



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Botley West Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) – Part 1
Date:	15 May 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:04:11 - 00:00:36:00

By the clock in the room over there. It is now 10:00, and I'm officially opening this issue specific hearing into the application for an order for development consent for the Botley West Solar Farm project. We will introduce ourselves in just a few moments, but before we do that, please bear with me while I did a few housekeeping matters. First of all, can everyone hear me clearly? Excellent. Good. And can I confirm that the recordings on the live stream have started? Thank you very much.

00:00:36:23 - 00:01:07:13

There are no fire alarm drills today, so if it sounds, it's the real thing. Please exit for the doors behind you and then congregate into the car park. Or if the fire is in that direction, there are exits behind us here and again around the building and into the car park. All the toilets and facilities are just beyond those doors behind you there. So on to introductions. I'm Mr. Wallace. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State as the lead member of the examining authority to carry out an examination of the application.

00:01:07:20 - 00:01:10:11

I'll hand over to other members to introduce themselves.

00:01:11:14 - 00:01:18:05

Good morning. My name is Mr. Shaikh. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of a panel of inspectors to examine this application.

00:01:19:14 - 00:01:30:11

Good morning. My name is Miss Cassini, and I've also been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of a panel of inspectors to examine this application. I'll also be noting hearing actions today.

00:01:33:08 - 00:01:40:15

Good morning. My name is Mrs. Metcalf. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of this panel of inspectors to examine this application.

00:01:41:19 - 00:02:14:08

I can confirm that all the panel members have made a declaration of interests responding to the planning Inspectorate's conflict of interest policy, and I can confirm that none of us have any declared interest in relation to our appointment. Also present today are members of the case team, the case manager, Mr. Ray wood. And he is supported at the venue by Miss Hannigan and Mr. Stevens and online. Miss. Miss core is running the show there. If you have any questions or concerns about today's event, please contact a member of the case team.

00:02:14:20 - 00:02:46:12

The audiovisual service today is provided by CVS. So that's the team on our end. Uh, turning to the attendees today. Welcome to everyone. Be you in person, be virtually or watching the live stream. Thank you for your attendance. Um, I'm aware that there's a number of us today, and a number of individuals and organisations have, uh, requested to speak during the course of the event. I will at this time only require introductions from those, uh, who the agenda.

00:02:46:18 - 00:03:12:20

We published the agenda and individuals and organisations were named within that. I only asked for introductions from those parties at this time. If during the course of discussion as we go through today, other people feel compelled that they want to contribute to the discussion on a particular item. Then all I'd ask is that you identify yourself and any organization you represent at that time. So to begin with, who is who? On behalf of the applicant, please.

00:03:14:12 - 00:03:30:14

Morning, sir. My name is Toby Yates. I'm an associate at Pinsent Masons Legal Advisors on behalf of the applicant. I'm joined by various members of the applicant team, some online and some in person. I don't propose to introduce them all at this stage, but I'll draw on them as someone appropriate.

00:03:31:17 - 00:03:39:08

That makes sense. Thank you very much. Okay, so moving on then. Who is here for Oxfordshire County Council, please.

00:03:40:21 - 00:03:49:21

Hey. Good morning. My name is George Gurney. I'm here to represent Oxfordshire County Council, and I'm supported by three of my officers who will introduce themselves as they're needed throughout the day.

00:03:50:02 - 00:03:55:22

So thank you very much. And for West Oxfordshire District Council.

00:03:57:27 - 00:04:03:06

Sir Andrew Thomson and planning policy manager, West Oxfordshire District Council. Thank you.

00:04:03:20 - 00:04:07:08

Thank you very much. Welcome. For Cherwell District Council.

00:04:09:00 - 00:04:13:22

Good morning. I'm Suzanne Taylor representing chair or district council. Thank you.

00:04:14:10 - 00:04:17:22

Thank you. And for the Vale of Whitehorse district Council.

00:04:18:26 - 00:04:27:15

Good morning. Stuart Walker representing the Vale of Whitehorse District Council. I have a colleague with me to introduce himself if he's required. Later. Thank you.

