?</p>
2.8.13	Applicant	<p>Effects on woodland</p> <p>Forestry Commission [REP2-054] query the interface of HDD and ancient woodland. This was not commented on in the applicant’s DL3 submissions. Please elaborate on the relationship and specify whether a minimum depth underneath ancient woodland could be secured.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.8.14	Forestry Commission Natural England	Woodland fragmentation The applicant has stated [REP2-026] that: <i>“maintaining connectivity between woodlands and water course features is ensured within the masterplan through the provision of the buffers around water courses, hedgerows etc. Indeed, the masterplan would improve connectivity between these features compared to the baseline as the majority of the fields present across the Project site have little or no field margin. Once built, the Project would provide a minimum of 5m of margin either side of all hedgerows.”</i> Given this statement, do you consider there the potential for fragmentation between woodland (and ancient woodland) areas to occur, or would the proposal provide betterment compared to the current situation?
2.8.15	Applicant	Biodiversity Net Gain The OLEMP anticipates the delivery of 70% net gain of habitats units across the project as well as 50% net gain in hedgerow units [REP2-019, paragraph 9.1.4]. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment forecasts 80% and 57% respectively [APP-162]. 1) Explain the differences between the % figure. 2) Which of the above figures is relied upon in the assessment of beneficial effects in ES Chapter 9 [REP2-012]
2.8.16	Natural England	Biodiversity Net Gain vs loss of habitat Many IP have queried whether BNG would actually be an effective replacement for the habitat (breeding and foraging opportunities) that would be lost to bats and breeding birds through the loss of arable land by way of the project. Do you have any views on this, particularly with regards to connectivity between existing established habitats and the distance to proposed BNG land?
Q2.9 Environmental Impact Assessment		
Areas for further evidence		
2.9.1	Applicant	Overplanting NPS EN-3 para 2.10.17 anticipates solar generation as being between 2 to 4 acres for each MW of output. Overplanting, as noted in 2024 NPS EN-3 footnote 92, is <i>“the situation in which the installed generating capacity or nameplate capacity of the facility is larger than the generator’s grid connection”</i> . The Examining Authority (ExA) has not found reference to overplanting within Environmental Statement (ES) Chapters 5 or 6. Reference was made at Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 regarding the generating capacity being limited by the grid connection offer of 840MW. The ExA requests greater detail on these two aspects of the proposed development in respect of these NPS citations.
2.9.2	Applicant	Cumulative developments Cumnor Parish Council [REP2-048, ExQ1.1.5] raised concern regarding the cumulative effects associated with the Red House Solar Farm and a floating solar farm at Farmoor Reservoir. Whilst Red House Solar Farm is cited in a couple of tables in ES Chapter 20 [APP-057] there is little literature discussing the cumulative impacts of the project with Red House Solar Farm or ratifying the conclusions drawn, even though that proposal is adjacent/ adjoining the project. In addition, whilst the ES does make reference to the Farmoor Reservoir scheme [APP-057], there is little literature on the potential for cumulative effects. Provide more information in respect of these other proposals and evidence any conclusions drawn as to the cumulative effects arising across all the varying ES Chapter topics.
2.9.3	Applicant	Cumulative effects The ExA note that, among all the other projects in the shortlist [APP-224], there are four particular proposals that appear to be getting attention from Interested parties (IP) during the course of the Examination. These are: 1) The 2MWe floating solar farm at Farmoor Reservoir 2) The 65ha solar farm on adjacent/ adjoining land at Red House Farm 3) The Salt Cross housing allocation 4) The proposed housing development by Blenheim Palace sought under reference 25/01510 Other questions in ExQ2 request details relating to these proposals. For the purposes of this question, the ExA state that these proposals appear more important and relevant to the Examination than others due to the interest from IP. The ExA request assessment of these

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		schemes and evidence that the applicant has given thought both to the cumulative effects and to the potential implications for mitigation when advancing the project.
2.9.4	Oxfordshire Host Authorities Other Interested Parties	<p>Consequences of assessments</p> <p>The ExA note your concerns about the applicant's methodology (particularly on landscaping) underplaying the effects arising from the proposed project, and the ExA also note the applicant's rebuttals defending the decisions made. The question following on from this is whether, as a result, you consider the mitigation to be adopted by the applicant is equally underplayed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do you consider that, if the effects arising had been deemed 'significant', that additional mitigation above and beyond what is proposed would be required, or: 2) Do you consider that the mitigation proposals would likely have remained equivalent to what is currently proposed, regardless of whether the applicant reported moderate adverse effects as significant or not significant? <p>If the answer to question 2 is no (i.e. more mitigation would have been proposed had the effects been deemed significant), which areas do you think the mitigation proposals have been underplayed and what do you consider needs to be done for more effective mitigation?</p>
Matters of clarification		
2.9.5	Applicant	<p>Residual effects</p> <p>Paragraph 4.1.7 references the role of residual adverse effects after the implementation of mitigation measures in the overall planning balance, and states that the Secretary of State (SoS) should weigh these effects against the public benefits.</p> <p>The applicant has faced criticism of the approach taken in the ES, particularly on cultural heritage and landscape topics in terms of methodology and the perceived downplaying of effects, as well as in respect of ecology in terms of surveys. If an effect has been considered to be of a lesser consequence than it actually is (i.e. not significant), the ExA perceive there could be real potential for the subsequent mitigation plans to be less than what is required (i.e. the belief it is not broke, don't fix it). If that were to be the case, then the true residual effects of the development could be unknown and unquantified.</p> <p>In light of this, the ExA is curious to understand from the applicant how the SoS should take into account the potential for such unknown or understated residual adverse effects in the planning balance. How can it be confidently said that the 'critical national priority' would outweigh the residual effects when the residual effects may not be accurately covered or represented?</p>
Q2.10 Flood Risk, Hydrology and Water Resources		
Flood risk		
2.10.1	Applicant	<p>Flood risk assessment</p> <p>The response to EXQ1.10.10 is noted [REP2-025]. In respect of those solar panels which have a 200mm freeboard, please provide the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Location of the proposed solar panels on a plan 2) Estimate of number of solar panels with a 200mm freeboard
2.10.2	Applicant Environment Agency Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Flood modelling</p> <p>In relation to the modelling that has been undertaken, the applicant states [REP2-027, page 4]: <i>"While the current model is uncalibrated and excludes some features (e.g., eastern flow route, culverts, urban pipework), it has identified key flood flow patterns and areas of potential mitigation...the modelling outputs have informed initial mitigation concepts."</i></p> <p>How reliable and robust are the flood mitigation proposals when they have been informed by uncalibrated and incomplete data?</p>
2.10.3	Applicant	<p>Infiltration testing</p> <p>The applicant states [REP2-027, page 5] it <i>"recognizes the importance of infiltration testing to inform pond sizing, locations, and overall drainage design. A programme of site-specific infiltration testing will be undertaken as part of detailed design."</i></p> <p>Can the applicant arrange for some preliminary infiltration testing to take place during the Examination so as to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Seek to resolve or narrow the amount of dispute with Cassington Parish Council 2) Demonstrate to the Secretary of State (SoS) that the assumptions made in respect of flood risk and surface water drainage are robust.

