



Hearing Transcript

Project:	East Park Energy
Hearing:	Preliminary Meeting
Date:	17 March 2026

Please note: This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

It is not a verbatim text of what was said at the above hearing. The content was produced using artificial intelligence voice to text software. It may, therefore, include errors and should be assumed to be unedited.

The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

AUDIO_EASTPARK_PM_SESSION1_170326

Tue, Mar 17, 2026 11:01AM • 44:35

00:05

Re meeting for East Park energy at land northwest of st EDS is now open. Thank you all for joining us today. Please. Could a member of the case team confirm that I can be heard clearly and that the live streaming and recording of the event have started. Thank you. My name is Graham sword, and I have been appointed by the Secretary of State as the examining authority to examine the application by bssl cams, bed one limited for an order granting development consent for this project. I am supported by the planning and inspectorates case team. They are managed today by Deborah Allen, who is with us. Today's meeting is a hybrid event, meaning that some of you are present with us here in the room, and some of you are joining us. Using Microsoft Teams, I intend to make sure that you will be given a fair opportunity to participate. However you decide to attend today, I will now deal with a few housekeeping matters. Can everyone please set all devices, smart watches and phones to Silent to avoid disrupting the meeting. Please keep microphones muted until I invite you to speak. For those of you in the room, I understand that no fire alarm test is planned for today. However, should an alarm sound? Then please leave using fire exits, one of which is to the rear of this room, across the hall. Please go to the fire assembly points to the edge of car parking area, which have green signs identifying them. Should you require the toilet? Then there is signage directly to you to them in the Mayan Hall outside of this room, a recording of today's meeting will be made available on the east Park energy web page of the national infrastructure planning website. As soon as possible after the meeting has finished, please contact a member of the case team. If you don't know how to find the project page a link to the planning inspectorates privacy. Privacy notice was provided in my rule six, letter dated the 17th of February 2026 I assume that everybody here today has familiarized themselves with this document which establishes how the personal data of our customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. Please speak to Deborah Allen if you have any questions about this purpose of this morning's meeting is to focus on how I propose to examine this application, and I will only be inviting discussion about the procedural aspects of this examination and the timetable for the examination. I must stress that this meeting is not an opportunity to give your views about whether you like the application or not. Those can only be considered once the examination begins, which is after the close of this meeting, the first open floor hearing later today will provide an early opportunity for you to express your views. There will be several other opportunities for you to give your views about what you like and don't like about the application over the following months of the examination. Please remember that the principal means of examining the application is through the written process. And I would ask anybody that is speaking today to follow up their discussion in writing. Please, following the close of the meeting, I will now ask certain parties to introduce themselves when I invite you to speak, please ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone and please state your name and who you are representing each time you speak. Please remember to unmute your microphone when you speak, and if you are taking part using Microsoft Teams and are comfortable to do so, please switch on your camera when I invite you to speak. Please switch them off again when I move to the next speaker, if you are in the room, but not at a table with a microphone there, there is a roving mic, so please wait for one of these to be taken to you before you speak. If there are several people representing the party, please, could just the lead speaker introduce themselves for now, and the other representatives that are invited to speak later, should please introduce themselves at the time? So could I ask who is the lead speaker for the applicant?

05:19

Good morning, sir. My name is Julian Boswell. I'm a solicitor and partner with Burges salmon LLP, representing the applicant. You've just said not to ask my two colleagues to introduce themselves, but I have a representative of the client, Rockwell energy and access, who are the lead consultants on our team.

05:38

Okay, thank you. Bedford Borough Council, good

05:43

morning, Inspector. My name is Peter Day case. I'm the lead officer for Bedford Borough Council, supported by my colleague, Greg Logan, sitting next me, thank you.

05:54

Thank you. Cambridge accountant council.