00:04:27:24 - 00:04:40:00

Thank you very much. Um, also on the agenda, we had the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. I understand they're not in attendance at the moment. Uh, is there anyone from Historic England?

00:04:41:29 - 00:04:42:14

Uh.

00:04:42:16 - 00:04:46:08

Hello, sir. Good morning. Uh, my name is Andrew Scott, and I'm representing Historic England.

00:04:46:18 - 00:05:06:14

Excellent. Thank you very much. And welcome. Thank you for that. Um, we've had, um, apologies from National Grid Electricity Transmission plc, and they've asked to be kept updated as to the events that happen, uh, today. Um, the Oxford Aviation Services Limited. I see a hand raised.

00:05:16:19 - 00:05:21:09

Uh, like it is also here. He's just out of the room at this point in time.

00:05:21:21 - 00:05:31:05

Okay. Thank you very much. If you wanted to. So I know there's, uh, some desks free at the front there. When the agenda item comes up, you may wish to move forward.

00:05:31:07 - 00:05:33:02

We thought we would move forward for the agenda item.

00:05:33:06 - 00:05:39:13

Excellent. Thank you very much. Um, and last but no means least named on the agenda is RAF Brize Norton.

00:05:44:08 - 00:05:47:24

Okay. Fair enough. Thank you very much for that.

00:05:51:00 - 00:06:08:17

In which case, um, as I've said, if anyone does feel compelled to contribute to the discussion during the course of proceedings today, uh, please raise your hand either virtually or in the room, and we'll

aim to accommodate you at an appropriate time. Uh, I'll now hand over to Mr. Shaikh to take you through agenda item two.

00:06:09:26 - 00:06:42:29

Thank you, Mr. Wallace. Moving on to our agenda item two. I will set out the procedure for running the hearing today. I appreciate the attendees who are here for the open floor hearings will have heard this before, but I ask that everyone bear with me. I must repeat this for the benefit of those who have just joined us for the first time today and for the recordings, but just a few words to acknowledge the format of the event today. This is a blended event. It allows attendee attendance, both in person and virtually through Microsoft Teams. It is expected that both blended and fully virtual events will form part of the planning Inspector's future operating model.

00:06:43:23 - 00:07:15:01

We, the Examining authority, are attending this meeting from the King Center in Oxford, as are several of the attendees. For those attending virtually, please be rest assured that you have our full attention at all times, even if we are at times not looking at the camera to avoid visual and noise distractions. Please keep your cameras and microphones off unless we invite you to speak. Second, the proposed timings for the day. We will seek to have lunch at approximately 1 p.m. as will, as well as comfort breaks at appropriate times during the course of the meeting.

00:07:15:19 - 00:07:44:23

We aim to finish around 5:30 p.m., but we will keep this under review. These timings are approximate. If you are joining for a particular agenda item, we recommend you keep in touch with a case team who can tell if the sessions are running a few minutes late, or ahead of the indicated timings for virtual attendees. If you do decide to leave the meeting during the break, then you can rejoin using the same link provided in your invitation email. If you are watching the live stream, then please refresh your browser to resume each subsequent session.

00:07:47:06 - 00:08:21:18

I would like to make you aware that this event is being both live streamed and recorded. The digital recordings that we make are retained and published. They form a public record that can contain your personal information and to which the General Data Protection Regulations GDPR applies. This planning Inspector's practice is to retain and publish recordings for a period of five years from the Secretary of State's decision on the Development Consent Order. Consequently, if you participate in today's issue specific hearing, it is important that you understand that you will be recorded and that you therefore consent to the retention and publication of the digital recording.

00:08:22:18 - 00:08:59:15

It is very unlikely that the examining authority will ask you to put sensitive personal information into the public domain. Indeed, we would encourage you to not do to do that. However, if for some reason you feel that it's necessary for you to refer to sensitive personal information, we would encourage you to speak to the case team in the first instance. We would then explore with you whether the information could be provided in a written format which might be redacted before being published. Finally, the purpose of the hearing is about the substantive matter of today's issue. Specific hearing itself, and the agenda for the hearing was published on the Planning Inspectorate National Infrastructure web page on the 30th of April this year.