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		In addition, given the concerns from Oxford Airport and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) regarding bird strike, further information on the location, size and form of any attenuation ponds is required, including whether such ponds would accommodate or support large bird species.
2.10.4	Applicant	Monitoring of Northern Watercourses The Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) requests modelling of watercourses in the northern area [REP1-072, paragraph 7.5.17]. The response to the LIR [REP2-026] does not address this point. Provide a response.
2.10.5	Applicant	Cassington vulnerability The response by the applicant in respect of specific concerns raised in several Relevant Representations (RR) regarding the impact of the proposed development on Cassington flooding vulnerability is noted [REP1-020]. Please expand on why proposed mitigation measures are to be tested at the detailed design stage and not earlier in the process. How can the Examining Authority (ExA), and ultimately the SoS, be confident that the proposed measures would provide adequate mitigation if testing has not occurred.
2.10.6	Applicant	Soil compaction The response by the applicant in respect of specific concerns raised in several RR's regarding the lack of mention of soil compaction in the Conceptual Drainage Strategy with respect to pile driving and construction is noted [REP1-020]. Please provide additional detail as to the content of the proposed soil/grass management plan in order for the ExA to understand what measures would be in place to ensure that the ground does not become bare due to the lack of maintenance and peak runoff discharge does not increase over time
2.10.7	Lead Local Flood Authority	Outline Operation Management Plan Noting the response made to ExQ1.7.27 [REP2-050], the applicant has updated the Outline Operational Management Plan (OOMP) at Deadline 3 (DL3) [REP3-032] to include proposed measures to manage recent pollution and manage surface water runoff during the construction of the solar farm. Such measures would include soil/vegetation management in the context of flood risk, and this is to be set out in the Construction Surface Water Management Plan. Please confirm whether these additional measures are considered satisfactory.
2.10.8	Applicant	Haul roads Please confirm whether any of the temporary haul roads are to be kept in place during the operational phase. If so, please provide an explanation as to why this is required and identify on a plan which haul roads are to be retained.
2.10.9	Applicant	Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule The additional mitigation measures contained within Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 10: Hydrology and Flood Risk submitted at [REP3-012] are noted. However, please advise whether the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [APP-129] should be updated to reflect these additional commitments. If so, please amend and submit into the Examination at D4.
Hydrology and Groundwater		
2.10.10	Applicant	Code of Construction Practice: Part 1 Noting the comments made by the Environment Agency (EA) [REP2-053], please confirm whether the following plans will be available prior to the close of the Examination. Alternatively, if the plans aren't going to be available, please provide further detail on the content of the proposed plans: 1) Pollution Prevention Plan 2) Spillage and Emergency Response Plan 3) Contaminated Land and Groundwater Discovery Strategy
2.10.11	Environment Agency	Water Supply Strategy It is noted in the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) submitted at DL3 [REP3-047] that the applicant is proposing to prepare a Water Supply Strategy post consent. Please confirm whether the timing of this strategy is acceptable to the EA.
