



Planning Inspectorate

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Slough
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Customer
Services: 0303 444 5000
email: eastparkenergyproject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

All interested parties, statutory parties and any other person invited to the preliminary meeting

Our Ref: EN010141

Date: 17 February 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

Planning Act 2008 – section 88 and 89 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rules 5, 6, 9 and 13

Application by BSSL Cambsbed 1 Limited for an order granting development consent for the East Park Energy Project

Invitation to the preliminary meeting, draft examination timetable, notification of hearings and other procedural decisions

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an examination of the above application, I am writing to introduce myself. My name is Graham Sword. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed under the [documents tab](#) on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)).

I would like to thank those of you who submitted relevant representations. These representations have assisted me when considering how I will examine this application.

Invitation to the preliminary meeting

As a recipient of this letter you are invited to the preliminary meeting to discuss **the procedure** for the examination of the above application.

Date	Start time	Venue and joining details
Tuesday 17 March 2026	Registration and seating available at venue from: 9:30am Virtual registration process from: 9:30am Preliminary meeting starts: 10:00am	King's House Bedford, 245 Ampthill Road, Bedford MK42 9AZ and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
IMPORTANT: The preliminary meeting should be completed before 1.00pm on Tuesday 17 March 2026.		

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by Tuesday 10 March 2026 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting, then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **Tuesday 10 March 2026** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **Tuesday 10 March 2026**.

Purpose of the preliminary meeting

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to enable views to be put to me about how the application should be examined. The ExA will therefore limit the scope of the preliminary meeting to consideration of **how the application will be examined**. See **annex B** to this letter and the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

The preliminary meeting is **not** an opportunity for you to give your views about what you like or don't like about the application. The merits or disadvantages of the application will only be considered once the examination starts, which is after the preliminary meeting has closed. All relevant and important matters will be taken into account when I make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will take the final decision in this case.

The agenda for the meeting is at **annex A** to this letter. This has been set following my initial assessment of principal issues arising from my reading of the application documents and the relevant representations received. The initial assessment of principal issues is set out in **annex C** to this letter.

Written submissions about how the application should be examined

The Planning Act 2008 establishes a principally written process for the examination of applications for development consent orders and **representations made in writing carry equal weight to oral representations at all stages of the process.**

I am now requesting written submissions from recipients of this letter about how the application should be examined. I particularly wish to hear from you if either:

1. consider changes need to be made to the draft examination timetable set out at **annex D** to this letter
2. wish to comment about the arrangements for future examination hearings, including the use of virtual methods

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application is to be examined by **procedural deadline A** (Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 11:59pm) (see **annex D** to this letter).

I request that all submissions are made using the ['Have your say' page](#) on the project webpage on or before **procedural deadline A**. **Annex H** to this letter provides further information about using the ['Have your say' page](#).

Requests to participate at the preliminary meeting

Please note that **you are not required to attend, or make written submissions to, the preliminary meeting in order to participate in the examination.** If you are an interested party, you can make a written representation and comment on the written representations made by other interested parties during the examination. You will also be able to participate in any hearings that are arranged.

If you wish to participate at the preliminary meeting, you are required to notify the ExA in writing on or before **Tuesday 10 March 2026** (see **procedural deadline A**).

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting **must include** the following information:

- name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from the Planning Inspectorate)
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- for blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A**.

Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support or assistance to attend the preliminary meeting, either virtually or in person.

Format of examination events – preliminary meeting and hearings

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

Both blended (part in-person and part virtual) and fully virtual events form part of the Planning Inspectorate's operating model. I remain flexible and will confirm the format of any hearings to be held during the examination stage when I provide formal notification of each hearing in advance of it taking place.

I am providing formal notification that the **preliminary meeting will be a blended event and that the OFH and ISHs referred to in annex E to this letter will also be blended events.**

After the preliminary meeting

After the preliminary meeting I will issue a letter (known as the Rule 8 Letter) setting out the finalised examination timetable. A note of the meeting will also be published on the [project webpage](#).

Notification of initial hearings

I have made a procedural decision to hold the following initial hearings:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



- Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) on Tuesday 17 March 2026 (blended event)
- Issue Specific Hearing 1 into the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) (ISH1) on Wednesday 18 March 2026 (blended event)
- Issue Specific Hearing 2 into Best and Most Versatile Land and Soil and Construction Traffic (ISH2) on Wednesday 18 March 2026 (blended event)

Important information about these hearings is contained in **annex E** to this letter, including what details need to be provided with a request to be heard at a hearing and the procedure that will be followed.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

I have made some further procedural decisions which are set out in detail at **annex F** to this letter. They are summarised as follows:

- Visuals for the hearings
- Statements of common ground
- Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations
- Status of the applicant's examination documents
- Additional submissions
- Deadline for the submissions of comments and summaries on Relevant Representations
- Notification by statutory parties, or certain local authorities of their wish to be considered as an interested party
- Use of Artificial Intelligence
- Ethical Procurement for imported plant or other equipment

Changes to land interests

When the applicant becomes aware that there has been a change in ownership, or a new interest, in relevant land the applicant is requested to make the relevant person aware that they can make a request to the ExA to become an interested party under section 102A of the PA2008. They should inform them that information about how to do this can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's advice for members of the public: [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process](#). The examination timetable includes various deadlines for the submission of an updated book of reference and schedule of changes to the book of reference, which should include confirmation that relevant persons have been informed of their rights under section 102A.

Managing examination correspondence

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



Given the volume and frequency of letters the Planning Inspectorate needs to send to interested parties during an examination, we aim to communicate with people by email as electronic communication is more environmentally friendly and cost effective for the taxpayer.

If you have received a letter but are able to receive communications by email, please inform the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter as soon as possible.

As the examination process makes substantial use of electronic documents, it will be useful for you to become familiar with the [project webpage](#).

A '[Have your say](#)' page is available on the website which provides a portal through which parties should make written submissions at relevant deadlines during the examination. Further information about the '[Have your say](#)' page is provided at **annex H** to this letter.

You can also use the 'Get updates' button on the project webpage to register to receive automatic e-mail updates at key stages during the examination.

Your status in the examination

You have received this letter because you are a person or organisation who is involved in the NSIP process. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: National Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process](#) for further details.

If, having read the advice, you are still unsure about how you are involved in the process please contact the Case Team using the details at the top of this letter.

Awards of costs

All parties will normally be expected to meet their own costs. Costs can be awarded against a party who has acted unreasonably and has caused the party applying for the award of costs to incur unnecessary or wasted expense during the examination. You should be aware of the relevant costs guidance [Awards of costs: examinations of applications for development consent orders](#).

Management of information

Information, including representations, submitted in respect of this examination (if accepted by the ExA) and a record of any advice which has been provided by the Planning Inspectorate is published on the [project webpage](#).

Please note that in the interest of facilitating an effective and fair examination, it is necessary to publish some personal information. To find out how we handle your personal information please view our [Privacy Notice](#).

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



I look forward to working with all parties in the examination of this application.

Yours faithfully

Graham Sword

The Examining Authority

Annexes

- A** Agenda for the preliminary meeting
- B** Introduction to the preliminary meeting
- C** Initial assessment of principal issues
- D** Draft examination timetable
- E** Notification of initial hearings
- F** Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
- G** Examination documents
- H** Information about the 'Have your say' page

This communication does not constitute legal advice.
Please view our [Privacy Notice](#) before sending information to The Planning Inspectorate.