00:09:00:03 - 00:09:25:06

Those are the only matters for discussion today. To be clear, it is not intended to discuss all matters relating to the Development Consent Order. Some matters will be pursued through rounds of written questions at future hearings. If there are any questions on this agenda item, please raise your hand. Okay. Not seeing any hands. That's it from me for now. Let us now tend to agenda item three. I will now hand over back to Mr. Wallace.

00:09:26:05 - 00:09:57:27

Thank you very much. So with agenda item three we look at item three which is to talk about the Rochdale envelope flexibility and the environmental statement. I'll come to the applicant first and say that within the order limits. Land has been set aside for a new National Grid substation, but National Grid and their relevant rep are 0760 stated that they have a preferred site that lies outside of the order limits. Could you give me an update on the latest position, please?

00:10:00:25 - 00:10:36:04

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant, the position from the applicant's point of view remains as set out in the explanatory memorandum as 011. And that is until the certainty provided from National Grid that they are able to deliver the substation on land within its own control. Then, in order to ensure deliverability of this project, we need to maintain consent powers for the new National Grid Substation within the Draft Development Consent Order, which references work number two at schedule one of the draft DCO as 009.

00:10:37:13 - 00:10:44:12

Okay. Um, so on that basis, has National Grid made an application yet for the new substation?

00:10:46:15 - 00:10:53:18

Toby, I'll have the applicant. I don't want to put words in national grids. Now, I think they'll be better to confirm that. But as far as I understand, no, they haven't.

00:10:54:15 - 00:11:01:01

And presumably they haven't given you a timetable as to when that's likely to happen.

00:11:01:27 - 00:11:02:15

No, sir.

00:11:03:03 - 00:11:25:25

Okay. Um, I imagine the next question will be deferred to National Grid as well, but I'm going to ask it anyway. Do you understand their application to be a section 78 amplification under the normal planning regime, or is it part of wider grid reinforcement works and therefore a development consent order in its own right, if they were doing it outside your order limits?

00:11:27:11 - 00:11:29:00

That's on the national grid, I'm afraid, sir.

00:11:31:13 - 00:11:32:05

Okay.

00:11:37:09 - 00:11:56:13

Um. Obviously. National grid. It's a worst kept secret, if you like. They're very busy in the news recently. A lot of, uh, work's going on, um, for them around the country. Have they given you any idea as sort of a sense of priority for your project and providing a grid connection in this area?

00:12:00:04 - 00:12:12:26

The applicants engage a national grid, if that helps. We've been in discussions over a statement of common ground, and a draft is in circulation at the moment. But to answer a specific question, we haven't had any indication from National Grid as to a priority.

00:12:23:12 - 00:12:37:00

I'll continue. I'm told that that, um, in terms of the need for regime, if that's where you're going. We do have a confirmed grid connection. So whilst we've not been given a priority as compared against other projects, we have got a point of connection and a connection agreement in place.

00:12:38:01 - 00:13:15:16

So let's just turn quickly to that grid connection. Um, in your grid connection statement, which is app 019. It states that the connection date is October 2028, and that the connection would be to the new National Grid substation at Botley West. That's that's correct, isn't it? Um, if at this current time, National Grid have not informed you or made you aware of any application or what route they're even taking for that application, do you perceive that to be an impediment to your project?

00:13:17:00 - 00:13:38:28

So it's on behalf of the applicant? No, sir. And that's the exact reason that we're seeking consenting powers in our draft DCO to ensure that in absence of National Grid being able to deliver their own substation, then we offer a complete consenting package as part of our DCO to ensure that the National Grid substation and the Solar Generation project, in accordance with that connection agreement, can be delivered.