Rivers and Watercourses		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
Control of Pollution and Contaminants		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Q2.11 Geology and Land Use		
Farming Operations		
2.11.1	Applicant	<p>Grazing strategy</p> <p>The response to ExQ1.10,11 is noted by the Examining Authority (ExA) [REP2-025]. However, please confirm the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which other livestock, apart from sheep, is to be used for grazing? Is this reference to low-intensity cattle grazing in the River Evenlode corridor? <p>Provide additional detail in respect of the statement that there will be a pause in the grazing over much of the site to allow grasses and wildflowers to set seed. How long is the pause anticipated to be for?</p>
2.11.2	Applicant	<p>Grazing strategy</p> <p>The response to ExQ1.11.2 in respect of sheep grazing is noted by the ExA [REP2-025]. Given the importance of the grazing, please confirm how the expansion of Blenheim's current livestock business is to be secured?</p> <p>Similarly, if Blenheim's livestock business is not expanded, how would the required number of sheep be secured with the three local farmers mentioned in the response to ExQ1.11.2?</p>
2.11.3	Applicant	<p>Land holding details</p> <p>The ExA notes the response made to ExQ1.11.6 in respect of land holding details [REP2-025]. However, please revisit the response and, as per ExQ1.11.6, amend the original response to include the following details:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All relevant plot numbers 2) Holding Use 3) Breakdown of land classification – by hectare and percentage of holding 4) Loss of land – defined by temporary and/ or permanent by both hectare and percentage of holding <p>Please provide the revised response in an Annex to your responses in a tabular format for use by the ExA.</p>
2.11.4	Applicant	<p>Best and Most Versatile Land</p> <p>The ExA notes the response made to ExQ1.11.8 in respect of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land [REP2-025]. However, please revisit the response, and as requested, provide, or signpost to existing, justification for each use of land by grade. Please provide the revised response in an Annex to your responses in a tabular format for use by the ExA.</p>
2.11.5	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England	<p>Best and Most Versatile Land</p> <p>The ExA notes the comments made by Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) during Open Floor Hearing (OFH) 1 and the written summary submitted into the Examination [REP1-100]. With regard to the concerns raised regarding the use of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, please confirm what additional information CPRE would expect to see from the applicant which illustrates how harm/avoidance of BMV land has been included in the project design.</p>
2.11.6	Blenheim Estate	<p>Fallow land</p> <p>Noting your response to ExQ1.11.11 [REP2-067] and also in response to James Price's submission at Deadline 3 (DL3) [REP3-100], please provide additional detail on how land quality would increase just by leaving it fallow.</p>
2.11.7	Applicant	<p>Best and Most Versatile Land</p> <p>The ExA notes the applicant's response to ExQ1.11.7 [REP2-025], however part 2 of the question has not been answered. Please revisit the response, and as requested, consider whether there would be a significant effect on the ability for those affected farms to grow crops for an extended period of time.</p>
2.11.8	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Outline Decommissioning Plan</p> <p>Applicant - The detail regarding the return of land to agricultural use/farmland in the Outline Decommissioning Plan (ODP) [APP-236] is noted. However, the ExA requests that further commitments are included within the ODP to ensure that the land to be returned to</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>agricultural use/farmland would be to the same Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grade. Additional detail should include, but is not limited to, specific methods and timescales to be involved.</p> <p>Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) – Noting the current wording of Requirement 14 within the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) [REP3-004], please comment on whether it is considered necessary for the relevant planning authority to also determine the acceptability of the end state of the land to be returned to agricultural use/farmland in terms of the ALC grade after the decommissioning stage.</p>
2.11.9	Applicant	<p>Underground cables and land drainage</p> <p>The ExA notes that the majority of the underground cables are to be left in-situ following decommissioning. Please confirm whether this would have any effect on the reinstatement of land drains? Would the presence of underground cabling prevent the land from being returned to agricultural use as it would no longer be efficiently drained?</p> <p>How does the applicant intend to maintain the existing land drain network across the site and how is this to be secured?</p>
2.11.10	Natural England	<p>Agricultural land yield</p> <p>At ExQ1.11.11 [PD-008] the ExA requested that Blenheim Estate provide further detail regarding which parcels of agricultural land to be included within the proposed development were degraded of nutritional and organic content. A response was received from Blenheim Estate at [REP2-067]. However various interested parties (IP's), including Professor David Sherratt at DL3 [REP3-112], have raised concern in respect of the information given in terms of accuracy.</p> <p>In order to assist the ExA, please review the initial question posed at ExQ1.11.1 by the ExA [PD-008] and the responses received and provide commentary.</p>
Other land use matters		
2.11.11	Applicant	<p>Land stewardship</p> <p>The response made by the applicant in respect of land management options is noted by the ExA [REP1-020]. Please confirm whether there is any update in respect of proposed management options. Is a decision in respect of this matter to be made before the close of the Examination?</p>
2.11.12	Applicant	<p>Green Belt – openness definition</p> <p>In response to ExQ1.11.12, the OHA state that the definition of openness as provided in the Planning Statement is not accepted [REP2-050]. Several reasons are given for such non-acceptance but include the fact that the account of a development's three-dimensional volume has not been included, and that the visual element of openness should not be determined simply by whether the scheme can be seen, but also by the change in the openness of the view. Please provide comment on the full answer provided at ExQ1.11.12 by the OHA.</p>
2.11.13	Applicant	<p>Green Belt – Very Special Circumstances</p> <p>The response to ExQ1.11.16 [REP2-025] is noted. With regard to VSC 5 – Economic, Education and Sustainability Benefits please provide additional clarity and detail in respect of each of the three aspects as to how the suggested benefits would justify the proposed development within the Green Belt.</p>
2.11.14	Applicant	<p>Soil analysis information</p> <p>Further to the submissions made by CPRE Oxfordshire [REP3-090] and Tom Lewis [REP3-122] at DL3, please provide a copy of the soil sampling plan and the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) pH levels 2) Phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium levels, expressed in parts per million, rather than an index 3) Organic matter content <p>Also, noting the additional comment in respect of lack of data for the northern site, please confirm whether the applicant intends to purchase the missing data? If not, please provide an explanation.</p>
2.11.15	Applicant	<p>Agricultural Land Classification and soil survey</p> <p>Noting the response to ExQ1.11.4 [REP2-025], please provide an update in respect of the outstanding survey work for the remaining 5% of the total survey area. The ExA requests that the results of this survey are submitted into the Examination as soon as possible.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
Q2.12	Habitats Regulation Assessment	
Effect of the Proposed Development on its own and In-combination with Other Plans and Projects		
		There are no questions under this topic at this time.