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



Agenda for the preliminary meeting

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by Tuesday 10 March 2026 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **Tuesday 10 March 2026** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **Tuesday 10 March 2026**.

Please note that by attending the event either in person or online you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#). A limited number of seats will be available for observers who wish not to be filmed at the venue. Please contact the Case Team to notify them if you prefer not to be filmed at the event. A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

Date: **Tuesday 17 March 2026**

Registration process: **9.30am**

Meeting start time: **10.00am**

Venue: Blended event at:
King's House Bedford,
245 Ampthill Road,
Bedford
MK42 9AZ
 and by virtual means using **Microsoft Teams**.
 Full instructions on how to join online or by phone
 will be provided in advance to those who have pre-
 registered

Attendees: **Invited parties who have pre-registered**

Agenda for the preliminary meeting	
9.30am	Registration and seating available at venue for in-person attendees
9.30am	<p>Virtual registration process</p> <p>Please arrive at 9:30am to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the virtual meeting by the Case Team, greeted and given further instructions.</p> <p>The registration process will commence at 9:30am. This will be hosted by the Case Team and cover the housekeeping arrangements for the preliminary meeting and allow for any questions to be asked about how to take part.</p>
10.00am	<p>Preliminary meeting</p> <p>The preliminary meeting will formally open at 10.00am. The Examining Authority will join, welcome participants and lead introductions.</p>
Item 1	
Item 2	The Examining Authority's remarks about the examination process – annex B to Rule 6 Letter
Item 3	Oral representations from Interested Parties on the Examination process.
Item 4	Initial assessment of principal issues – annex C to Rule 6 Letter
Item 5	Draft examination timetable – annex D to Rule 6 Letter
Item 6	Oral representations from Interested Parties on the draft Examination timetable.
Item 7	Any other matters
Close of the preliminary meeting	

If you are participating using Microsoft Teams please join the virtual lobby promptly using the instructions that will be sent to you. The event will start at **10.00am** irrespective of any late arrivals, for whom access may not be possible.

It may take some time to admit participants from the virtual lobby, your patience whilst you are waiting is appreciated.

The agenda for the preliminary meeting is subject to change at the discretion of the Examining Authority, although in making changes the Examining Authority will be mindful of the need to provide opportunities for fair involvement to all invited parties.

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting **must include** the following information and be made on the [event participation form](#):

- name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- for blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make.

Introduction to the preliminary meeting

Background

The preliminary meeting (PM) will be a blended event with some participants attending in person and some taking part virtually using Microsoft Teams.

The Examining Authority (ExA) is conscious of videoconferencing fatigue and will aim to keep the proceedings focussed and as efficient as possible. This annex provides advance access to information that would usually be included in the ExA's introductory remarks. Please read this carefully. The ExA will only present a summary of the key points set out here in order to ensure that the time available for participants to speak is maximised.

The Examining Authority and the Case Team

The ExA will introduce themselves at the start of the PM.

The ExA will be supported by the Planning Inspectorate Case Team. During the registration process a member of the Case Team will welcome and admit participants from the virtual lobby, and will be available to answer questions by email before and after the PM. The contact email address is:

EastParkEnergyProject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The purpose of the preliminary meeting

The PM is being held to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application for a development consent order (DCO) for the East Park Energy Project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and which will generally be referred to in the PM and examination as 'the proposed development'. The application has been made by BSSL Cambsbed 1 Limited, which will be referred to as 'the applicant'.

You will find information about the application and, in due course, documents produced for the examination on the project webpage of the Find National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)). The project webpage has links to the examination timetable, relevant representations and examination documents and examination procedure.

You are encouraged to look at the [project webpage](#) if you haven't already done so, because it will be used to communicate with you and to provide access to documents throughout the examination.

The main purpose of the PM is to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application. It focuses on the process only, and it will not be looking at the substance of the proposals: Questions, discussions and representations about the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development are for the examination itself which will begin the day after the close of the PM.

The PM will be your opportunity to influence the process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached to this Rule 6 Letter at **annex A**. It is important to have the letter and the agenda in front of you and to refer to them during the course of the PM. You may wish to print these in advance of the PM for reference.

Government guidance and policy

The application is a NSIP under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) as a consequence of sections 14 and 15: it includes the construction of a generating station in England with a capacity exceeding 50 MW in capacity. The following designated National Policy Statements (NPSs) apply to this examination and to decision-making relating to this application:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy ('NPS EN-1')
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure ('NPS EN-3')
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure ('NPS EN-5').

The ExA will consider the proposed development in accordance with the NPS and any other applicable policy or considerations the ExA deem to be important and relevant. The PA2008 makes it clear that, in making a decision, the relevant Secretary of State (SoS) "must decide the application in accordance with any relevant NPS" (s104(3)), subject to certain provisos. Essentially, the provisos are that the application must not breach legal or treaty obligations, and that any adverse impact of the proposed development would not outweigh its benefits.

The SoS is entitled to disregard any representations that relate to the merits of the designated National Policy Statement (NPS). In practice, this means that the ExA will not spend time examining representations that challenge policy set out in NPSs, or the validity of NPSs themselves. The focus will be on the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development, tested to the appropriate extent using the tests set out in relevant designated NPSs that are in force.

Other important and relevant planning policies that the ExA may consider include policies in the relevant local authorities' development plans. However, if these conflict with policy in a NPS, then the NPS will take precedence.

In summary, the PM will establish the procedures and timetable for the examination of the proposed development. It will set a framework for the ExA to enable the SoS to consider and decide the application. In doing so, the ExA will have regard to:

- the positions and representations of all interested parties (IP)
- any local impact reports (LIR) prepared and provided by relevant local authorities
- other prescribed matters
- any other matters that appear to be both relevant and important to the relevant SoS's decision.

Preliminary meeting invitees

The applicant is invited to the PM and is generally given the opportunity to reply to any representations made.

Everyone who has made a valid relevant representation has been registered as an IP and has been invited to the PM. All IPs are entitled to involvement in the examination.

Each person or organisation with an interest in land or rights that are affected by a compulsory acquisition request in this application is an affected person (AP) and has been invited to the PM. In addition to a general entitlement to involvement in the examination, APs have a right to be heard in relation to any objection about the effects of compulsory acquisition on their interests in land, and a right to be notified of any compulsory acquisition hearing. All APs are IPs, whether or not they have made a valid relevant representation.

Certain bodies are statutory parties and they have been invited to the PM. Statutory parties can elect to become IPs without having made a valid relevant representation by notifying the ExA in writing.

The ExA has the power to involve people who are not IPs in the examination as though they are IPs, including by inviting them to the PM. However, this is only done in exceptional circumstances, for example if it was clear that the application would materially affect a person, they are not automatically an IP or eligible to elect to become an IP and they had been unable to take the necessary action to register as an IP.

The ExA has decided to invite the following other persons to the PM:

- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Conduct of the preliminary meeting

The ExA estimate that the PM will take half a day to complete.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. In recognition of the fatigue associated with on-screen communication, the ExA will provide breaks during the PM as appropriate.