00:13:41:20 - 00:14:16:25

I understand where you're coming from there. My, my, let me tell you my thought process that if National Grid at the moment are exploring options and then they apply, I don't know, let's just say hypothetically at the start of the new year and then it goes through application goes, no, not prejudging that, but say it goes to appeal or judicial review or whatever else delays could happen. If they're applying outside the order limits, which may mean it takes them time to take the opportunity that you're offering them of developing within the order limits.

00:14:17:12 - 00:14:26:20

Do you think that that whole process could be done in time for you to for them to, if you like, honor the connection agreement in October 2028?

00:14:29:03 - 00:15:05:12

Maybe it's on behalf of the applicant. I don't want to veer into speaking about National Grid's ability to meet certain time frames, but from the applicant's perspective, we have to work on the basis of the

current connection agreement, and that's that's out in our documents. That's 2027, albeit we know it's likely to be amended to be 2028. And as part of our application, we need to ensure that we can meet that deadline and ensure that National Grid can also meet that deadline. And by including the powers for the National Grid substation as well as our generating station, we see there to be no reason for an impediment not to meet that connection agreement.

00:15:05:14 - 00:15:06:05

Connection date.

00:15:07:18 - 00:15:09:01

Okay, okay.

00:15:12:18 - 00:15:39:28

One thing that seems logical, if you like, from the applicant's position, from a commercial position, is that you wouldn't necessarily stop building your development, um, if it was consented, that you wouldn't go ahead and start purchasing land and compulsory purchase, or developing your project without the certainty of National grid. Having that connection in place, that seems fairly logical, doesn't it?

00:15:42:13 - 00:15:43:15

That's logical. Yes.

00:15:43:17 - 00:16:26:02

Yeah. Um, I know from experience, having having been a bit been around the system for a long while is that, uh, we we people don't necessarily make the right decisions at the right times. And therefore we have to have, if you like, fallback positions or things in reserve. And therefore, I'm wondering whether the applicant would entertain the idea of a Grampian style clause in the development consent order, effectively saying that no compulsory acquisition could, could take place and no development could commence unless and until development.

00:16:26:06 - 00:16:36:17

No permission has been granted for National Grid. If they are doing it outside the the order limits. Would that be something that the applicant would consider?

00:16:53:11 - 00:17:29:28

Sir Gareth Phillips for the applicant I can give some wider context here. So in terms of where we are with National Grid, the ongoing consultation and negotiation with them all the time, we know that they are working up and preparing an application for their wider substation. The reason why they're looking at an alternative site is that over the course of the pre up period for this project, other applications for grid connection have come forward. So additional projects wishing to connect in the area. So they've been looking at a site to the west of the site that we're looking at to see if there's additional land or larger plot of land that could accommodate a larger substation.

00:17:30:09 - 00:18:00:21

We know that they're in extensive negotiations with the landowner, and that's working forward. So far as we're aware, they haven't yet secured heads of terms, but that would be a point for the national grid

to to confirm. And so far as we're aware, they are preparing to put an application in towards at some point in this year. And I understand that would be a tcpa application to the local authority for that substation. But that that wider substation that they're looking at is to serve more than this project. That's before you.

00:18:00:23 - 00:18:33:12

Now as as Mr. Yates has explained, we're simply covering the fallback of having a substation available for National Grid so that there's no impediment to the delivery of this project. That's actually consistent with a number of projects that certainly solar projects that have been consented during last year and also this year in terms of West Burton and also East Yorkshire, where essentially the developers are taking a position that if National Grid is unable to honour its contractual commitments for whatever reason, um, then it can be delivered on site.

00:18:33:27 - 00:19:04:09

In terms of the Grampian, I don't think there's any need for that because, well, certainly the projects consented to date haven't had that in there because the reality is that there will be aspects of the works that need to move forward. There needs to be certainty over the project. And in terms of the timescales we're talking about, you know, we're just starting this examination. So arguably it's 12 months until there's a decision to be made on it, um, that we're seeking a typical implementation period of about five years.