Q2.13	Landscape and Visual Amenity	
Arboriculture		
2.13.1	Applicant	Updated arboricultural report [REP1-045] provides the updated tree survey plan, however the cable route (shown in light blue on the key) is not shown on the plans. [REP1-046] shows what appears to be a cable route, but not in the colour indicated on the key; the lighter blue (which is shown as the proposed cable route on the key) appears to indicate waterways and drains. Update these documents to show the cable route.
2.13.2	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Tree protection scenarios [REP1-047] shows various scenarios in relation to works adjacent to/within root protection zones. However, no indication is provided on the plans of where such incursions may occur. Provide plans that show where each scenario may occur. Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) – do you have sufficient information to provide clear advice on the likelihood of impact to the tree roots and if not, what additional information do you require?
Landscape Effects		
2.13.3	Applicant	Landscape effects – construction In their responses to EXQ1.14.11 [REP3-072] OHA consider that your response further highlights their general concerns on the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA). They state that there will be compounds, temporary compounds, fencing, vehicle movements, piling with associated plant and drilling machinery, which are all elements that would have an impact on the landscape character of an area thus conflict with the statement <i>“the inherent landscape characteristics and physical framework of the landscape would be retained”</i> . The Examining Authority (ExA) are minded to agree with the OHA assessment and so in order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please provide a more robust and detailed response to the question of how the assessment of minor adverse effect is justified, particularly in relation to the how the scale of construction across the proposed development site may be considered as only a “slight variance” with the existing character.
2.13.4	Applicant	Landscape effects – operation In their responses to EXQ1.14.11 [REP3-072] OHA consider that the impacts on landscape character are inadequately assessed and underestimated, and they state that your response does not address those concerns. In addition, Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) disagrees with your assessment and state that landscape character changes throughout the proposed development site, and for the south area with large scale fields, open nature and elevation of the landscape, means that the change in landscape would be out of odds with the character of the area. They also note that the National Grid Energy Transmission (NGET) substation would not be low-lying in nature. The ExA are minded to agree with the OHA and VWHDC assessments and so in order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please provide a more robust and detailed response to the question of how the assessment of moderate/minor adverse effect is justified, particularly in relation to the change in character of the landscape from rural to industrial.
2.13.5	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Photomontages In [REP2-026] the applicant has responded to question raised by your consultants LUC regarding the photomontages not showing the worst-case scenario of winter in year 15. The applicant has stated <i>“At winter Year 15, the views experienced by visual receptors would be similar to those experienced in summer Year 15, given the height and width of the proposed landscape mitigation and the height of the solar panels.”</i> Do you agree with this statement?
2.13.6	Applicant	Photomontages Chapter 3 of Annex 1 to the OHA Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072] indicates several irregularities with the photomontages provided.

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		In order to assure that these can be relied upon, please respond to every point raised and, where necessary, amend the relevant photomontage and re-submit.
2.13.7	Applicant	<p>Hedges adjacent to new and existing Public Rights of Way</p> <p>There have been several representations regarding the “tunnelling effect” of planting tall hedges on both sides of many of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Using a worst-case scenario, provide scaled plans that show a typical section across these paths, showing the minimum suggested width of path and suggested height of hedges on both sides at maturity during operation. 2) Include details of the proposed species mix as outlined in the outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [REP3-034]. 3) In Appendix C of the OLEMP, it is noted that hedgerows should be managed to a minimum height of 3m but no maximum is provided. On the plan and within the OLEMP include details of the proposed maximum height for these hedges during the operational phase of the proposed development to ensure they do not get overgrown. Include details of who holds responsibility for this maintenance.
2.13.8	Applicant All Interested Parties	<p>Landscape mitigation and decommissioning</p> <p>In the applicant’s response to the Rule 17 letter [REP2-029], the applicant states <i>“the proposed landscape mitigation would be retained after the removal of the infrastructure elements and will continue to provide a positive long-term contribution to and reinforcement of the character of the landscape, in line with the management guidelines for the area. Should the proposed landscape mitigation be considered detrimental to landscape character at decommissioning, then it could be removed. However, as it follows the current management guidelines this is unlikely to be recommended.”</i></p> <p>To the applicant</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When a number of interested parties (IP) have expressed that the landscape character, at present, is defined by long sweeping views across undulating countryside from higher vantage points, how do you justify your position that the landscape mitigation (including lining footpaths with 3m high hedgerows, thus removing or blocking a proportion of these views) would <u>reinforce</u> landscape character? 2) Is the landscape mitigation (i.e. such as additional hedgerows along footpaths) being relied upon for biodiversity net gain calculations or are these deemed as separate biodiversity enhancements? 3) There is no mention of future hedgerow management in the outline Decommissioning Plan (ODP) and no mention of whose responsibility this would be. Add this maintenance responsibility information to the ODP along with a proposed appropriate height for future maintenance to ensure the wider landscape views would not be affected. <p>To all IP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) The ExA recognises that the proposal would have visual impacts on the landscape, and several IP’s have expressed concerns as to how adverse they would be. The ExA nonetheless is considering all stages of the development and is considering the future condition of the landscape post-decommissioning. What would your reaction be if, at this stage, areas of landscape mitigation (for example, planting hedgerows along public footpaths) were excluded from the applicant’s plans and not implemented? ** This would of course result in un-mitigated visual effects being endured during operation but, at decommissioning stage, the original landscape character could be restored closer to that presented, enjoyed and described in the book by Forever Fields [REP1-101]. <p>** Please note the ExA is not necessarily advocating this or pursuing this as a possibility but simply seeking to consider detail of operational and decommissioning phases of the development, taking into account paragraph 2.10.151 of NPS EN-3.</p>
