



Meeting note

Project name	East Park Energy Project
File reference	EN010141
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	11 July 2022
Meeting with	RNA Energy
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Inception Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial reasons).

Project Overview and Objectives

The East Park Energy Project is a proposed Solar Farm by project developer Ignis and project sponsor RNA Energy. Burges Salmon are employed as the legal advisors for the project with AXIS as the planning and environmental lead.

The project aims to export 400MW to the National Grid, wholly achieved through photovoltaic (PV) solar generation, with a further approximately 100MW imported to a Battery Energy Storage System. The Applicant highlighted their intention to minimise as many adverse effects of the project as possible, maximise biodiversity gains and promote community benefits.

The Inspectorate queried the total capacity of the project. The Applicant advised between the solar panels and the battery storage it will be approximately 500MW.

The Applicant is seeking option agreements for land that comprises some 800 hectares, owned by six different landowners. The site itself is planned to cover a smaller area within this envelope. The Applicant is seeking voluntary agreements with these parties but may reserve Compulsory Acquisition powers in the draft Development Consent Order as a fallback if negotiations are not successful.



The Applicant stated that Bedford Borough Council are the Unitary Authority for the project while Huntingdon District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council are two tier authorities.

The Applicant is aiming to scope out the grid connection route options, to then present one grid option at scoping. However, this may not be possible and the Applicant may submit its scoping request with multiple grid options.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Applicant provided an overview of environmental constraints at the site and discussed early survey work, noting that traffic assessments and early assessment work on drainage are currently underway. Breeding bird surveys are also being carried out. The Applicant plans to conduct preliminary design and ecological surveys throughout the Summer of 2022.

It was noted that whilst the site is not a designated landscape, and there are limited landscape designations nearby, there are a number of heritage assets (listed buildings) in close proximity to the site for which an assessment of settings effects will be required.

The Inspectorate queried whether a sequential approach had been adopted to use of agricultural land. The Applicant stated that land had been selected on the basis of lowest agricultural land classification but that Grade 2 land predominates in the area, making use of some Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land unavoidable.

The Inspectorate queried working widths for cable corridors, which the Applicant noted would be between 40-60m.

The Inspectorate queried the potential for interactions with other major schemes including East West Rail. The Applicant advised that at the time of the inception meeting there had been no interaction with the promoters of the East West Rail project.

The Inspectorate queried if there are any other large scale solar projects in the area of the East Park Solar Project. The Applicant advised that they were not aware of any.

The Applicant explained that a Rochdale Envelope approach would be taken in the assessment to provide future flexibility for the proposed development. The Inspectorate highlighted Advice Note Nine, which provides Information on the Rochdale Envelope approach, and can be found on the National Infrastructure website [here](#).

Programme

Non-statutory consultation will commence in Q4 2022. A Scoping request is proposed to be submitted between September 2022 and December 2022.

The Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) will take the form of a draft ES and the Applicant expects to prepare the PEIR between January 2023 and May 2023.



Statutory consultation is planned for Q2 2023 ahead of a planned submission date of Q4 2023.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that due to the number of projects likely to come forward in the area, there was potential to cause resource capacity issues for relevant statutory bodies. To ameliorate it was recommended that a clear timetable of activities and advance notice of any activities requiring input should be provided to these organisations.

POST MEETING NOTE: *The Applicant contacted the Inspectorate in October 2022 to advise that there had been delays in the programme and that the scoping request would now likely be submitted in early 2023.*

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant is to confirm with the Planning Inspectorate when the project will be made public so the Inception meeting note can be published.