A digital recording of the PM will be made available on the project webpage as soon as practicable following the close of the PM. The recording allows any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed at the PM. The making and publication of these recordings are a means by which the ExA meets the legal requirement to hold the PM (and any other hearings) in public. In this regard, **anyone speaking at the PM will need to introduce themselves each time they speak**, to ensure that someone listening to the recording after the event is clear who was speaking. A written note of the PM will be produced and published as soon as practicable following the close of the PM.

As the recordings are retained and published, they form a public record that can contain personal information to which The UK General Data Protection Regulation applies. Participants must do their best to avoid providing any information which should otherwise be kept private and confidential. If there is a need to refer to such information, it should be in written form. Although this will also be published, personal and private content can be redacted or removed before it is made publicly available. Any person who is unclear on this point should ask the Case Team for guidance before they place personal and private information into the public domain.

The Planning Inspectorate's practice is to publish the recordings and retain them for a period of at least 6 weeks from the SoS's decision on the DCO. If you actively participate in the PM, it is important that you understand that you will be recorded and that the recording will be made available in the public domain. Please see our [Privacy Notice](#) for more information about how we handle your data.

Following the ExA's introductions, each participant who has been registered to speak will be asked to introduce themselves, including any organisations or groups that they represent. The ExA will then conduct the meeting in accordance with the agenda. If you prefer not to have your image recorded, you can switch off your camera at any point.

The examination process

The examination of NSIPs follows different processes to those, for example, of a public inquiry into a planning appeal following the refusal of planning permission. The main differences are that the examination of NSIPs are primarily a written process and hearings take on an inquisitorial approach as opposed to an adversarial one.

This means that the ExA will probe, test and assess the evidence primarily using written questions. While some hearings are held to provide supplementary evidence, questions to the applicant or to witnesses will come from the ExA. Questioning or cross-examination of witnesses by other parties will not generally be allowed.

In terms of opportunities to provide evidence in writing, the draft examination timetable makes provision for the following written processes:

- Local authorities can submit LIRs if they wish. Whilst these are voluntary, the PA2008 provides that if they are provided, they must be considered by the SoS in reaching a decision. Consequently, LIRs are a very important method for local authorities to communicate issues of concern to the ExA, the SoS and their residents
- IPs can make written representations (WR) and comment on WRs made by other parties
- IPs can respond to the ExA's written questions (ExQs) and comment on responses to these written questions provided by others
- IPs may be asked to contribute to the making of statements of common ground (SoCG) if it appears that there are matters on which they and the applicant

agrees, and if it would be useful for this to be clarified. SoCGs most usefully extend to catalogue matters that are not agreed or are outstanding

The draft examination timetable includes a series of numbered deadlines for receipt of written submissions. Timely submissions received by the relevant deadline and that address its purpose will be accepted. **Documents received after the relevant deadline are only accepted at the discretion of the ExA and may not be accepted to ensure fairness to all parties.** Circumstances where documents are submitted late without good reason, causing inconvenience or delay to other parties can amount to unreasonable behaviour.

These written processes will be the principal means used by the ExA to gather information, evidence and views about the application. However, the examination will only be effective if all parties resolve to give timely, full, frank, clear and evidenced answers to every question that is relevant to their interests and to engage fully with any other related processes such as the completion of WRs and SoCGs.

There is no merit in withholding or delaying information, or in failing to co-operate, and should it occur, any unreasonable behaviour that caused another party to incur wasted expenditure could lead to an award of costs against the offending party.

The ExA has discretion to make amendments to the examination timetable for the wider benefit of the examination. If possible, events will be arranged for times when all relevant parties are available, but the ExA is under a duty to complete the examination by the end of the six-month period beginning with the day after the close of the PM. This requirement is set by legislation, and while the ExA will try to rearrange event dates to accommodate all relevant parties, in practice there will be limited scope to alter dates set out in the draft examination timetable.

The statutory time limit for the examination means that where there are matters that still need to be discussed and agreed between the applicant and IPs, it will be very helpful to the ExA if these could be progressed as early as possible.

Hearings

The draft examination timetable includes provision for hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties.

Any registered IP may request an **open floor hearing (OFH)** to make oral representations about the application if they believe this to be preferable to relying on their written representation, though both carry equal weight. Oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing, but they should not simply repeat matters previously covered in the written submission. Rather, they should focus on specific detail and explanation to help inform the ExA. There should be no new or unexpected material in oral representations. A written summary note with any supporting evidence or references will be requested of each speaker following the hearing.

As with all examination events, OFHs are subject to the powers of control of the ExA, as set out in the PA2008 and supporting legislation. Participants must register in

advance by the deadline shown in the examination timetable and in accordance with the instructions. It is common practice for the ExA to set a time limit for each speaker and speakers with common points are asked to come together to nominate a spokesperson or representative speakers to cover specific topics, so as to avoid repetition. Speakers representing public authorities, community and membership organisations or multiple IPs are normally provided with an additional time allowance, recognising their representative role.

The applicant's draft DCO provides for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights, and the temporary possession of land. APs (meaning those whose land or rights over land are affected) have a right to request and be heard at a **compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH)**. If one or more APs request to be heard then a CAH must be held. Provisional dates for CAHs are included in the draft examination timetable along with deadlines by which requests to be heard must be submitted.

The ExA has the discretion to hold **issue specific hearings (ISH)** if it would aid in the examination and there is a specific reason this would be more helpful than reliance on written evidence only. The lack of an ISH on one or more topics does not suggest that that topic is less important than others which are subject to a hearing. Rather, it is an indication that the ExA is satisfied that the issues can be fully considered through written submissions and responses to its written questions and that each party has had a fair opportunity to put its case.

The draft examination timetable includes a number of dates reserved for ISHs and IPs may make suggestions for topics to be discussed at an ISH in their written or oral representations to the PM.

It may be necessary for the ExA to hold more than one ISH on the draft DCO. This is normal practice, and they are held on a without prejudice basis. Parties can suggest modifications and amendments to the draft DCO provided by the applicant with the application, without prejudicing their overall position on the application.

Holding such hearings does not imply that the ExA has reached any judgements on the merits of the application. Whatever the ultimate recommendation is, the ExA must make sure that the draft DCO is fit for purpose if the SoS decides to grant consent, as any consent will be subject to requirements (similar to planning conditions) set out in the draft DCO.

At hearings it will not normally be necessary for parties to make long and detailed submissions that require, for example, PowerPoint presentations. Any supporting detail/ information can be provided in writing following the event by the relevant deadline.

The draft examination timetable includes a deadline (**Tuesday 10 March 2026**) for participants to notify the ExA that they wish to speak at an OFH.

Site inspections

As part of the examination process the ExA may undertake site inspections. These can be either unaccompanied or accompanied.

The purpose of these is for the ExA to see features of the proposals within the context of the evidence put forward. Notes of unaccompanied site inspections (USI) are published on the [project webpage](#).

Accompanied site inspections (ASI) will only be necessary to view land to which there is no public right of access, or with no clear view from nearby locations with open public access. The purpose of ASIs is familiarisation only and no discussion of the merits of the proposed development will be entertained during an ASI.

The ExA may decide to hold USIs to relevant nominated locations, supported by the submission of additional written, photographic, video or even drone material if this would be preferable to not visiting sites or holding ASIs in circumstances which could make them difficult and unduly time-consuming to conduct (for example if public health restrictions are in place). The ExA may also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of a USI on an access required basis (ARSI).

