

Memorandum



To: Consultee Access
From: Sophie Milburn
Date: 18/10/2022

My ref: Proposed Solar Farm
To The West Of, Berrington -
22-04355-FUL 18.10.22 SM
Your ref: 22/04355/FUL

Consultation on planning application: Proposed Solar Farm To The West Of, Berrington, Shrewsbury, Shropshire – Erection of an up to 30 MW Solar PV Array, comprising ground mounted solar PV panels, vehicular access, internal access tracks, landscaping and associated infrastructure, including security fencing, CCTV, client storage containers and grid connection infrastructure, including substation buildings and off-site cabling

Recommendation:

Additional information is required, as set out below.

I have read the following submitted documents:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (RSK ADAS, August 2021)
- Great Crested Newt Survey (RSK ADAS Ltd, October 2021)
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (RSK ADAS Ltd, June 2022)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (RSK ADAS Ltd, July 2022)
- Biodiversity Strategy (RSK ADAS Ltd, July 2022)

Great crested newts

A confirmed GCN breeding pond lies approximately 140m to the east of the site boundary. Two other ponds with positive eDNA results lie approximately 50m to the east and 100m to the north. RSK ADAS believe that ‘Given the lack of GCN and eggs found during surveys it is assessed that [these two ponds] do not constitute GCN breeding ponds.’

RSK ADAS recommend a non-licensed method statement. Given the scale of works and the distances of the ponds from the site, SC Ecology disagrees with this approach and recommends that the District Level Licensing (DLL) scheme should be used for the development.

Please see the government website for information on how to join the DLL scheme:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-district-levellicensingschemes/developers-how-to-join-the-district-level-licensing-scheme-for-gcns.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-district-levellicensingschemes/developers-how-to-join-the-district-level-licensing-scheme-for-gcns)

The website states: ‘You must include a copy of the countersigned agreement [the Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate] with your application for planning permission to show you’ve agreed to join the scheme.’

A countersigned IACPC needs to be submitted in support of the planning application. Without this, the LPA cannot consider the favourable conservation status test under the Habitats Regulations 3 derogation tests.

In addition, the Great Crested Newt Survey calculated Pond 11 (approximately 245m to the north-east) as having Good suitability to support great crested newts but an eDNA sample wasn't take. I believe this is because the site boundary of the planning application is a little different to that in the report. There is a 2013 record of great crested newts in Pond 11.

There are 2005 and 2006 records of great crested newts in Pond 4 (170m to the north) although this pond was calculated as having Poor suitability in 2021 and so not surveyed.

There is a 2013 record of great crested newts in Pond 10 (320m to the north-east) although this was found to be dry in 2021.

Skylarks

Breeding bird surveys in 2022 identified 11 skylark territories on the site:



The Ecological Impact Assessment (RSK ADAS Ltd, July 2022) states that 'The special distribution of this species was also notable in that there was a close affiliation with the buffer of grassland/tall ruderal surrounding the farm reservoir. It is anticipated that there will be a net loss of available Skylark habitat on site, though no significant effects on the population at local, regional or national levels are anticipated as a result of the development. Similar alternative habitat is present within the immediate area, with Skylark present in all adjoining land parcels outside of the site boundary, and therefore no significant local scale impacts are expected.

The loss of skylark habitat on the site is not acceptable. Replacement nesting habitat needs to be provided on the site as part of the site design.

Local Wildlife Sites

The Big Bog Local Wildlife Site is designated for its bog, open water and willow carr habitats.

According to the Site Layout Plan, tree and grassland planting is proposed adjacent to, or in close proximity to, these habitats.

Cound Brook Local Wildlife Site is designated for its fast flowing natural brook with plentiful associated habitat.

The ecological documents state that Cound Brook lies 'approximately 200m from the boundary of the site.' This is incorrect; the brook lies 20m from the site boundary at its nearest point.

The potential impacts of the development (including landscaping) on the Local Wildlife Sites need to be considered.

White-clawed crayfish

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal states that 'While attending site it was mentioned by the landowner that the lagoon (Pond 1) is known to have crayfish, although the species was not specified. The data search did not identify a population of white-clawed crayfish in the nearby area but did identify a population of signal crayfish in the local area. It is therefore assumed that the species present on site is the invasive signal crayfish.'

The lagoon needs to be assessed for its potential to support white-clawed crayfish.

Bats

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal states that 'There were five trees with cavities that had the potential to support a bat roost including the large mature oak tree within the eastern field. Around Pond 2 at the northern edge, there were two mature trees oak had features suitable for bats and in the open part the western fields there was one large mature oak and the other mature oak tree was in the hedgerow that had features suitable for bat roosts. In the eastern field there was a mature oak (TN1) that also had suitable features for bat roots.'

Only TN1 is shown on the Phase 1 plan. The locations of the other four trees with bat roosting potential should be shown on the plan.

Otters

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal states that there is a 'shallow moving stream ... located 2m outside the site on the eastern boundary'. This should be shown on the Phase 1 plan.

Please contact me, or one of the other Ecology team members, if you have any queries on the above.

Sophie Milburn
Planning Ecologist
sophie.milburn@shropshire.gov.uk
Tel.: 01743 254765