Cottam Solar Project

Statement of Common Ground

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Prepared by: Clarkson & Woods
October 2023

PINS Ref: EN010133
Document reference: EX1/C8.3.12
Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Cottam
SOLAR PROJECT

Contents

Issue Sheet

Report Prepared for: Cottam Solar Project Ltd.
DCO Submission

Statement of Common Ground

Prepared by:

Name: Joel Wright

Title: Senior Ecologist

Approved by:

Name: Harry Fox

Title: Principal Ecologist

Date: 24th April 2023

Revision: [01]

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared as part of the proposed Cottam Solar Project Development Consent Order (the Application) made by Cottam Solar Project Ltd (The Applicant) to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (the Secretary of State) pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008).

1.1.2 This SoCG does not seek to replicate information which is available elsewhere within the Application documents. All documents are available on the Planning Inspectorate website.

1.1.3 This SoCG has been produced to confirm to the Examining Authority (ExA) where agreement has been reached between the parties, and where agreement has not (yet) been reached. SoCGs are an established means in the planning process of allowing all parties to identify and focus on specific issues that may need to be addressed during the examination.

1.2 Parties to this Statement of Common Ground

1.2.1 This SoCG has been prepared by (1) Cottam Solar Project Ltd as the Applicant and (2) Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT).

1.2.2 Collectively, Cottam Solar Project Ltd and NWT are referred to as 'the parties'.

1.3 Terminology

1.3.1 In the table in the Issues chapter of this SoCG:

- "Agreed" indicates where the issue has been resolved.
- "Not Agreed" indicates a final position, and
- "Under discussion" indicates where these points will be the subject of ongoing discussion wherever possible to resolve, or refine, the extent of disagreement between the parties.

2 Record of Engagement

2.1 Summary of consultation

2.1.1 The parties have been engaged in consultation since the beginning of the proposed development. A summary of the meetings and correspondence that has taken place between Cottam Solar Project and NWT in relation to the Application is outlined in **Table 2-1**.

Table 2.1 - Record of Engagement

Date & Form of Correspondence	Summary of Comment/Issues Raised	Summary of Action or outcome
Pre-application advice received from Senior Conservation Officer dated 29/10/21.	NWT provided high-level advice on the expectations for avoidance and mitigation of impact and assessment of baseline conditions. Advice based on Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEAs) and generic design information. This document formed part of the consultation package submitted to PINS during the EIA scoping process.	Impacts on LWSs and SSSIs relevant to Nottinghamshire have been avoided through sensitive siting of development and access routes, with further mitigation proposed (see Sections 9.7.6-9.7.12, 9.7.24-9.7.31 and 9.7.31-9.7.42). Protective buffer zones from important habitats are discussed in Section 9.6.8 and shown in Appendix 9.11 [EN010133/APP/APP/C6.3.9.11]. Impacts on hedgerows have been largely avoided through careful access design and buffering, with mitigation put forward where needed (see Sections 9.7.55 – 9.7.68).
Applicant ecologist contacted Senior Conservation Officer on 14/04/22 to request meeting to discuss progress on Scheme and approach to baseline assessment of the cable routes. Meeting took place 21/04/22. Written	NWT acknowledged all documents provided on the layout of cable routes and detailed proposed approach to ecological survey scope. NWT was satisfied with all provided information in relation to survey scope. NWT recommended cabling operations to be undertaken via a Precautionary Method of Working/Ecological Clerk of Works arrangement. NWT recommended stronger wording in relation to the avoidance of impacts on Local Wildlife Sites, including	All advice noted and has been incorporated into the Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy (EPMS) [EN010133/APP/C7.19] and Landscape Ecological Management Plan Outline (LEMP) [EN010133/APP/C7.3] as necessary, as well as the design of the Scheme.

response received 22/04/22.	opportunities for their enhancement.	

2.1.2 It is agreed that this is an accurate record of the key meetings and consultation undertaken between (1) Cottam Solar Project Ltd and (2) NWT in relation to the issues addressed in this SoCG.

3 Issues

3.1 Matters Agreed

3.1.1 **Table 3.1** below details the matters agreed with NWT.