05:58

So I'm Daniel Stedman Jones of Council, and I'm here acting on behalf of Cambridgeshire county council. I'm also instructed by Bedford, Bedford Borough Council and by huntingdonshire District Council. And Lisa Miss Peyton here is, is here on behalf of Huntington. Sheer appreciate. Thanks your earlier comments, but thank you

06:26

so just introduce attending the District Council. Are there any other local authorities present? Any statutory consultees present? Okay? So I am aware that several interested parties registered to speak at this meeting. I need to re emphasize that this meeting is only for procedural matters and not to debate the merits of a proposed development. Again, I have to re emphasize if you wish to discuss the merits, then there will be opportunities at the open floor hearing or issue specific hearings scheduled within the proposed timetable. I acknowledge Jason Newell wishes to speak on Item four, and councilor Sharon G Sirat wishes to speak on the timetable following people have also registered to speak on topics or have not specified a subject there is to speak on. These people are Richard, for instance, Richard Fuller, MP for North Bedfordshire. Emma glass, Helen Stark, Tim price, Tricia price, Simon Beverly, Sean Woodward, Elaine Wheeler, Alan Wheeler, Oliver, Creasy and Jonathan Hickman, unless you want to comment on the procedural aspects of the proposed examination, I would ask you to refrain from speaking until the open floor hearing or issue specific hearings. Is there anybody else taking part using Microsoft teams who may wish to speak this morning,

08:28

take that as a no. So that's all for the introductions. For now, if you haven't introduced yourself yet, then there will be an opportunity to do so later, when I invite you to speak, there will be opportunities to raise matters relevant to this meeting later, when I invite you to speak at the relevant point on the agenda, I will follow the agenda that was published on the 17th of February 2026 if I could ask the applicant to Share a copy of the agenda on The screen. Now, if that's possible, please do

09:28

whilst the applicant tries to sort that, does anybody in the room have a question about the agenda or the arrangements for this meeting? Does anybody taking part using Microsoft Teams have a question about the agenda or the arrangements for this meeting? Thank you. Thank you for displaying the agenda that concludes a greater name, but. On agenda item number one, moving on to agenda item two, to streamline the running of this event, annexes A and B of my rule six letter provide an introduction to the preliminary meeting and the examination process, explaining how it will be

conducted and how you can participate. For expediency, I'm assuming that everyone has read this, and therefore I don't propose to spend time reading it out now, although I would just like to reinforce some key parts about the examination process, the Planning Act 2008 sets a statutory timescale for the examination, for the determination of the application. This includes six months in which the examination must be completed within, followed by three months in which I must complete my report with my findings, conclusions and recommendations to the secretary of state, and then three months for the Secretary of State to reach a final decision on the application, my examination will be in accordance with the Planning Act 2008 and I will consider one whether the application complies with relevant legislation, policy and guidance, two powers sought by the applicant, including in relation to land rights. Three, how the proposed development would be controlled. Four, the balance of benefits and dis benefits of the proposed development and finally, five, whether development consent should be granted. During the examination, I will gather evidence needed to help me consider these matters, I will then submit a report with my recommendations to the relevant Secretary of State, who will be the decision maker and whether consents should be granted. The examination is an inquisitorial process in which I, as examining authority, takes the lead in establishing what is important and relevant to the decision that the Secretary of State needs to take. I am looking for evidence that this is relevant and important to the decision, and will test that evidence to see how robust it is. My recommendation to the Secretary of State will be based on facts and sound evidence rather than speculation or opinion. It will not be based on a public vote for or against the application. I do want to hear from you please, including if you have any local or specialist knowledge that may be important and relevant to my recommendation in subsequent hearings, I will read and consider every submission. When I make my recommendation to the Secretary of State, therefore, there is no need to repeat anything from your previous submissions, and there is no need to repeat anything from other people's submissions. As I said earlier, the primary method of examining this application is through the written process. While there is provision for holding certain types of hearing, it is the written process that I will concentrate on to get that information about the application. So please follow up with what you see in writing. You do have the opportunity to set out your case and the evidence to support it in your relevant representation, and there will be opportunities to add to that during the examination. You will also have the opportunity to comment on the submissions made by others any document that you would like to be considered must be formally lodged as part of the examination process. Material that is accepted into the examination will be published on the project website so that is available for all to see. That completes agenda item two,

14:06

moving on to agenda. Item three, oral representations from interested parties and the examination process. I'm shortly going to invite submissions about the way in which I propose to examine this application, if you have anything to say about the initial assessment of principal issues, and please raise this later in a giant Agenda Item four, if you have anything to say about The draft timetable, please raise this later under agenda item five. So please identify yourself when you speak, and please direct all comments and questions and answers to me rather than anybody else. So can I ask? Does anybody in the room have a question? Question or comment about the examination process.