2.13.9	Applicant	<p>Environmental Statement and landscape effects</p> <p>In their response [REP2-029], to the Rule 17 letter [PD-009], the applicant acknowledges that mitigation would result in a change in view but states that the mitigation planting would ‘balance’ the effects attributable to the solar infrastructure and that the mitigation would be beneficial. The Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 8 [PDB-006], paragraph 8.9.107 also states that operational effects are fully reversible suggesting the site would return to baseline conditions following decommissioning. However, the ExA notes that ES Chapter 8 table 8.11 determines the magnitude of impact is related to the change in view from baseline condition.</p> <p>The OHA identify a number of viewpoints [REP1-072], [REP2-050], [REP3-072] where they consider that despite mitigation, the view remains altered and therefore the magnitude of impact is not reduced or reduced to the extent the applicant reports.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>The ExA notes that in the applicant's response to the Rule 17 request it states the mitigation will assist in integrating the proposed development into the landscape, provide biodiversity benefits and follow local management guidelines. However, it is unclear how ES Chapter 8 section 8.9 takes into account the change in the nature of the impact with reference to the supporting photomontages and instead considers all mitigation to have a beneficial effect.</p> <p>Can the applicant demonstrate how the change in nature of the impact has been taken into account in line with the methodology with appropriate consideration of, and reference to, the correlating photomontages. Where there is any change in the conclusions or justification for the conclusions of the assessment of likely significant effects, the ES should be updated accordingly.</p>
2.13.10	Applicant	<p>Definition of temporary</p> <p>In your response to the Rule 17 letter [REP2-029], you have stated that 'temporary' relates to the completion of the construction period and therefore the magnitude of effects at construction is the same as the initial year of operation. However, this is not always the case in ES Chapter 8 [PDB-006] section 8.9; examples include but are not limited to viewpoints 22 and 36. Explain the discrepancies or otherwise seek to amend any errors in the ES.</p>
2.13.11	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Response to ExQ1.14.9 [PD-008]</p> <p>The ExA acknowledge the Change Request (CR) 2 notification [REP2-045]. However, the CR has not taken into account all of the changes proposed by others, particularly in relation to the ICOMOS-UK submission and OHA's. Please refer back to this question and respond with a plan with overlays, as requested, indicating the omissions proposed in excess of those captured by CR2. It is acknowledged that this may change at DL4 when OHA submits the findings from their visits, as outlined in [REP3-072].</p>
Visual Effects		
2.13.12	Applicant	<p>LVIA methodology and assessment of effects.</p> <p>At Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) and EXQ1.14.10 [PD-008] the ExA asked the applicant to explain why effects with a significance level of Moderate or less were considered not to be significant.</p> <p>Whilst the applicant provided a response at [REP2-025] and [REP2-029], the ExA is minded to agree with other representations on this matter, including the LIR [REP1-072], OHA [REP3-072] and Stop Botley West [REP3-120] and still consider this matter unresolved.</p> <p>In light of these representations (and the alternative approach taken in other ES chapters) and in order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on the representations made at DL3 and provide a more detailed and robust reasoning for your position.</p>
2.13.13	Applicant	<p>Visual effects – operation</p> <p>In response to ExQ1.14.14 [REP2-025] you referred to your response to ExQ1.14.10 [REP2-025] regarding the significance of effects.</p> <p>Your statement that <i>"In middle or long distance views, with the Project following the existing contours and much of it at 2.30 m in height, it was judged that views would largely be retained"</i> does not account for the change in view from rural to industrial.</p> <p>1) The ExA would like you to expand on this and explain why, given the change in view from rural to industrial, you consider the views would be largely retained.</p> <p>You also note that in relation to close views, it has been acknowledged in the LVIA that the project would result in a number of significant effects, although you consider that these would diminish over time with no residual significant visual effects predicted at summer of year 15 (paragraph 8.14.4 of the LVIA).</p> <p>2) Because this negation of effect is due to the growth of the screening hedges, the ExA would like you to expand on your reasons for not considering that the change in views from expansive fields to close-range 3m hedges would be significant.</p>
2.13.14	Applicant	<p>Viewpoints</p> <p>There have been representations from OHA [REP1-072], [REP2-050], [REP3-072] as well as IP's, including but not limited to [REP1-148], [REP1-154], [REP2-081], [REP3-108] regarding the lack of consultation on viewpoints, suggestions for additional viewpoints, noting the poor positioning of existing viewpoints and, given the scale of the project, the lack of photomontages.</p> <p>From the Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) undertaken, the ExA is minded to agree with these various representations and the applicant is therefore asked to explore this further, providing evidence to demonstrate the robustness of their approach in order for the ExA to reconcile this matter.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.13.15	Applicant	<p>Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)</p> <p>The Scoping Opinion [APP-126] states <i>“In line with guidance, the requirement for a RVAA is generally dependent on the outcome of a landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Therefore, in the absence of LVIA conclusions, the Inspectorate does not agree to scope out a RVAA at this time. The need for an RVAA should be justified based on the conclusions of the LVIA presented in the ES and agreed with the relevant consultation bodies.”</i> (ID 3.2.3).</p> <p>In the LVIA [APP-126] you have responded with <i>“The need for an RVAA will be determined through the outcome of the ES and through further consultation with relevant parties as required following the ES process”</i> and at paragraph 8.6.80 <i>“Due to the low level of the Project, particularly the solar arrays, and proposed mitigation, there is no potential for any private views to be adversely affected to an extent that would result in a level of harm of Substantial, which trigger the threshold for an RVAA being required. As such, private views are not considered further in this Chapter”</i>.</p> <p>In Appendix 1 of the Joint LIR [REP1-073], OHA consultants have questioned the methodology that led to the assumption that the RVAA was not required, and this does not appear to have been fully addressed in your response at [REP2-026].</p> <p>The ExA are unclear on the properties that were initially considered, what mitigation has already been undertaken since public consultation, which properties may have residual effects and what the proposals are for any further mitigation. In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on the representations made by OHA and their consultants on this matter and provide any such further information that would assist the ExA.</p>