00:19:04:13 - 00:19:38:27

So there is plenty of time for National Grid to work up its proposals for the alternative site, or take a decision bearing in mind grid reform. It may well be that some of those connections that have been offered that have been sought from National Grid fall away because of the ongoing management that Nisso are doing. We're in a position that for gate two purposes under that grid management, we've got the land secured for the project. We haven't accepted DCO application. So that's the second limb of the criteria. So this project is in a very good position in terms of the queue management that is ongoing.

00:19:39:02 - 00:20:09:13

And therefore we will be a priority project with a small P. Those are my words, not national grids or policy will be a prioritized project as we go through the next year. But I think certainly we're likely to have an updated position for you by the end of this examination. We've got six months to to elicit that. And of course, you're at liberty to ask questions directly of National Grid to confirm where they are in terms of their program and what they see as the obstacles to coming forward. So I think I don't think a champion will be necessary.

00:20:09:15 - 00:20:33:21

It certainly has been on the other projects. Um, the timescales afforded to this project are the same as those other projects, and I think a Grampian would introduce a certain degree of risk to the project. that wouldn't be wouldn't be necessary and I think. Would would would make it unattractive to investors. But at the moment I don't see an anticipated need for that. I think by the time we get to the end of this examination, there'll be greater clarity for you. Thank you.

00:20:34:11 - 00:20:50:14

Thank you very much for that. And whilst we're just on National grid, just one final comment on them. If I may, I note that there are no protective provisions yet in the development consent order for National Grid, regardless of what their position is. Can you tell me why that is please?

00:20:51:14 - 00:21:20:20

So it's on behalf of the applicant. Yes. We've circulated a draft form of protective provisions to National Grid, which is largely based on precedent set from other solar CEOs. And that's with National Grid for comment. At the moment, we're expecting comments back on those. We've also seen their relevant representation, where they've requested protective provisions for protection of their future operators as well as existing apparatus. And that's one that we've picked up as part of the relevant process. And we'll will also look to engage with them on that set of protective provisions as well.

00:21:20:29 - 00:21:43:27

Okay. Okay. If I could just, uh, obviously I'm hoping National Grid will watch these recordings, but if not, could I just have it as an action for the applicant to to liaise with them and get them to send something in in response to the questions I ask? Because clearly they're probably in a better position to know where they are than than themselves. So no, thank you very much for that.

00:21:47:01 - 00:22:18:29

Um, moving on then. Um, in terms of the Rochdale envelope and flexibility, there are several instances in the order limits where cable routing, um, had not yet been finalised and that choices remain as to where the the cables were going to go. Uh, they are listed in paragraph 6.1. 12 of the chapter six of the environmental statement, which is app 043. Um, can the applicant talk through each instance where the cable routing options exist.

00:22:19:15 - 00:22:26:00

The reasons why they exist, and whether or not any final decisions will be made over the course of this examination. Please.

00:22:27:28 - 00:22:42:27

So be. It's on behalf of the applicant. I'll hand over here to Mr. Christopher Lapointe, who's the planning, and I'll lead on behalf of the applicant and also Mr. Hisham Trabelsi, who is coming at it from an engineering perspective on behalf of the applicant. But I'll go with Mr. Lapointe first.

00:22:46:20 - 00:23:20:17

Good morning. Christopher. Planning and environmental lead, on behalf of the applicant. Yes, from a planning and environmental point of view. We needed flexibility in certain areas of the project because we didn't have enough information to be, to be, to confirm a particular corridor or route for a cable. There are, for instance, in instances where we need that flexibility. Um, and um, the approach we've taken from an EIA Point of view is that we've assessed the whole corridor within which the cable is intended to be laid.

00:23:21:07 - 00:23:59:13

And we've said in the submitted documents that we would hope to be able to, uh, report back to you, uh, a more, um, a narrower version of that corridor, uh, following some further investigations in terms

of land and in terms of ongoing discussions with relevant, uh, landowners and other matters. Um, and so that's the approach we've taken from an EIA point of view. And during the course of the examination, we hope that we will be able to narrow the corridor so that, uh, uh, we would try and avoid taking powers, um, for the whole corridor.