15:08

Does anybody taking part using Microsoft Teams have a comment or question about the examination process?

15:22

A complete agenda item three, moving on to the initial assessment of principal issues, it would be useful have Annex C of the rule six letter on screen for this item. Please do

15:45

so just occurred to me that something I was going to raise under AOB might you might regard as being under item three. It was just so, if it's okay, could I raise it now? So going back to item three, Julian Boswell for the applicant was just to be double, doubly certain that the Indicative agendas that were included in the rule six letter have now been completely superseded by the agendas that have now been issued for the The hearings tomorrow.

16:17

Yes, the agendas were supplemented to the two last week, I believe, and they were.

16:26

I'm just conscious that there are differences between the two, and I just want to be certain that we're working off what came out as what we understand to be the formal agendas, because in the rule six letter, it uses the word indicative agendas to help people understand whether they were likely to want to attend.

16:44

So I did supplement some minimal information to the agendas last week, which I believed these were posted.

16:57

Yes, no, we've got the agendas. I suppose I'm slightly struggling with the word supplement, because that implies that it's adding to what was there before. Whereas, for example, there's reference in the Indicative agenda to EIA and the Rochdale envelope, which doesn't then translate across into the final agenda for the DCO hearing. And we are assuming, unless you say otherwise, that we're that we're working to the final agendas.

17:23

Yes, final agenda. Thank you.

17:37

So this list the will provide a framework issues for the examination going forwards, a load does not preclude us from amending the list by the removal or addition of issues at a later stage in the process. It is in alphabetical order, so it does not denote any hierarchy of importance. So

18:05

I acknowledge that both the British Horse Society and Bedford Borough Council have suggested that public rights of way should be examined as an issue of its own. To add my intention was to examine it as part of transport and as part of landscape and visual items. So at this stage, I'd like to invite anybody from Bedford Borough Council or the British Horse Society to add to their previous representation on this

18:40

sorry, sir, specifically in relation to that issue. Yeah, I don't think we need to add anything at this stage. Thank you.

18:50

Thank you. Anybody from the British Horse Society Present? Okay, I'll move on. Can I ask the applicants for their comments please on the issues?

19:08

Do you mean on that specific request? Yes, I guess our position is neutral. We would have no objection. If you want to treat it as a as a principal issue, but appreciate that you've got to find a way of examining it that you find most efficient. And I guess, from our perspective, the main thing is that the issues are covered. They're obviously legitimate issues. It's just a case of how you find it most efficient to cover them.

19:39

Thank you for that. Does anyone else have anything to add on this matter at this stage? Sorry.

19:50

Sorry. Is this now in relation generally to the issues or that particular issue,

19:57

or the principal assess? Moment of principle issues in its entirety.

20:03

So there is, there is just one issue to from the host authorities perspective. It may be that it's encompassed in your list, although I think we would suggest that it ought to be explicit, and that is under traffic, construction and decommissioning. I think all three host authorities, position is that there needs to be consideration not just of construction and decommissioning, but also operational replacement, if I can put it that way, which obviously encompasses different kinds of interventions at different moments, but in general, as a separate stage, or a middle a middle stage, if I can put it that way, between construction and decommissioning, so the operational phase when replacement works are being undertaken, and the impacts thereof,

21:00

we can like to comment on that, Julian Boswell.

21:05

Julian Boswell, for the applicant, I think our I don't think it's me causing the feedback. I think our response is the same as with the other issue, namely, that we accept that's a legitimate issue if, if you decide to sort of elevate it or supplement it to what's there already in terms of the principal issues list, that's fine, and it's just a case of how it's most efficiently considered in the examination. Yeah.