Q2.14 Noise and Vibration		
Noise effects		
2.14.1	Applicant	<p>Cumulative noise in Public Rights of Way</p> <p>In response to paragraph 7.9.10 of the Joint LR [REP2-026] there is a statement that: <i>“It is possible that noise from the PCS units will be slightly audible in some areas of some PROW which cross the Site. However, it is not uncommon for industrial noise to be audible on PROWs, as is experienced alongside the Siemens factory in Whitney. Furthermore, receptors on PROW are transient, and so any potential impact experienced by noise from the development, whilst on a PROW, would be for a very short period of time, thereby reducing the magnitude of any impact.”</i></p> <p>This leads to the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Examining Authority (ExA) note that the Power Converter Stations (PCS) units are rated at 92dB [APP-043, Table 6.3]. At what distance away from a PCS unit would that level of noise be deemed ‘slightly audible’? 2) What minimum buffer/ distance is planned in the layout of the proposed development between any single individual PCS unit and the nearest Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and can that buffer appear as a design commitment in the Outline Layout and Design Principles (OLDP) document? 3) The ExA observed from its Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) that, apart from road traffic noise, industrial noise was not frequently experienced across the PRoW network. From the statement above, it appears assumed that the noise from a PCS unit would only be experienced for a short period of time. However, this does not account for someone walking the full length of a path and being susceptible to multiple PCS units (and/ or substations). Does this affect the magnitude of the impact in a cumulative sense?
2.14.2	West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)	<p>Background noise data</p> <p>In paragraph 7.9.19 of the Joint LIR [REP1-072], West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) state they wish to review the derivation of the representative background noise levels. Can you confirm if you have received the information you need from the applicant to complete this review. In the absence of this data being made available to you, how confident are you with the background noise data currently provided by the applicant in their Environmental Statement (ES) assessment.</p>
2.14.3	Applicant	<p>Operational noise monitoring</p> <p>In response to action point 27 arising from Issue Specific Hearing (ISH)1 [EV5 -010], you have stated in [REP1-019], your willingness to undertake noise measurements from a sample of PCS units and other electrical infrastructure (e.g. sub-stations) during the commissioning stage. How long will noise monitoring during this commissioning stage last and taking into account cumulative effects also, justify how this</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		would be representative of the noise impact on residents during the operational phase. How will this proposed noise monitoring be secured in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) and what would happen if the noise levels during commissioning were found to be harmful?
2.14.4	Applicant	Statutory nuisance caused by UK solar farms Applicant to investigate and provide details of any statutory nuisance issues caused by noise or vibration generated from solar farms in the UK. Where such issues have been resolved, the ExA would appreciate details of actions taken by the owner of the solar farm and/ or the relevant local authority.
2.14.5	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Planning condition At Deadline (DL) 3 in response to the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) answer to Q1.15.1 [REP3-065], the Applicant accepts that a planning condition requiring a detailed noise impact assessment to be submitted could be imposed. What is meant by planning condition? Is this a requirement, amendment to a requirement or an amendment to a management plan?
Vibration effects		
		There are no questions on this topic at this time.
Q2.15 Socio-Economic Effects		
Socio-Economic Impacts		
2.15.1	Applicant	Community benefit Please confirm whether the proposed community benefit fund is £440,000 or £441,000 as there are variations in the figures within various documentation submitted into the Examination.
2.15.2	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	Community benefit funding Applicant - The Examining Authority (ExA) is aware that the proposed community benefit funding sits outside of the Examination. However, please confirm how the proposed funding is to be secured to ensure it can be effectively delivered? Similar scaled projects have previously drafted section 106 agreements to secure such funding. Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) – Please confirm how you wish to see the community benefit funding to be secured and who would be the administrator of the fund.
2.15.3	Applicant	Blenheim Palace The ExA notes the Applicant's response to ExQ1.16.7 [REP2-025] and the signposting to the Heritage Impact Assessment. However, the Heritage Impact Assessment does not provide detail in respect of agricultural productivity or impacts on tourism as was requested. Please provide this information.
2.15.4	Applicant	Education facility At Deadline 3 (DL3) various submissions including those from Frances Stevenson [REP3-094] and [REP3-095], Ian Hudspeth [REP3-099], Bladon Parish Council [REP3-073], Professor and Mrs A. Banning [REP3-123] and the OHA [REP3-072] comment that, alongside of a lack of community consultation regarding the proposed location of the education facility, the proposed access along School Lane is narrow and would not offer suitable vehicular access to the land identified for the education facility building. Please confirm whether the proposed location would benefit from adequate access, particularly during the construction phase of the facility.
2.15.5	Applicant	Education facility Noting the submission at DL3 from the OHA [REP3-072], please confirm what consultation took place with the relevant local authorities and interested parties (IP) regarding the siting of the proposed education facility. If no consultation took place, please provide an explanation.

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
2.15.6	Applicant	Solar Road Map and skills The recently published 'Solar Road Map' ¹ states that “ <i>The solar sector requires skills and professional competencies from a range of occupations. However, there is wide recognition that the sector needs to improve the visibility and clarity of its training provision to the existing and future workforce</i> ”. Please confirm how the proposed development would meet Government’s aspiration of improving its training provision for both the existing and future workforce?