00:23:59:26 - 00:24:12:18

Uh, we recognise there's weaknesses in that approach. Um, so we'll be looking to narrow the corridor where we can, in terms of engineering and other aspects. Uh, Mr.. Can can assist you with that if you have any queries there.

00:24:14:18 - 00:24:25:10

Yes. In place I would would like to know a bit more information. And in particular what other surveys or information you need to to to do in order to narrow down those options please.

00:24:27:21 - 00:25:05:02

Good morning. My name is Trabelsi. I'm an electrical engineer and technical project manager for PVP. Um, so I would like to start to, um, to, uh, given detail to how we choose the cable route. So, as you know, the project consists of three main sections northern side, the middle section and then the southern side. So we choose to go having one single, uh, cable corridor going from the north side, then collecting electricity from the central side and then going towards the southern side to the project main substation where the voltage will be stepped up.

00:25:05:04 - 00:25:39:19

And then we connect to the National Grid substation south of Palmer Reservoir. So we chose this, um, method to connect, um, all the, um, location together and not connect separately each site directly to the National Grid substation. So we have the single route, but in four locations. Um, first southeast of one, second, east of Woodstock, uh, third near of Bladen, and then fourth, um, south of uh, and east of Antrim, where we have, um, cable options.

00:25:39:21 - 00:26:12:29

So we needed to retain some flexibility, uh, while we continue investigating, doing, um, the final executive detail design. Um, because, as you know, we need intrusive surveys and non-intrusive surveys. So we began some non-intrusive surveys. Um, looking, for example, for in the third option for the cable, uh, thermal. Um, so if we can lay cables to 75 kV cables plus 33 GB cables, um, depending on the width of the road or the width of the location where we are laying the cables.

00:26:13:03 - 00:26:38:23

So we started some of the non-intrusive surveys and as we continue our project, we will begin the intrusive surveys, depending on having, for example, access rights and agreements with the with the landowners nearby the cable route. So we are continuing this step by step, and as the project will continue, we will try to reduce as much as possible the the cable options.

00:26:41:14 - 00:26:42:03

Okay.

00:26:43:22 - 00:26:59:18

Thank you very much for that and understand where you're coming from there. Um, obviously if it's if options are reduced during the course of the application, presumably the applicant envisages making a change request for those.

00:27:02:12 - 00:27:37:26

To be on behalf of the applicant depend on at what stage and what the change would look like, depending on what reductions we'd need to make. Um, and I think just the point I'd make there is that this ongoing work isn't to broaden the area within which works would be carried out. The proposed nature of the cable works is set in terms of working widths and width of the ultimate corridor. The reasons for this ongoing land and environmental and technical considerations is so that the best place for the ultimate placement of the cables falls at the best spot within that wider cable corridor areas.

00:27:37:28 - 00:27:41:19

Not that we're looking to carry out works over a more, more broad area.

00:27:45:24 - 00:27:59:23

Okay. Thank you. If work could be expedited on that so that we know we can get a bit more during the course of the examination, a bit more certainty as to how the project's been chosen. That would be that would be most useful, please.

00:28:01:29 - 00:28:35:26

The the next sort of set of questions. I have a sort of multiple points that, in effect, wrap into one if you like. Um, it's been said that there you don't want a cap, if you like, on the amount of energy producer, 840MW isn't a cap. So you could, in effect, produce more. But then obviously in the future, you've said it's a 37 year lifespan for the project, but after 25 years or so, panels will need to be replaced.

00:28:35:28 - 00:28:58:00

The infrastructure itself will never be replaced, which could lead to a greater output as technology advances. First question in relation to that, in terms of the cables that you're laying now, what capacity would those cables be able to take in terms of electricity generation?

00:28:59:21 - 00:29:32:06

So it's on behalf of the applicant to answer that specific question. I'll pass to Mr. Trabelsi just before I do. I just wanted to clarify that there isn't an intention of the applicant to replace all of the infrastructure after 25 years. That's just been the reasonable worst case assumption to form as part of the Rochdale envelope, the environmental assessment based on predicted lifespan of some of the technology and this power sort that would allow us to make those replacements if following maintenance activities, it was justified that certain panels or certain infrastructure did need to be replaced.