The draft examination timetable includes a deadline for IPs to make submissions suggesting sites and locations that the ExA should visit. These will be used to inform further USIs/ ARSIs as well as possible ASIs.

Initial assessment of principal issues

This is the initial assessment of principal issues prepared as required under section 88(1) of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). It has been prepared by the Examining Authority (ExA) following its reading of:

- the application documents
- the relevant representations received in respect of the application
- its consideration of any other important and relevant matters

This initial assessment has guided the ExA in forming a provisional view as to how the application is to be examined. It is not a comprehensive or exclusive list of the issues that will be subject to examination and inevitably some issues will overlap or interrelate. The ExA will have regard to all important and relevant matters during the examination and when it writes its recommendation to The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero after the examination has concluded.

The policy and consenting requirements and documents associated with the PA2008 are an integral part of the examination and are therefore not listed as principal issues. It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equalities duties are not listed as principal issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind.

Regarding national policy, the following National Policy Statements (NPS) have effect, and the issues contained within will be an integral part of the examination:

- NPS EN-1 – Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy
- NPS EN-3 – National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure
- NPS EN-5 – National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure

Whilst matters relating to compulsory acquisition and the draft Development Consent Order are not listed as principal issues, they will form an integral part of the examination.

Consideration will be given to all relevant matters during the construction, operation and decommissioning activities associated with the proposed development, and cumulatively with other plans and projects, as necessary.

The order of the issues listed does not imply any order of prioritisation or importance. The bulleted items under each issue are indicative and do not preclude other sub-items being considered.

Principal Issue	Brief amplification, to include but not necessarily be limited to:
Battery Energy Storage Systems, Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery Electrical Storage System (BESS) including the number and positioning of the BESS across the application site, infrastructure associated with the BESS and fire safety concerns • Security of the site and supply.
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect of construction works on ecology • The construction and operational effects on protected species and their habitats including ability for fauna to maintain their ability to roam • The mechanisms and future controls of the maintenance and management of new biodiversity sites.
Compulsory Acquisition	The case and justification for the CA of land and rights and for the Temporary Possession of land.
Development Consent Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of the dDCO • Definitions • Scope of the proposed development and its associated development • The appropriateness of Articles and Requirements • The appropriateness of Proposed Protective provisions • Relationships with other consents, and • Whether the dDCO is satisfactory in all other respects.
General Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether all relevant legislation and policy has been complied with and the regard given to guidance and advice • The relevance of National Policy Statements. Consideration of any changes to legislation or policy since the application was made • Matters arising in any Local Impact Reports • The implications of any relevant planning decisions, local policy or case law • The effects on the local economy including tourism • Health and wellbeing, including risk from electromagnetic radiation.
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact to the setting of the designated and non-designated assets • Physical impact from the construction and decommissioning phase on potential archaeological heritage assets, and • Mitigation measures.
Landscape and Visual Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology including study area, viewpoints and zone of theoretical visibility and approach to cumulative/ in combination effect

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect of the solar panels, battery storage and other structures on landscape character and the use of good design principles • The effect on visual receptors of the solar panels, battery storage, other structures and the operation of the proposed development • The visual impact of glint and glare • The visual impact of lighting • Cumulative impact on visual amenity and landscape character • The determining factors for the size and location of the solar panel arrays and associated development • The design and size of the solar panels and proposed development and proposed mitigation and screening.
Noise and Vibration – Construction and Decommissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction related noise during the setting up of the site and construction of the panels • Operational noise from the substations and BESS • Decommissioning phase noise and • Mitigation measures.
Site Selection	To consider the reasonable alternatives assessed and the reasons for the chosen option taking into account the effects of the proposed development on the environment.
Soils – Best and Most Versatile Land and Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agricultural Land Classification of the site including impact on Best and Most Versatile Land (BMV) including quantity and quality of land that would be temporarily and permanently lost, and the methodology and assessment used to ascertain this • The proposed end uses for BMV following decommissioning phase • The securing of grazing during the operational phase, and • Potential for cumulative impacts at regional scale on BMV permanently and temporarily given the Written Ministerial Statement of May 2024.
Traffic – Construction and Decommissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effects on users of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Network in the vicinity due to proposed stopping up and diversion of PRoW • The effects of the volume and size construction and decommissioning traffic vehicles on the local highway network and impact on residents and businesses • Cumulative impact with other developments occurring in the locality and the duration of the development proposal.
Water Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of land which are areas situated within Flood Zones for the project, the sequential and exception tests and ensuring no increase to flood risk downstream • Effects on water quality from the construction and decommissioning phases

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effects of surface water runoff from compounds.
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Draft examination timetable

The Examining Authority (ExA) is under a duty to **complete** the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting.

The examination of the application primarily takes the form of the consideration of written submissions. The ExA will also consider any oral representations made at hearings.

Item	Matters	Date
1.	<p>Procedural deadline A</p> <p>Deadline for receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> written submissions on the examination procedure, including any submissions about the use of virtual methods requests to be heard orally at the preliminary meeting requests to be heard at Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) regarding the draft Development Consent Order and general principles of the proposed development requests to be heard at Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) regarding BMV Land, Soil and Construction Traffic requests to be heard at an Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) suggested locations for site inspections (accompanied or unaccompanied), including justification, for consideration by the ExA 	<p>Tuesday 10 March 2026</p>
2.	<p>Preliminary meeting (PM) is an opportunity to comment on the examination procedure. The Examining Authority will not hear views on the application. Use this link to register: https://forms.office.com/e/JedhqVrySA</p>	<p>Tuesday 17 March 2026 10.00am</p>
3.	<p>Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) is for parties to speak directly to the Examining Authority about their views on the application. Use this link to register: https://forms.office.com/e/JedhqVrySA</p>	<p>Tuesday 17 March 2026 2.00pm</p>
4.	<p>Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) regarding the draft Development Consent Order and general principles of the proposed development</p>	<p>Wednesday 18 March 2026 10.00am</p>