2.15.7	Applicant	Outline Skills Supply Chain and Employment Plan The updates to the Outline Skills Supply Chain and Employment Plan (OSSCEP) made by the Applicant at DL3 [REP3-028] is noted by the ExA. Reference is made to ‘The Planning Inspectorate’ in paragraph 8.2.2 of the OSSCEP. Please review and consider whether this reference should be the relevant Secretary of State or whether the reference should be removed? Additionally, the ExA consider that the figures quoted within Table 8.1 of the OSSCEP for both targeted and stretch outputs are low. Given the location of the proposed development in proximity to the both the Oxford – Cambridge Growth Corridor and well-established education facilities, the ExA considers the targets represent limited ambition for the local area. Please provide an explanation as to how the proposed targets were arrived at. Please also review the targets and if no change is considered necessary, provide a detailed explanation.
Effects on social infrastructure		
		There are no questions on this topic at this time.
Health and Wellbeing		
2.15.8	Applicant	Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule - trails and education boards Row 15.5 of the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [APP-129] states that children’s fun trails and education boards will be provided, and this is a commitment within the project design as set out in the Outline Layout and Design Principles (OLDP) document [REP1-014]. Please signpost to where this is contained within the OLDP.
2.15.9	Applicant	New hedgerows The proposed provision of new hedgerows to compensate for removal elsewhere or to provide screening is noted by the ExA [APP-129]. However, whilst not only having the potential to change the nature of existing views, concern has also been raised by Stop Botley West regarding users of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) who may potentially experience feelings of enclosure and/or experience a tunnelling effect, which in turn may have a negative effect on mental wellbeing [REP2-081]. What consideration has been given to such effects and could hedgerows be lowered at key vantage points to reduce the potential for such effects?
2.15.10	Applicant	Statements of Common Ground and Statement of Commonality The topic of ‘Health’ is not included in the Statement of Commonality submitted at DL3 [REP3-041], please explain why and amend if necessary. The ExA notes that the topic of ‘Health’ has been included in the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) submitted at DL3 [REP3-056]. Please explain why ‘health’ is not included within the other local authorities SoCG?
Q2.16 Traffic and Transport		
Local Road Network		
2.16.1	Applicant Siemens Healthcare	Mitigation of effects Applicant – Although the construction programme cannot be finalised at this stage, could you provide predictions of how long construction works would be active in the vicinity of the Siemens Healthcare facility? Could this period of works be timed and forewarned to Siemens Healthcare so as to limit impacts upon their operations?

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/solar-roadmap>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		Siemens Healthcare – Can you explain how the business operates on a day-to-day basis in terms of its demands on the highway network and when certain activities (deliveries) occur that require the network to be as clear as possible?
2.16.2	Applicant Oxfordshire County Council	<p>Highway works interface</p> <p>Can the applicant co-ordinate with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to facilitate the submission of 1:1250 and 1:500 plans showing the overlay of potential works areas both for the project and for the junction improvements on the A40 that OCC are undertaking, to show the level of interaction between the Order limits and the scope of works intended. In addition to the provision of this plan, both OCC and the applicant are requested to answer the following questions:</p> <p>Both</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Could this matter be resolved via protective provisions or via a separate memorandum of understanding to be submitted to the Examination? <p>Applicant</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) The applicant states [REP2-026, page 59] <i>“it cannot control the nature and timing of the works proposed to the A40.”</i> What prevents the applicants from being flexible in relation to the works in proximity to the A40 and why can works in this location not be undertaken as a bespoke piece of infrastructure delivery, timed to avoid cumulative effects with OCC works programme? 3) Describe the sequencing or phasing of the project as a whole and whether it would be sequential construction of north, central and south areas or concurrent construction. <p>Oxfordshire County Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Please provide an anticipated timetable for the construction and delivery of the improvement works to the A40.
2.16.3	Applicant	<p>Road widening works</p> <p>Management</p> <p>In response to ExQ1.17.5, you have confirmed that all road widening works would be retained for the lifetime of the Project [REP2-025]. Can you confirm the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) If the additional land required is all within the boundary of the Order limits. 2) If construction associated with these works is included in the outline Code of Construction Practice. <p>Assessment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) How was the assessment and subsequent decision to widen certain roads and not others carried out. Can you also confirm if this assessment included the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. proposed HGV route along the A4095 b. access to and from new buildings such as the proposed education facility 4) Taking environmental factors into account, what are the benefits verses harms if the width of these roads were to be reduced back to their original size post construction.
Public Rights of Way		
2.16.4	Applicant	<p>Public Rights of Way diversions and cycle path connections</p> <p>Your response to the issues/ concerns on the strategic walking and cycling connections raised in the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) is noted [REP2-026], including your point about continuing to engage with OCC regarding the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. However, can the applicant confirm if the issues/ concerns raised by Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) in their response to the Examining Authority's (ExA's) first written questions [REP2-051], including the changes proposed have now been addressed.</p>
2.16.5	Local Authorities	<p>Mitigation measures proposed</p> <p>Paragraph 7.8.51 of the LIR [REP1-072], states a number of mitigation measures which the OHA are seeking from the applicant, can the local authorities provide an update on how agreement and implementation of these is progressing.</p>
2.16.6	Applicant Local Authorities	<p>Responsibility for new and diverted Public Rights of Way</p> <p>Please clarify who would be responsible for maintaining diverted and new PRoW including any proposed hedgerow planting alongside them during the operational and decommissioning phases of the proposed development.</p>

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
Air Traffic and Aviation Safety		
2.16.7	Oxford Aviation Services Ltd	Thermal plumes In light of the forthcoming change request and the applicant's omission of land in proximity to Oxford Airport, are the concerns regarding thermal plumes resolved? If not, why not and which areas cause the concern to remain?