00:29:32:08 - 00:29:40:24

But there's definitely not an intention of the applicant to do a wholesale replacement or indeed a guaranteed replacement of any of the panels if that's not required.

00:29:42:13 - 00:29:51:12

Right. So. Okay, so I might have misunderstood some of your environmental statement there because it certainly seemed to to be.

00:29:53:21 - 00:30:18:02

Suggested perhaps that with a 25 year lifespan that even if they weren't Won't be placed at certain times. The development consent order certainly allows for replacement. I believe it's something like not the whole project at one time, but that needed to be defined as such. But you're saying that after 2025 years you're not going to be doing wholesale replacement, is that right?

00:30:18:29 - 00:30:51:08

So it's on behalf of the applicant. Yeah. That's right. For assessment purposes, it's assumed that the lifespan of the panels have a 25 year lifespan to ensure that if based on that reasonable worst case assumption replacement was required, then the assessment has already captured the effects that would arise as a result of that replacement. But I just wanted to clarify that the practical reality is that it's not expected that such replacement would be required, and that's in accordance with the Rochdale envelope approach and making sure that the assessments been done on that reasonable worst case basis.

00:30:52:27 - 00:31:45:02

Okay, I'll, I'll continue along this path because I do want an answer to my original question, but I'm going to deviate along with you here. If I take your position that okay, it won't be wholesale replacement, but with two fingers, 2 million odd panels going in. If 50% of them needed to be replaced at any one time during the operational phase, presumably that now that's that's something that's going to require a construction compound, presumably so that then there's a lay down area to put new the new panels in to dispose of the old panels, perhaps whole roads relaid and whatnot, in order to be able to fit that, because 50% is a significant undertaking in itself, although the s assumes a 25 year lifespan.

00:31:46:14 - 00:31:58:09

I've not seen that much in terms of the operational effects. If that scenario came forward, that sort of 50% needed to be replaced. Could you enlighten me, please?

00:32:00:07 - 00:32:14:19

So on behalf of the applicant, so slightly beyond my scope here and going into the assessment. Um, I am joined by hopefully online, Mr. Andrew Tasker, who did the climate change assessment, who might be able to give you some further detail on this point.

00:32:15:18 - 00:32:16:04

Of course.

00:32:20:13 - 00:32:59:09

Uh, good morning, Andrew Tasker. Um, on behalf of the applicant, um, so our consideration with regards to the greenhouse gas emissions, um, for the project has assumed a conservative worst case assumption whereby, um, the 25 year design life, um, which is assumed based on something that we called an environmental product declaration. So it assumes a 25 year design life. Um, that is a

conservative assumption. Um, we we make that purely for Estimating the potential operational maintenance emissions associated with the project.

00:32:59:17 - 00:33:40:17

Um, there are mechanisms and so far as the outline operational management plan EP 234 um, which includes measures that will um, um, ensure where feasible and where practicable, practicable, um, the longevity of said panels. Um, but just to be clear, with regards to the climate change assessment, um, the conservative assumption is that 100% of panels will be replaced across the lifetime. Um, but that is not a, um, a given certainty that that that will, um, happen at one time or 50%, but in terms of the GHG emissions.

00:33:40:19 - 00:33:45:24

So for, for our assessment, the greenhouse gas emissions that has been, um, assumed.

00:33:48:25 - 00:34:38:03

Okay. That's that's understood. My concern is that, okay, you know, there's a conservative assumption that 100% will need to be replaced. But if even 30, 40, 50% of them need to be replaced either at the same time or within a short period of time, say, a period of six months, there's traffic, there's noise, there's visual effects associated with construction, and they do not appear within the operational management plan, or they don't seem to have been assessed as being an effect of any significance, when in reality, you know, if you're replacing even 50% of the panels at any one time, that is a big undertaking.