5.	Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) regarding BMV Land and Soil and Construction Traffic	Wednesday 18 March 2026 2.00pm
6.	Issue by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the examination timetable (Rule 8 Letter) 	As soon as practicable following the PM
7.	Deadline 1 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on relevant representations (RR) • summaries of all RR exceeding 1500 words • written representations (WRs) and summaries of any WR which exceed 1500 words • post-hearing submissions, including written submissions of any oral cases heard at OFH1, ISH1 and ISH2 • Local Impact Reports (LIRs) from the local authorities • notification of wish to have future correspondence received electronically • the applicant's draft itinerary for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) (if required) • suggestions for locations for the ASI (if any) from any other party together with reasoning • requests by interested parties to be heard at a further open floor hearing (OFH2) • requests by affected persons (defined in section 59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at a compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • comments on any further information/ submissions accepted by the ExA • draft Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) - see annex F • updates from the applicant – see annex F 	Tuesday 7 April 2026
8.	Deadline 2 For receipt by the ExA of:	Friday 24 April 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on WRs • comments on responses to RRs • comments on the LIRs • comments on the applicant's draft itinerary for the ASI (if required) • comments from affected persons on applicant's updated land rights tracker • comments on any updated or additional documents from the applicant • comments on any additional submissions received by Deadline 1 and accepted by the ExA (if required) • the applicant's revised dDCO and other updates from the applicant – see annex F • comments on Draft Statements of Common Ground • any further information requested by ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	
9.	Issue by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ExA's First Written Questions (ExQ1) 	Tuesday 5 May 2026
10.	Deadline 3 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses to ExQ1 • comments on any updated or additional documents submitted by the applicant at deadline 2 • updates from the applicant – refer to annex F • any further information requested by ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by deadline 2 	Tuesday 26 May 2026
11.	Publication by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ExA's final itinerary for the ASI (if required) 	Friday 29 May 2026
12.	Week reserved for hearings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Issue Specific Hearing (ISH3) (if required) • Compulsory Acquisition Hearing (CAH) (if required) • Further Open Floor Hearing (OFH2) (if required) 	w/c Monday 8 June 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASI (if required) 	
13.	<p>Publication by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) and any associated questions (if required) • The ExA's Second Written Questions (ExQ2) (if required) 	Tuesday 23 June 2026
14.	<p>Deadline 4</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • response to ExQ2 • post-hearing submissions, including written summaries of any oral cases made at hearings held during w/c 8 June • comments on the applicant's revised dDCO • updates from the applicant – refer to annex F • any further information requested by ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by deadline 3 	Friday 10 July 2026
15.	<p>Deadline 5</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updated SoCGs • comments on the RIES (if required) • updates from the applicant – refer to annex F • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by deadline 4 	Tuesday 21 July 2026
16.	<p>Deadline 6</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on Deadline 5 submissions • any other information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • updates from the applicant – refer to annex F 	Tuesday 4 August 2026

17.	<p>Deadline 7</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the final draft DCO Final draft DCO to be submitted by the applicant in the SI template Applicant to provide the email notification from https://publishing.legislation.gov.uk/validation confirming the document has successfully passed validation, and the PDF version of the SI validation report obtained from the link in the notification email. The applicant should also provide a clean (all tracking removed) standalone MS Word version of the draft DCO, with no header or cover page • the final updated BoR Final BoR and schedule of changes to BoR • final SoCGs • final Statement of Commonality of SoCG • list of matters not agreed where SoCG could not be finalised • final Navigation Document/ Guide to the Application • final Status of Negotiations CA Schedule and Land Tracker • final Status of Negotiations with Statutory Undertakers • final NPS Tracker • final Issues Tracker • final signed and dated section 106 – if needed • comments on responses to ExQ2 • comments on any further information received Comments on any additional information/submissions received by deadline 5 • any further information requested by ExA Any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	<p>Tuesday 18 August 2026</p>
18.	<p>Close of examination</p> <p>The ExA intends to close the examination on this date. See 'Note about the close of examination date'.</p>	<p>Friday 21 August 2026</p>

Note about the close of examination date

The ExA is under a duty to complete the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting. The ExA may however decide to close the examination earlier and on the date specified in the timetable if it considers that the application and relevant matters have been examined adequately.

Submission times for deadlines

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is 23:59 on the relevant deadline date, unless instructed otherwise by the ExA.

Publication dates

All information received will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the deadlines for submissions.

Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES)

Where an applicant has provided a No Significant Effects Report or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report with the application, the ExA may decide to issue a RIES during the examination. The RIES is a factual account of the information and evidence provided to the ExA on HRA matters during the examination up to the date of the publication of the RIES, for the purposes of enabling the Secretary of State, as competent authority, to undertake its HRA. It is not the ExA's opinion on HRA matters. Comments on the RIES will be invited by the ExA and any received will be taken into account as part of the ExA's recommendation to the Secretary of State. The ExA may also raise questions in the RIES to confirm or clarify matters that remain outstanding.

The Secretary of State may rely on the consultation on the RIES to meet its obligations under regulation 63(3) of The Habitats Regulations 2017 and/ or regulation 28 of The Offshore Marine Regulations.

Notification of initial hearings

The Examining Authority (ExA) provides notice of the following initial hearings:

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Tuesday 17 March 2026	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 1.30pm Virtual registration process from: 1.30pm Hearing starts: 2.00pm	King's House Bedford, 245 Amphill Road, Bedford MK42 9AZ and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 18 March 2026	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) – draft DCO	Registration and seating available at venue from: 9.30am Virtual registration process from: 9:30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	King's House Bedford, 245 Amphill Road, Bedford MK42 9AZ and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 18 March 2026	Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) – BMV Land and Soil and Construction Traffic	Registration and seating available at venue from: 1.30pm Virtual registration process from: 1.30pm	King's House Bedford, 245 Amphill Road, Bedford MK42 9AZ and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
		Hearing starts: 2.00pm	Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

NOTE: If any of the above hearings are no longer required then notification that a particular date is no longer required will be published as soon as practicable on the [project webpage](#), providing reasonable notice to interested parties of the decision to cancel them.

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by Tuesday 10 March 2026 if you intend to participate in any of the hearings and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe any of the hearings then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical hearing at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **Tuesday 10 March 2026** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **Tuesday 10 March 2026**.

Any request to participate in a hearing **must include** the following information:

- name and unique reference number (found at the top of any letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- for blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person

- confirmation of the hearing(s) you wish to participate in, the agenda item(s) on which you wish to speak and/ or brief details of the topic(s) that you would like to raise
- for compulsory acquisition hearings, the plot number(s) of the relevant land provided in the [Book of Reference](#) and the [Land Plans](#)
- the [Examination Library](#) reference number (with paragraph/ page number where appropriate) of any documents you wish to refer to

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A**.

Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support or assistance to attend any of the hearings, either virtually or in person.

Hearing agendas

The indicative high-level agendas for OFH1, ISH1 and ISH2 are set out below to help inform your decision about whether to register to participate.

For issue specific hearings and compulsory acquisition hearings the ExA will publish a detailed draft agenda on the project webpage at least 5 working days in advance of the hearing date. However, the actual agenda on the day of each hearing may be subject to change at the discretion of the ExA. For open floor hearings an agenda may not be published until the day of the hearing.

Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1):

Agenda for the Open Floor Hearing 1	
1	Welcome and Introductions
2	Purpose of the Open Floor Hearing
3	Confirmation of those who notified the ExA of a wish to be heard at the OFH
4	<p>Oral Submissions from Interested Parties</p> <p>Each Interested Party who has indicated a wish to speak will be invited forward in turn. Each party will be given a limited amount of time.</p> <p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 minutes for individual IPs • 5 minutes where one IP speaks on behalf of a number of IPs • 5 minutes for membership organisations and formal groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other party who has not registered but would wish to speak on the day (if time). Following each submission, the Examining Authority may wish to ask the speaker questions. <p>Oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing by the particular participant. However, representations made at the hearing should not simply repeat matters previously covered in a written submission, but rather provide further detail, explanation and evidential corroboration to help inform the Examining Authority.</p>
5	<p>Responses by the Applicant</p> <p>The Applicant will be invited to respond to matters raised and to questions arising from the ExA either orally after all IPs and Non-IPs have spoken, or in writing by Deadline 1 on 7 April 2026.</p>
6	Next Steps
7	Closing
Close of the Open Floor Hearing 1	

Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) – Draft Development Consent Order:

The ExA would particularly request that representatives of the following bodies attend the Issue Specific Hearing:

- The applicant
- Interested parties who have pre-registered
- Bedford Borough Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Any other proposed beneficiary of protective provisions and
- Any other utility service provider or statutory undertaker with land, infrastructure, alignments or apparatus affected by the dDCO.
- Any other Affected Person who wishes to make oral representations in respect of the applicant's general case.