21:36

Thank you, Mr. Buzzello, so if nobody has anything else, sorry.

21:49

Thank you, Sir Richard Fuller, Member of Parliament for North Bedfordshire, on the list of principal issues, the issue of cumulative impact appears under traffic construction and decommissioning. But my observation would be that there are matters to do with cumulative impact which are far broader than those that relate to traffic. Is it possible to have consideration of cumulative impacts in the broader area, rather than just under traffic,

22:20

the wider cumulative impact across all topic areas and all projects will be considered as part of the the examination process, As a principal issue, I can look at embellishing the list so that it reflects that better.

22:48

Thank you, sir. Richard Fuller, MP North beverton, I think that would be wise, because there are a very significant number of nationally significant infrastructure projects that pertain both directly to this area and to people who live in Bedfordshire. And I think, to provide the scope for commentaries about that, it would be helpful, for example, also sorry for an item on its own, and also for yourself, sir, that you may wish to have after hearing further evidence, the opportunity to talk to those who are in charge of those other projects, so that you can have independent observation about their impact on the proposal four of us before you today. Thank you.

23:37

But didn't like to add anything goes, It's same as before

23:42

June and Boswell for the applicant, I think we've taken obviously cumulative issues are a standard issue relevant, potentially to all topics. The environmental statement has addressed them in the usual way, and it's certainly been our assumption that they would be raised by you as you saw fit on any given topic,

24:02

okay, thank you. Well, moving on. Is there any other comments?

24:14

Get a microphone. Microphone be brought across to this gentleman, please.

24:30

Thank you, sir, apologies. My name is Andy pike. I'm nominated spokesperson on behalf of stop East Park energy. We submitted a list of around 24 questions to the preliminary meeting by the deadline of the 10th of March, I think it was and I was just wondering whether you'd had an opportunity to look at that list of questions and how they pertained to the list of issues you have here on for examination. Thank you. Thank. Yeah, it

25:01

will form part of my assessment, moving towards the issue of the rule a letter following this meeting,

25:17

anyone else who wishes to comment,

25:26

it. Then I'll move on to Agenda Item five, which is the examination timetable. The draft timetable is set out in Appendix C of my little six letter. Could I ask that the timetable is shared on screen? Please? Thank you. I will ask some procedural questions as I go through the examination timetable, otherwise, I will consider your submissions and questions on the timetable later, under the next agenda item, and acknowledge the applicant has submitted a number of comments and suggestions at deadline a but I will now Take the items of the draft timetable in turn. So item one, these dates are passed. Strictly speaking. These are not part of the examination, but included to give you a complete, complete set of key dates following my rule six letter. Item two is this meeting. Item three is the open floor hearing scheduled for later today. Item four and five are the issue specific hearings scheduled for tomorrow.

26:53

On item five thought it would be useful if the applicant could present some information and a visual or fly through method aid a better understanding that have the proposed development construction traffic wise would be routed and managed through the construction phase. I understand that this has not been prepared, but would ask if this is something that could be prepared for submission for later on in the examination of the forthcoming deadline the applicant could advise please.

27:33

Tom rose played on behalf of the applicant, so we have prepared a single figure which shows the construction access routes from the A one into the site as a single figure that could be shared tomorrow in plan view, which will then subsequently submit to Deadline One. But we can, we can present that tomorrow. Okay,

28:09

item six is when I will upgrade the draft timetable following this meeting, and this will be published in the rule eight letter as soon as I can. I now have a procedural question for the applicant. I do not intend to publish my first written questions until May 2026 and they will not repeat all of the matters raised by parties in their relevant representations or additional submissions. Please, could the applicant advise whether it tends to provide written responses to submissions from all parties, and it will continue to do that up until the end of the examination.

28:54

Julian Boswell, for the applicant, obviously, there are a substantial number of relevant reps. Is that what you're getting at, are we going to reply to each of them individually, or is it a different

29:06

question, not necessarily individually, but where there's common themes?

29:12

Our intention, and we're actively doing it already, is to adopt a thematic approach so that it can be dealt with proportionately. Otherwise, I think it would overwhelm the process. Okay, thank you.