Table 3.1: Matters Agreed

Topic Ref.	Sub-topic	Stakeholder Comment	Applicant Response
A-ECO-1	Cable Route	NWT confirm that the survey scope and methodologies carried out for the Cottam cable route are acceptable. NWT note that the Cottam cable route will avoid Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). NWT would expect that the solar arrays, storage units and cable routes to not only avoid SSSIs but also there should be a presumption against development of sites of local biodiversity value, that is, Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Where this is not possible then it may be justifiable that impacts proceed if accompanied by sufficient mitigation, compensation and aftercare. NWT are of the opinion that the mitigation hierarchy should be applied. Cabling operations should be carried out according to a PMW or Ecological Method Statement in the presence of an Ecological Clerk of Works to supervise and advise during the process to avoid direct impacts on protected and notable species.	This is considered common ground as the process of finalising the Cable Route Corridor has meant that none of the nearby LWSs will be directly affected by the cable installation. This is due either by avoiding crossing/making incursions into the LWS or, in the case of Cow Pasture Lane Drains LWS and Upton Grange Road Verges LWS, employing Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) to install the cables without needing to open a trench. Additionally, while the road at Upton Grange Road Verges LWS is within the access route for vehicles involved with the cable route installation, it has been confirmed that no incursion into the LWS will be necessary owing to the use of existing farm access gates. The ecological avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures determined to be necessary for cable route installation are set out within the Outline EPMS.
A-ECO-2	Biodiversity Net Gain	All new development should make provision for a minimum 10% net biodiversity gain on site, or where it	This is considered common ground as the proposals have been calculated as providing a net increase of 96.09% in Habitat Units, 70.22% of Hedgerow Units and

		can be demonstrated that for design reasons this is not practicable, off site through a financial contribution.	10.69% of River Units. The BNG assessment can be found in Appendix 9.12 [C6.3.9.12].
A-ECO-3	Hedgerows and Trees	NWT recommended retention of landscape features such as hedgerows and mature trees. If removal of a section of hedge is essential, the loss should be mitigated elsewhere on the site.	This is considered common ground as the potential for loss of hedgerows and trees to the construction of the array Sites is very limited as the design process has continuously sought to refine down the number of new crossings or gaps required in existing field boundaries. The schedule of new gaps required for the array construction and ongoing maintenance is given in ES Chapter 9 Section 9.6, and totals 12 new hedgerow gaps, with 10 associated ditch crossings. These gaps will measure between 3-6.5m wide. In the context of the Scheme's hedgerow network which comprises approximately 65km within the Sites, such losses are proportionately extremely small. The loss of small sections of hedgerow will be mitigated through significant enhancement of hedgerows including planting of new trees (approximately 10ha) and hedgerows at boundaries (as can be seen within the oLEMP). This planting will focus on the gapping up of currently defunct hedgerows, creation of new hedgerows (approximately 20km) at boundaries where none exist, planting around Public Rights of Way and where landscape and visual impact mitigation is required. In addition, limited opportunities for the replanting of old, removed field boundaries where appropriate have been pursued.

A-ECO-4	Habitat Creation	NWT recommend that biodiversity gains are possible where intensively cultivated arable or grassland is converted to extensive grassland and/or wildflower meadows between and/or beneath solar panels and in field margins. The best results are likely to come from sites that contain both wildflower meadows and areas of tussocky un-cropped grassland. NWT suggest planting wild bird seed or nectar mixes could benefit birds and insects. Pollen and nectar strips provide food for pollinating insects through the summer period, and wild bird seed mixes provide food for wild birds through the winter. NWT recommend that bare cultivated strips for rare arable plants and invertebrates and rough grassland margins could also be beneficial. NWT suggest a variety of artificial structures can be built to provide hibernacula for reptiles and amphibians, log piles for invertebrates, and nesting or roosting boxes for birds and bats. Built structures such as control buildings can be designed to provide access to loft spaces. Biodiversity enhancements should be appropriate for the scale of the site and should link with existing habitats on and around the site.	This is considered common ground. Habitat creation and ongoing management of retained, enhanced and newly created habitats have been discussed in the oLEMP to maximise diversity.

3.2 Matters Under Discussion

3.2.1 **Table 3.2** below details the matters under discussion with NWT.

Table 3.2: Matters under discussion

Topic Ref.	Sub-topic	Stakeholder Comment	Applicant Response
None	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

3.3 Matters Not Agreed

3.3.1 **Table 3.3** below details the matters not agreed with NWT.

Table 3.3: Matters under discussion

Topic Ref.	Sub-topic	Stakeholder Comment	Applicant Response
None	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

4 Signatories

4.1 Overview

The above SoCG is agreed between Cottam Solar Project Ltd. (the Applicant) and **Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust**, as specified below.

Duly authorised for and on

behalf of **Cottam Solar Project Ltd.**

Name:	Eve Browning
Job Title:	Senior Project Development Manager
Date:	10/10/2023
Signature:	[redacted]

Duly authorised for and on

behalf of **Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.**

Name:	Mark Speck
Job Title:	Senior Nature Recovery Officer
Date:	10/10/2023
Signature:	[redacted]