2.16.8	Applicant	Bird strike Paragraph NPS EN-1 paragraph 5.5.41 requires the applicant to take account of bird strike. It also advocates that environmental mitigation is designed in such a way as not to increase bird strike risk. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Given that there is considered to be long-term displacement of wintering birds [REP2-025, ExQ1.8.7], (deemed temporary until new habitat is established), how does the displacement and the associated new habitat creation seek to avoid an increase in bird strike risk? 2) The second change request (that is not yet formally submitted) proposes an additional 17.6ha of biodiversity net gain (BNG), which would be in proximity to the airport. How would bird-strike potential from this land be limited?
2.16.9	Applicant Oxford Aviation Services Ltd Defence Infrastructure Organisation	Impacts on radar The applicant reports at Deadline (DL) 3 [REP3-065] that thermal plume modelling is going to be conducted to determine if impacts are possible. However, in the same sentence the applicant states that the impact on radar would be minimal. Applicant - when thermal plumes have not been fully assessed to any great detail, what evidence do you have to substantiate the claim of a minimal effect? Oxford Aviation/ Defence Infrastructure Organisation - Are you aware of any instances where radar has been adversely impacted by thermal plumes and, if so, how has such an issue been overcome in the past?
Q2.17 Waste and Minerals		
Waste		
2.17.1	Applicant	Battery Energy Storage System containers On page 18 of the applicant's response to the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP2-026], in respect of mineral safeguarding, the following is stated: <i>"When the operational phase ends, the solar farm will require decommissioning. All PV modules, BESS containers, mounting poles, inverters transformers and switchgear would be removed and recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice and market conditions at the time."</i> Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) containers are not listed in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) in any of the works or equipment to be provided, and the applicant has stated repeatedly that BESS is not part of the project. The reference to BESS containers is therefore unusual. What is this, why is it listed, and would that invoke any different waste regulations to those already relied upon for the disposal of waste arisings?
2.17.2	Applicant	Bill of quantities The Examining Authority (ExA) note that the applicant has declined to provide a bill of quantities in response to ExQ1.18.4 [REP2-025]. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations state that the description of the development should include an estimate, by type and quantity, of types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases (Schedule 4 Paragraph 1(d)). In line with the EIA regulations and the requirements of NPS EN-1 confirm the anticipated volumes of waste from the proposed development and provide a bill of quantities.
2.17.3	Applicant	Future waste management In their response at Deadline (DL) 3 [REP3-072] the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) state - <i>"The Minerals and Waste Policy and Strategy Team therefore remain of the view that there is currently insufficient information within the application to ascertain its impact, particularly on existing waste infrastructure and to plan for the management of the waste arisings from this development over future plan periods."</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whilst acknowledging the applicant intends to provide details on the waste arisings during decommissioning in the future decommissioning management plan and that specific waste management facilities and tonnages may be subject to commercial confidentiality, how does the applicant intend to alleviate the concerns raised by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) regarding the lack of detail on type and amount of waste likely to be generated?

ExQ2	Question to:	Question:
		<p>2. Applicant to produce a waste processing plan for the life of the project. The plan to include details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when individual parts would need replacing (based on estimated failure rates) • A list of the components, materials and quantities each of these parts would be broken down into • outlet for each specific material generated, taking into consideration potential recyclables produced by other solar farms and industries in the future (U.K. recycling capacity) and the ease with which the material can be processed. <p>N.B. If outlets for specific waste materials are not likely to be available in the near future, this should influence design choices.</p>
2.17.4	Environment Agency	<p>Landfill cabling</p> <p>With regards to potentially installing underground cabling in close proximity/ through a landfill, has the applicant sought advice from you about how best to approach this and, if so, are there sufficient safeguards in place to give you reassurance that contamination, leachate or release of landfill gases would not occur?</p>
2.17.5	Applicant	<p>Waste facilities</p> <p>Having read the DL3 response from the OHA [REP3-072], the ExA require clarity on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is the applicant reliant on existing waste management facilities to handle construction waste? 2) Is the applicant reliant on existing waste management facilities to handle operational waste? 3) If the answer to 1 and/or 2 is yes, whilst the contract may be described as ‘commercially confidential’, the ExA want to know the amount of waste being sent to those facilities and the distance the waste would travel (i.e. would waste be handled within 5 miles of the Order limits?) 4) The OHA state that if the amount of waste is broadly known, this could influence future policymaking and the planning for future management facilities in the locality. It almost implies there is a ‘chicken and egg’ scenario to the handling of waste. Provide comment and a means for resolution
Minerals		
2.17.6	Applicant	<p>Repeat of question ExQ1.3.11</p> <p>Point 1 in question ExQ1.3.11 [PD-008] asked about the amount of the mineral safeguarding area that was covered by the solar farm, which was responded to by the applicant saying 119ha. Point 2 of the question asked why the mineral safeguarding area, or more crucial parts of it, wasn't avoided when selecting the site, designing the solar farm and arranging the cable corridor. The response given relates to contaminated land, which does not answer the question being asked in point 2. Please answer appropriately.</p>
2.17.7	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	<p>Clarification on mitigation</p> <p>In the applicant's response to ExQ1.18.8 [REP2-025], it is stated that the principle of incidental extraction (i.e. use it or sell it) is a type of mitigation for developing over a mineral safeguarding area. Is that mitigation or opportunism?</p>
2.17.8	Applicant	<p>Decommissioning of cables</p> <p>Can the applicant commit, in the Outline Decommissioning Plan, to remove all above and below ground infrastructure in the presence of the mineral safeguarding area? If not, why not.</p>