29:33

So item seven in the timetable is the first examination deadline, just to stress it is particularly important that is a particularly important deadline that includes some of the key written submissions for the examination. As I said earlier, there's no need for you to read anything from previous submissions and your written representation. Presentations or repeat points made by others, but I would just emphasize please ensure that submissions are submitted on time, because any submitted following the deadline may not be accepted, so it is essential to adhere to the timetable for the smooth learning of the examination. Item eight is the deadline by which comments must be made on written representations and local impact reports. Item nine is when I will publish my first written questions. Item 10 is a deadline which responses to my questions will need had been received. Item 11 is when I will publish the details of the accommodate site inspections if they are needed. Item 12 is when dates are reserved for the accompanied site inspections and any further hearings needed, the detailed agendas for any hearings to be held will issued prior to the hearings, and they will be sufficiently detailed to allow parties to complete their final preparations. If the hearings are not required, they will be canceled at least a week before their timetable. Date, item 13 is when I will issue the report on implications for European sites, if one was needed and if needed my second set of written questions. Item 15, the receipt of updated statement of common grounds comments on the report on the implications for up insights and updates from the applicant. Item 16 should be self explanatory. Item 17 requires submission of the final documents listed, and item 18 identifies the data by which I expect the examination to be completed as

I have scheduled a five month examination period. I do not expect to close the examination earlier than this, but it may be necessary to extend the period by up to one month. Timetable is not set in stone, and I may amend it during the examination. If I do this, I will write all interested parties, any submissions made to the planning Inspectorate after the examination has closed, will be forwarded to the Secretary of State to deal with may well not see them when I'm writing my report. If you want to send in anything for me to consider, and I strongly encourage you to do so as soon as possible. That completes agenda item five. So moving to agenda item six, I will invite submissions about the examination timetable as before, please identify yourself when you speak. Please direct all comments and questions to me rather than anybody else. Before I do this, I just want to ask one question of the applicant, and that is, do you have any plans to submit any change requests to the application which would likely impact on the examination timetable.

33:32

Julian Boswell, for the applicant, we're not preparing a formal change request, and we don't expect that to change as things stand at the moment. I We're not expecting one in the future as things stand at the moment.

33:44

Okay, thank you for clarification.

33:56

I do acknowledge that the applicant has submitted a number of comments and suggestions in respect of the examination timetables and other matters in its response to procedural deadline a on the 10th of March 2026 I'd like to take this opportunity to ask the applicant if they have anything we'll add to or to elaborate on their submission.

34:19

Julian Boswell, for the applicant, I don't think there's anything to add. I guess the single biggest point, as you would have gathered, is for us, is the gap between deadline one and deadline two. We've obviously seen what the local authorities have submitted, and in the end, you have to make your decision in the light of the competing requests. We're conscious that if deadline one and deadline to get moved back, then there is a cascade effect, and it puts pressure on, in particular, your first written questions. So other than that, whilst I could reiterate everything that's in the letter, you've obviously read it and happy to leave it at the.

35:00

That Okay, thank you moving to the local authorities.

35:08

Daniel Steadman, James, on behalf of the host authorities, so you will have seen in the correspondence the responses of the host authorities last week to procedural deadline a so I won't repeat those. The the main concern there being the deadlines, the first two deadlines, in addition to that, it's it wasn't possible to include them in those letters, although I think Bedfordshire did include the request for the hearing, but just wanted to make a couple of comments on possible hearing topics that the host authorities would seek in in June, in the week that you have set aside in the timetable, the host authorities consider that there ought to be hearings on three potential topics. The first is highways, and this is in addition to tomorrow's hearing on construction traffic. So the first is highways, the second is public rights of way, and the third is mitigation, primarily ecological or biodiversity mitigation. So those are the three topic areas at this stage that the host authorities would be would be looking to have here

hearings on and then the second, the second point in relation to hearings is that the host authorities would support a second open floor hearing as well.