Agenda for the Issue Specific Hearing 1	
1	Welcome and Introductions
2	Purpose of the Issue Specific Hearing
3	<p>Project Definition and limitations</p> <p>The applicant will be asked to set out its overall approach to the Environmental Assessment of the proposed development in light</p>

	of the, so-called, Rochdale Envelope. The ExA is particularly interested to ensure that the worst-case scenarios have been assessed.
4	The Overall Structure of the dDCO The applicant will be asked to explain its overall approach to the drafting of the dDCO and clarify what matters are to be secured by alternative methods, such as Planning Obligations and other forms of agreement.
5	ExA's Questions on the DCO The ExA will ask questions about the dDCO and seek observations from IPs present. Noting that this hearing is in the earliest stages of the Examination, the primary purpose of this Agenda item will be for the ExA to raise its own initial questions. Other IPs will be welcome to participate but will not be expected to frame their own detailed positions until the submission of their Written Representations, Local Impact Reports and participation in a DCO ISH later in the Examination.
6	Next Steps
7	Closing
Close of the Issue Specific Hearing 1	

The purpose of this ISH is to inquire into the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO), providing the applicant with an initial opportunity to explain the structure, content and drafting approach and for the ExA to explore initial questions about the drafting approach taken with the applicant and with bodies who are proposed or who might hold powers or duties under the dDCO.

This ISH into the dDCO will be conducted without prejudice to the in-principle positions taken by Interested Parties (IPs) in relevant or written representations. This means for example that IPs are at liberty to seek improvements to provisions in the dDCO without conceding an in-principal position that there should be no such provisions or that the dDCO itself should not be made. It is held in the interests of ensuring that the dDCO becomes the best draft that can be obtained in the circumstances and is also without prejudice to the ExA's future deliberations on its recommendation to the Secretary of State about whether or not the dDCO should be made.

The ISH is also to allow the applicant to set out in general case for the interference in land rights and for this to be considered by the ExA. APs are welcome to attend and to raise matters of general application. However, it is the ExA's intention to hold a second CAH, if requested, later in the Examination to deal with any site-specific matters raised by APs.

Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) – Best and Most Versatile Land and Soil and Construction Traffic:

The ExA would particularly request that representatives of the following bodies attend the Issue Specific Hearing:

- The applicant
- Interested parties who have pre-registered
- Bedford Borough Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Natural England
- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Any other Affected Person who wishes to make oral representations in respect of the Applicant's general case.

Agenda for the Issue Specific Hearing 2	
1	Welcome and Introductions
2	Purpose of the Issue Specific Hearing
3	The Use of Best and Most Versatile Land The applicant will be asked to present its approach to the use of BMV and the identification of alternative lower grade land for siting of the proposed development
4	The Effects on Food Production and Soil Quality The applicant will be asked to present their consideration given to effects for food production and the approach to soil management and restoration.
5	Construction Traffic routes The applicant will be asked to present its proposals in relation to construction traffic in the locale.
6	Traffic Management The applicant will be asked to outline its traffic management proposals in relation to the protect and also update on consultation with local authority highway authorities.
7	Cumulative Impacts from other projects
8	Next Steps
9	Closing
Close of the Issue Specific Hearing 2	

The purpose of this ISH is to explore the applicant's approach to use of BMV, the implications for food production and construction traffic routes and traffic management. It will also take the opportunity to receive updates on progress of consultation with the relevant Highway Authorities

Procedure at hearings

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

The Planning Inspectorate's Advice for members of the public provides important information about hearing procedures:

- [What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event](#)
- [Registering to speak at, or attend, a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event](#)

The procedure to be followed at hearings is set out in rule 14 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. The ExA is responsible for the oral questioning of a person giving evidence and the process affords very limited scope to allow cross-questioning between parties.

Hearing livestream and recording

A link to a livestream for each hearing will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before any hearing is due to open. The livestream is available to anybody who wishes to observe a hearing in real time.

All hearings are recorded, and the recordings will be made available on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the close of the hearing. The recordings allow any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

The Examining Authority (ExA) has made the following procedural decisions:

1. Visuals for the hearings

For ISH2 and other subsequent Hearings should the ExA determine their necessity, the ExA may wish to refer to plans and drawings to assist in the discussion points. The applicant is therefore requested to make provisions for the electronic display of such plans and drawings. The ExA will publish (If required) supplementary agendas no less than five days before those events setting out which plans and drawings will be required.

For IPs joining virtually, the ExA considers the most appropriate way of participation would be for persons to have available and to hand the Examination Library (EL). As each plan is uploaded, the ExA will notify those persons online of the EL reference number (e.g. APP-003) and IPs can then load the document themselves. This is considered preferable to the alternative of low resolution drawings being prepared and screened on Microsoft Teams by the applicant which, despite best intentions, are often difficult to see and navigate for online users.

2. Statements of common ground (SoCG)

In relation to some of the principal issues identified in **annex C** to this letter, the ExA would be assisted by the preparation of SoCGs between the applicant and certain interested parties. The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter therefore establishes **deadline 1** for submission of SoCGs.

The aim of a SoCG is to agree factual information and to inform the ExA and all other parties by identifying where there is agreement and where the differences lie at an early stage in the examination process. It should provide a focus and save time by identifying matters which are not in dispute or need not be the subject of further evidence. It can also usefully state where and why there may be disagreement about the interpretation and relevance of the information. Unless otherwise stated or agreed, the SoCG should be agreed between the applicant and the other relevant interested party or parties, and submitted **by the applicant**.

For each of those areas that are in dispute, it would be beneficial if each party would put their estimation as to the likelihood that disagreement will remain by the end of the Examination. This should be done on a “Low” (Green), “Medium” (Amber) and “High” (Red) traffic light model. This will allow the ExA to assess those areas where oral discussions may be most beneficial.

SoCGs are requested to be prepared between the applicant and:

A. **Bedford Borough Council**, to include:

- Principle of Development

- Economic and Social effects, including any implications for the Local Plan strategy and of transport effects on local communities
- Construction Traffic
- Environmental Impact Assessment, including cumulative effects
- Landscape and Visual Effects, including lighting
- Any other potential effects, including on heritage assets, biodiversity, noise and vibration, air quality, emissions, contamination and emergency planning
- Good Design
- Various Environment Management Plans, both during construction and operation
- The dDCO, including requirements and discharge mechanisms

B. Huntingdonshire District Council, to include:

- Principle of Development
- Economic and Social effects, including any implications for the Local Plan strategy and of transport effects on local communities
- Construction Traffic
- Environmental Impact Assessment, including cumulative effects
- Landscape and Visual Effects, including lighting
- Any other potential effects, including on heritage assets, biodiversity, noise and vibration, air quality, emissions, contamination and emergency planning
- Good Design
- Various Environmental Management Plans, both during construction and operation
- The dDCO, including requirements and discharge mechanisms

C. Cambridgeshire County Council, to include:

- Principle of Development
- Traffic and Transport, including traffic modelling and assessment of alternatives
- Effects of the Public Rights of Way network and on non-motorised users
- Economic and Social Effects
- Environmental Impact Assessment, including cumulative effects
- Water Environment and Flood Risk
- Good Design
- Any other potential effects, including on heritage assets, biodiversity, air quality, emissions and contamination
- Various Environment Management Plans, both during construction and operation
- The dDCO, including requirements and protective provisions

