



Planning
Inspectorate

East Park Energy – EN010141

Section 51 Advice Log

Version: 11 February 2025

There is a statutory duty under [section 51 \(s51\) of the Planning Act 2008](#) for the Planning Inspectorate to record the advice that it gives in relation to an application or potential application, and to make this publicly available.

This document comprises a record of the advice that has been provided by the Inspectorate to the applicant and their consultants during the pre-application stage. It will be updated by the Inspectorate after every interaction with the applicant during which s51 has been provided. The applicant will always be given the opportunity to comment on the Inspectorate's draft record of advice before it is published.

The applicant will use this Advice Log as the basis for demonstrating regard to section 51 advice within the application.

Project name s51 Advice Log - Index	
Date of meeting	Meeting overview
28 October 2024	Email with feedback on the Programme Document
17 January 2025	Project Update Meeting

Project name -s51 Advice Library

Topic

Email 28 October 2024

Feedback on the Programme Document

The applicant supplied the Inspectorate with its initial Programme Document in line with the Expression of Interest process, after the publication of the 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. Having reviewed the document, the Inspectorate considers that it satisfactorily covers the expected content as set out in the government’s pre-application guidance at paragraph 10, namely:

- “the date the applicant intends to submit their application
- a comprehensive timetable of the applicant’s pre-application process, the main events with dates and milestones demonstrating how the pre-application process will be completed (using the maximum target of 2 years as a benchmark)
- the applicant’s view on the main issues for resolution and activities they will undertake to address those
- the applicant’s proposals for engaging with statutory consultees and local authorities during the pre-application period and any intended financial support agreements, such as Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)
- the applicant’s identification of risks to achievement of the pre-application stage and the process by which these risks are tracked and managed
- cross references to the SoCC required by [section 47 of the Planning Act](#)”.

The Programme Document provides enough detail about the proposed development, timetable and activities for the pre-application process, as well as the applicant’s approach to engagement with statutory consultees and other parties. In the next iteration of the document, it would be helpful if the applicant includes the timescale for the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone.

Topic

Meeting date: 17 January 2025

Consultation Report

The applicant updated on their statutory consultation with substantial feedback received. They informed that the Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) have taken a long time to sign by the host authorities (as the councils needed to secure delegations on responding to cross-boundary matters) and they were pursuing a joint agreement with the councils. The authorities were looking to provide joint responses on certain issues (such as landscape and visual impact), whilst

	<p>retaining individual responses on others (such as highway matters).</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that when comments are provided by these councils, that their individual or joint submissions should be clearly articulated in the Consultation Report and how they have been taken into consideration.</p>
Project Programme	<p>The applicant informed the Inspectorate that they are planning to submit the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone in Q2 2025 with final feedback from local authorities expected soon to allow for this stage.</p> <p>The applicant also informed that they would update the Inspectorate in the Spring regarding when in Q3 2025 the submission of the DCO application will be expected. The applicant informed the Inspectorate that the timing of trial trenching would be critical to the submission date, in respect of updating the Environmental Statement and Works Plans.</p>
Programme Document	<p>The Inspectorate queried why the Programme Document was not on the applicant's website and if it has been updated since it was last submitted. The Inspectorate reminded the applicant of the feedback provided in October on its first iteration. The Inspectorate also advised the applicant to include all consents that were being sought into the programme document due to the planned application submission in Q3 2025.</p> <p>The applicant stated that certain checks had to be taken before the programme document could be finalised but that a version would be published on its website once the dates for trial trenching are confirmed.</p>
Land/ Landowner Engagement	<p>The applicant informed the Inspectorate that negotiations with landowners along the grid connection corridors was still underway and it is hoped there will be limited need for Compulsory Acquisition (CA).</p> <p>The Inspectorate queried whether feedback from users of the nearby airfields had been received and how this was being captured in the applicant's glint and glare assessment. The applicant said that the glint and glare assessment had been completed, taking into account any effects on the airfields.</p>
Grid Connection	<p>The applicant is now looking to apply for one option for the on-site substation / BESS, with an emerging preference for Option 2. No decision has yet been made.</p>
Archaeological Sites	<p>The applicant provided an update on the recently discovered Roman site of national importance, which has now been designated, and how they were assessing the area. The applicant stated that the extent of changes to the scheme</p>

	<p>following this discovery should be minimal and that they had agreed the extent of trial trenching with the relevant council. The applicant also said that they would be presenting information about the archaeological discovery to local schools and historical societies. The Inspectorate advised the applicant that any outcomes to its trial trenching leading to further design changes should be captured in their Design Approach Document (DAD) or equivalent, to explain the design evolution of the scheme. The applicant noted this and said it has been drafting a DAD since the Inception Meeting.</p> <p>The Inspectorate queried the progress of assessments of other heritage assets across the four sites. The applicant responded that mitigation such as buffers and screening were being considered. some outcomes to surveys had been delayed during the preparation of its Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), and that likely mitigation changes would be needed and set out in the DCO application.</p>
<p>Statement of Need (post-meeting advice)</p>	<p>The applicant queried whether a standalone ‘Statement of Need’ would be required with the DCO application, for this project and other Solar projects at pre-application, and whether this was now a ‘standard’ practice set by the Inspectorate. The applicant referred to the Inspectorate’s recent s51 advice to the applicant for the Botley West Solar Farm project, following the ‘acceptance’ stage. Specifically, the s51 advice for Botley West requested a Statement of Need document which addresses the “UK future electricity requirements and what role would solar farms play, if any, in helping to meet any increases in demand”; additional “detail on the reasons for the scale of the proposed solar farm”; and information “on the efficiency and how economically attractive solar generation in the UK is, compared to other forms of renewable generation”. For the East Park Energy project, the Applicant is intending to include a statement of need in its Planning Statement and not as a standalone document. The Applicant referred to the government’s Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy in respect of the important role wind and solar is expected to play in meeting the UK’s policy of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 (paragraph 3.3.20 onwards) and the sustained growth in the capacity of onshore wind and solar needed in the next decade, under the Energy White Paper.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advises that it is unlikely that a standalone ‘Statement of Need’ will be requested for this or other Solar projects if the relevant information is easily discoverable and complete within other application documents. The s51 advice for Botley West stated that a standalone Statement of Need document was not a statutory requirement but was being</p>

requested for the reasons given. Such a document would thus avoid having to cross-reference different information on 'need' in the 'Statement of Reasons' and the 'Planning Support Statement'. Additionally, several parties had questioned the scale and specific location of the proposed Botley West solar farm and the heritage and environmental constraints therein, as outlined in the applicant's Consultation Report. A standalone Statement of Reasons, outlining the 'need' in one place, would also assist other parties to understand the applicant's position on the issue and may help answer other related matters.

Lastly, including a Policy Compliance Document can greatly assist with signposting stakeholders to relevant sections of an application, to demonstrate perceived accordance with all important and relevant policies.