36:47

Could I just clarify in terms of highways? Is that during construction, the impact during construction operation, decommissioning, or just

37:02

so it goes to that point I've already mentioned earlier, under the issues. I think there are issues in relation to highways, in relation to all both those phases, construction and decommissioning, but also this intermediate issue around replacement, replacement phases. Okay, thank you. Thank you.

37:33

Anybody else in the room have a comment on the examination timetable? Place? Yes.

37:48

Thank you. Councilor, Sharon Duncan, Sarah representing why Boston Ward, can the examining authority please confirm how the timetable will accommodate emerging issues or cumulative impacts with other developments, particularly if new evidence arises during the examination period, please. Thank you.

38:12

So if there is new evidence submitted during the examination that will be considered as part of the whole process, and will inform my eventual recommendation to the Secretary of State in terms of supplementary evidence, I would welcome the submission of any evidence by interested parties that is relevant to the examination. Does that answer your query? To

38:53

Sarah, why Boston ward? I was just wondering if, during that procedure, will then any residents or any parties who may have a an interest in that particular issue brought up, would they be given the opportunity to then raise their concerns? I think that's why I'm more concerned about whether they'd have the time to do that. Thank you.

39:23

Are these residents, residents that have not registered as interested parties,

39:34

both, yes, so people who have registered and people who also haven't registered, so they may well have thought they may not have been impacted, but then new evidence may arise, stating that they now will be impacted. How would that be dealt with within the timetable? Thank you.

39:52

Okay, yeah. So if they are interested parties, then I would accept the information. If they are not. What then it would be my discretion.

40:10

Richard fuller MP,

40:12

thank you, sir. Richard fuller MP, couple minor practical questions to you, sir, really, I note that you had mentioned that the seventh of April is a hard deadline. I was just wondering, from the planning inspectors point of view, the seventh of April is awfully close to the public holiday weekend of the Easter holidays. I was just wondering about general consideration of dates around public holidays. And secondly, a very large number of my constituents have found that when they post or mail things in or receive post only comes now, far less frequently than in the in the past. And although the planning Inspectorate does encourage people to send by email, which I think is a good thing, obviously some people will still want to post in things. And what change has the planning Inspectorate made in consideration the fact they're now sometimes just one or two deliveries by the by the Royal Mail, rather than daily deliveries,

41:06

something I'm not able to answer at the moment, but the case team will take that away and respond to you accordingly.

41:19

Should Vincent resident just to say that really appreciate all the process that you outlined, and that's clear, but also to say for general members of the public, this is all quite intimidating and harder to follow, and while the applicant has his consultant and his planning lawyers, and this is their daily bread and butter. Lots of people who live in the villages that are affected, they are unable to attend because they're they're working the moment, or there's just this is a lot to do with so I just ask you to be cognisant of that. Give us latitude where you can, you can to people for whom this process is quite an intimidating thing to try and follow.

42:07

Okay, yeah. I mean, it is a long examination process, so hopefully that will give everybody the opportunity to participate. As I said, principal means of examining this project is through the written process, so hopefully nobody feels the need to be intimidated by submitting written submissions. But thank you for your comments.

42:38

Does anybody else have any comments on the examination timetable? Would the applicant like to add anything following those comments?

42:54

Julian Boswell for the applicant, obviously, we've heard the points that Mr. Steadman Jones has made about hearing topics, and in the end, that's just a matter for you, so we don't want to comment either way on that, and no other comments to make.

43:10

Yes, thank you. So I will move on to Agenda Item seven. Any other matters? Does anybody in the room have anything else to raise within the scope of this preliminary meeting? Does anybody taking part using Microsoft Teams have anything else to raise within the scope of this preliminary meeting?

43:44

So as soon as I can after this meeting, I will send out the rule eight letter to confirm the examination timetable and any other procedural decisions that may be necessary following this meeting, this letter, the notes of this meeting, and the recording will be all published on our project, Web Project Web page for everybody to see. I believe I have now covered all items on the agenda. Thank you all for your

assistance during this meeting. I may see some of you again at the opening floor hearing later this afternoon, this preliminary meeting is now closed and the examination has now begun. Thank you.