D. National Highways, to include:

- Traffic and Transport, including traffic modelling and assessment of alternatives

- Good Design
- The dDCO, including protective provisions

E. **Environment Agency**, to include:

- EIA Methodology
- Water environment and flood risk, including ground and surface water protection, drainage, geology and soils
- Climate change effects
- Various Environment Management Plans, both during construction and operation
- Any 'Shadow' licence applications
- The dDCO

F. **Natural England**, to include:

- Biodiversity, habitats and nature conservation including issues relating to:
 - The effects on protected species and habitats
 - Mitigation measures, including the likely effectiveness of mitigation monitoring procedures and their being secured
- Water environment, water protection, drainage and impact on habitats and species
- Landscape and Visual, appropriateness of mitigation, ZTC and impact on Kent Downs National Landscape
- Various Environmental Management Plans, both during construction and operation
- 'Shadow' licence applications
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- The dDCO

G. **Historic England**, to include:

- The effects on heritage assets and their settings and consideration of cumulative effects
- Archaeological considerations
- Various Environment Management Plans, both during construction and operation
- The dDCO

H. **National Grid**, to include:

- Agreement on connection
- The dDCO
- Compulsory Acquisition and temporary possession provisions

I. **Cambridge Fire and Rescue Service**, to include:

- Agreement on access routes
- Water volumes for fire fighting
- Positioning of BESS

The aim of a SoCG is to agree factual information and to inform the ExA and all other parties by identifying where there is agreement and where the differences lie at an early stage in the Examination process. It should provide a focus and save time by identifying matters which are not in dispute or need not be the subject of further evidence. It can also usefully state where and why there may be disagreement about the interpretation and relevance of the information. Unless otherwise stated or agreed, the SoCG should be agreed between the Applicant and the other relevant Interested Party or parties, and submitted **by the Applicant**. The draft Examination Timetable at **annex D** to this letter therefore establishes the deadlines in which drafts and final submissions are expected. **The SoCGs should always be accompanied by an issues tracker showing progress of the resolution of those issues.**

All of the SoCGs listed above should cover the articles and requirements in the draft Development Consent Order. Any interested party seeking that an article or requirement is reworded should provide the form of words which are being sought.

Final SoCGs should be submitted into the Examination by **deadline 7 (18 August 2026)** unless completed beforehand and this can be submitted at an earlier deadline. If, by **deadline 6 (4 August 2026)** a particular SoCG cannot be agreed between the parties, then a final draft SoCG on the matters of agreement should be submitted at **deadline 7 (18 August 2026)**.

The content of SoCGs will help to inform the ExA about the need to hold any issue specific hearings during the examination, and to enable the ExA and the applicant to give notice of such hearings in advance of them taking place.

3. Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter includes dates reserved for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) on week commencing 8 June 2026, should the ExA decide to hold one.

If either the applicant or other interested parties consider additional locations beyond those which the ExA has already visited as part of USI1 need to be visited, the ExA requests that they submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **deadline 1 (Tuesday 7 April 2026)**. The request must include:

- sufficient information to identify the location
- the issues to be observed at the location
- information on whether the site can be accessed via public land
- the reason why the location has been suggested.

Interested parties should be aware that ASIs are not an opportunity to make any oral representations to the ExA about the proposed development. However, participants may be invited by the ExA to indicate specific features or sites of interest.

The ExA will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis. The ExA will also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of an unaccompanied site inspection on an access required basis.

The ExA will publish its final itinerary at least 5 working days before the date of the ASI.

4. Status of the applicant's examination documents

The ExA requests that the applicant provides, at each deadline, an updated 'Status of the applicant's examination documents' document which provides a list of the most up-to-date status of the documents submitted, including which copies have been superseded in whole or in part. A final version must be submitted before the close of the examination. All examination documents submitted should include a version number and date. This annex sets out the ExA's requirements for the matters to be included in those updates.

a. Schedule of the latest versions of the applicant's submission documents and documents to be certified

The ExA requests that the applicant provides, at each deadline, an updated version of its "Guide to the Application"/Navigation Document [APP-003] in both clean and tracked forms. Each update to [APP-003] (which will be allocated a new Examination Library reference number on each occasion it is updated) should list of: 1) the most up-to-date version of all documents submitted by the applicant either: 1) as part the originally submitted application and then subsequently updated during the course of either the pre-examination (namely [AS-001 to AS-021]) or examination periods; and 2) any other documents submitted by the applicant during the course of the examination (for example responses to the ExA's written questions and post hearing submissions) and should record any updates to any such documents that may subsequently be revised during the examination. The updates to the Navigation Document must record the following details:

- The reference number allocated to it by the applicant and its
- version number or letter
- The submission date, namely the application date for documents
- that have not been or become the subject of a revision or revisions
- or the relevant examination deadline for non-application documents
- The Examination Library reference number allocated to the

- document by the Planning Inspectorate (when known)

b. Updates to the draft Development Consent Order (DCO) and Explanatory Memorandum (EM)

To include:

- The latest, fully up-to-date versions of the draft DCO and EM
- Clean copies and copies showing tracked changes to the immediately preceding version of the draft DCO and the EM
- An updated 'Schedule of Changes to the draft DCO, setting out the reasons for the changes included in each update
- For each substantive update of the draft DCO, a clean Microsoft Word version, in addition to clean and tracked changes PDF versions, shall be submitted.

This request has been made because increasingly ExAs have been encountering during their reporting periods Microsoft Word versions of draft DCOs that have broken templates. A draft DCO with a broken template can be very difficult to use when a recommended version is being prepared by the ExA for the Secretary of State's consideration, irrespective of what the ExA's overall recommendation about an application is. Accordingly, the ExA wishes to have Microsoft Word versions of the draft DCO available to it regularly during the examination so that it can check the functionality of this format version of the draft DCO in advance of the examination's close.

In the event of the ExA encountering functionality issues with the Microsoft Word version of the draft DCO during the examination that will be drawn to the applicant's attention, with an expectation that the applicant resubmits the draft DCO using a Microsoft Word template that has not become broken.

c. Updates to the Book of Reference (BoR) and Statement of Reasons (SoR)

To include:

- The latest, fully up-to-date versions of the BoR and SoR
- Clean copies and copies showing tracked changes compared with the previous versions
- A 'Schedule of Land Rights Changes' report, or equivalent, setting out the reasons for the changes included in each update

d. Updates to the Lands and Rights Negotiations Tracker

To include clear highlighting/signposting where updates have been made within the tracker since the previous deadline.

e. Updates to the Issues Tracker included in the Potential Main Issues for Examination [APP-171]

To include clear highlighting/signposting where updates have been made within the tracker since the previous deadline.

f. Updates to other documents for example the Environmental Statement (ES) and framework management plans

In the event of revised versions of documents such as the ES (individual chapters or appendices), framework management plans or other documents in the series of documents numbered 7.1 to 7.20 being submitted, clean copies and copies showing tracked changes highlighting the changes made to the previous version of the document should be submitted. In instances of changes (other than minor typographical corrections) being made, a summary explanation of the reason(s) for those changes being made should be provided.

g. Schedule of progress in securing other consents [APP-033]

To include:

- An updated 'Other Consents and Licences Statement' document required for the delivery of the proposed development, including the name of the consent, the relevant legislation (or policy or guidance), the consenting authority, the scope of the consent, why it is required, and when it is expected to be obtained.
- A summary of the up-to-date position in respect of obtaining the necessary consents and whether there is any reason to believe that any consent will not be granted.
- Where the Environment Agency or Natural England would be the consenting authority, and without prejudice to their subsequent decision, written confirmation of whether they have any reason to believe that any consent would not be granted. As well as being required for the ExA to assess the adequacy of the applicant's mitigation proposals, this is required for the ExA to report any known impediments to the Secretary of State.
- A summary of the progress made since the last update, any outstanding matters, the next steps to be taken and the progress anticipated by the next deadline and by the close of the examination.

5. Additional submissions

In addition to the documentation submitted by **procedural deadline A** the ExA has exercised its discretion and made a procedural decision to accept the following additional submissions:

- Examination Library reference AS-022 by Christine Abbott

- Examination Library reference AS-023 by Natural England
- Examination Library reference AS-024 by Harvesting the Sun Twice

6. Deadline for the submissions of comments and summaries on Relevant Representations

It is normal for ExAs to request that summaries and comments are provided of RRs where these original representations exceed 1500 words in length. The ExA has therefore also made a Procedural Decision to request the submission of summaries and comments by **Deadline 1 (7 April 2026)**.

Where a document is being revised from a previous submission then it should be submitted in two versions 'Clean' and 'Tracked Change' from the previous version. For revisions to the dDCO these should always be in the SI MS Word template, again two versions, 'Clean' and 'Tracked'.

7. Notification by statutory parties, or certain local authorities of their wish to be considered as an interested party

The ExA has made a procedural decision that, in order to facilitate a timely start to the Examination, Statutory Parties and certain Local Authorities should have decided whether they wish to be considered as an IP and notified the Planning Inspectorate of their decision by **Deadline 1 (7 April 2026)**.

Please note, the ExA will consider any specific, and well-reasoned requests for additional time to be provided before issuing the final timetable.

8. Use of Artificial Intelligence

The Planning Inspectorate understands the benefits that artificial intelligence (AI) can bring to the planning system when it is used ethically and transparently. To aid the beneficial use of AI in casework evidence, all participants in the examination are directed to guidance for submitting information that has been generated or altered by AI. If any party uses AI to create its submission, it is important to let us know if you have used AI in any way. This does not include basic spell-checks or grammar tools.

All parties should specify which AI systems or tools have been used, the source of the information that the AI system has based its content on, and what parts of the submitted information or representation AI has been used to create or alter. Where you have used AI systems to summarise, substantially rewrite or add commentary to information which goes beyond a simple factual description, this can affect the accuracy and interpretation of the underlying data. In addition to telling us that you have used AI, as with all other information submitted to us, it is your responsibility to ensure that it is fit for purpose, accurate, complete and not misleading.

By following this guidance, you will help the ExA to understand the origin and accuracy of the information submitted, thereby supporting our fair and impartial examination of the application. If you do not declare the use of AI in

any evidence submission where it has been used or remove evidence such as watermarks the ExA reserves the right to reject the submission.

9. Ethical Procurement for imported plant or other equipment

Many of the submitted RRs raise the issue of ethical procurement in the supply chain for imported solar panels and other plant or equipment required to implement the proposed development. Issues concerning the ethical procurement of imported plant and equipment are relevant to the United Kingdom's trade policy and international relations, rather than being land use planning considerations under the provisions of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008).

With respect to this matter IPs' attention is drawn to the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero's comments in the decision letter for the Mallard Pass solar farm:

“ 4.106 ... The ExA gives very minimal weight to the concerns raised in respect of ethical procurement and do not consider it affects its overall conclusions on the Application [ER 3.9.93].

4.107 The Secretary of State agrees with the ExA that the implications of materials sourcing have been reasonably assessed where relevant to other topics, notably on the potential climate change implications of the proposed development. However, the Secretary of State does not consider that ethical procurement is a relevant planning matter in itself in the determination of this Application and, whilst noting the concerns of IPs, this matter is therefore not ascribed any weight in the planning balance”.

Having regard to:

- 1) how the Secretary of State approached the matter of ethical procurement in determining the Mallard Pass application; and
- 2) ethical procurement being outside the scope of the matters addressed in the relevant designated National Policy Statements, ethical procurement matters are unlikely to attract weight when the ExA makes its recommendation(s) about the proposed development to the Secretary of State following the examination's conclusion

The ExA therefore takes the view that written or oral submissions relating to ethical procurement during the forthcoming examination for the proposed development are likely to be given no weight or very limited weight. IPs when making written or oral comments about the proposed development are encouraged to restrict their submissions about the proposed development to its effects on the land it would occupy and/or the area within the vicinity of that land.

In the event of ethical procurement submissions being raised during the course of a hearing, the ExA may refuse to allow such representations to be

made, having regard to the provisions of section 94(8) of the Planning Act 2008 (Hearings: general provisions).

Examination documents

The application documents and relevant representations can be inspected on the [project webpage](#).

How to stay up to date

All further documents submitted in the course of the examination will also be published under the [documents tab](#) of the project webpage.

You can also sign up to get [email updates](#).

If you have any questions about the process, examination events or how to access the documents, you can email EastParkEnergyProject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or contact us on 0303 444 5000.

The Examination Library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [Examination Library](#) (EL) which is accessible by clicking the blue button under the [documents tab](#). The EL is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The EL records and provides a hyperlink to:

- each application document
- each representation made to the examination
- each procedural decision made by the Examining Authority

Each document is given a unique reference which will be fixed for the duration of the examination. **Please quote the unique reference number from the EL when referring to any examination documents in any future submissions that you make.**

Information about the 'Have your say' page

The ['Have your say' page](#) is available on the [project webpage](#).

You will need to enter your unique reference number ('Your ref' found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate). If you are making a submission on behalf of another person or organisation, and do not have your own unique reference number, then you should enter the unique reference number of the person or organisation you are representing. If you are not a registered interested party then it is at the discretion of the Examining Authority whether or not your submission is accepted.

Submissions will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable following the close of the relevant deadline. For further information about publishing submissions please view our [Privacy Notice](#).

You will be able to submit a document (upload file), make a text representation or both. It is possible to upload multiple files for each individual submission item. Electronic attachments should be clearly labelled with the subject title and not exceed 50MB.

Submissions **must not include hyperlinks** to documents/ evidence hosted on a third party website (for example technical reports, media articles and so on). See The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: Advice for submitting representations or comments](#) for important information about making written submissions. All submissions must be made in a format that can be viewed in full on the Find a National Infrastructure Project website. Any submissions that exceed 1500 words should also be accompanied by a summary; this summary should not exceed 10% of the original text.

You should select the relevant deadline for your submission and then, on the next webpage, select the appropriate submission item as described in the examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter. Please ensure you make a separate submission for each submission item and **do not duplicate your submission**. If you consider that your submission does not fit the description of any of the submission items then please select the submission item 'Other' and ensure that it is titled appropriately.

If you experience any issues when using the ['Have your say' page](#) please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter and they will assist.