00:34:38:15 - 00:34:43:00

I just wondered if you had any views on that as to how that's been assessed in the. Yes, please.

00:34:44:26 - 00:35:20:13

So it's on behalf of the applicant if I can just jump in there. You referred, obviously, to the Operation Environmental Management Plan, which refers to the regular planned maintenance of the infrastructure and refers to the replacement of PV, PV modules and power converter stations when required. So it's tied in from a DCO powers perspective to maintenance and the power to maintain. And if you look at the definition of maintain at article two of the draft Development Consent order, you'll see that sets out the powers to actually carry out maintenance activities.

00:35:20:28 - 00:36:11:16

And that's limited. And I'm quoting here, to the extent that such works do not give rise to any materially new or materially different environmental effects than those identified in the environmental statement. So that gives the comfort that, as set out by my colleague there, there's been an assessment of a certain level of replacement throughout the lifetime. But irrespective of what that assessment leads to, the actual powers in the DCO don't allow maintenance that goes beyond the effects that have already been assessed, so if it was 30 or 40%. Whilst the applicants view is that the assessment is robust to cover that to the extent we were actually looking to carry out maintenance activities, if that 30 or 40% replacement, which we don't expect to be required, but if it were to be required, that wouldn't be able to be carried out if it would lead to materially, new or materially different environmental effects than those already assessed.

00:36:16:04 - 00:36:18:07

Bear with me one moment.

00:36:29:14 - 00:36:47:05

Just looking at that definition of maintain the includes inspect, repair, adjust, alter, remove, refurbish, reconstruct, replace and improve any part of the authorized development, but not remove, reconstruct or replace the whole of work number one at the same time,

00:36:48:22 - 00:36:53:04

to the extent that the works did not give rise to any materially new or materially different environmental effects.

00:36:54:25 - 00:37:16:18

So are you saying that the operational effects, if you were to do 95%, so not the 100%, not the whole thing at the same time, at 95%, you're saying that they're no worse than construction, but that could start at any time during the course of the operation. Is that right?

00:37:18:05 - 00:37:18:28

That's correct.

00:37:23:05 - 00:37:43:00

In which case, would you say, obviously it's hypothetical in the future? Would you say then that the construction compounds being used for the initial construction and the whole roads being used for the original construction, would be used for any operational maintenance?

00:37:46:19 - 00:37:51:09

On behalf of the applicant. I'll try passing that to Mr. Trabelsi to see if it's within his scope.

00:37:54:22 - 00:38:17:09

So the construction compounds are planned to be used only during construction. And now the maintenance roads will be used during operation too. So that's the difference. The whole road are just for delivering all the equipment, and we intend to only use them for the maintenance roads, for the operation of the project.

00:38:19:03 - 00:38:49:03

Okay. There might be more follow up questions on on that because I'm not I'm not comfortable with the idea of that whole nearly wholesale replacement. Um, and the likely effects that, that caused people at any one time. But we'll we'll deal with that in first written questions, if I may. Let's just go back to the cables. us. What capacity would the cables when they're first laid? Would they be able to take in terms of electricity?

00:38:50:21 - 00:39:22:19

So as I tried to describe the cables, we run from the north side, going to the south side and collecting the electricity. So the cable cross section will be increased depending on the opacity, how much electricity we need to transport. So when we size the cables, we always have what we call empty

margin. So taking into account the voltage drops the transmission losses. And um we calculate the cross sections based on the continuous load.

00:39:22:21 - 00:39:52:07

But as you know, depending on the sun and on the cloud, the electricity generation will, will will change. So we always take into consideration the rating current the highest current possible. And um we call that we have the safety margin. And, um, so we are able now to export the 840MW of electricity and more because of these, uh, margins, following the guidelines from the electromechanical, uh Commission, International Commission.

00:39:52:18 - 00:40:28:24

Okay. The the reason why I'm going to labor on this point is because let's just say the cables when they're first laid. You've got the 840MW that are said to be generated by the proposed development. Let's say you put in a margin that when the cables are laid, they can deal with one gigawatt of electricity going through them. But if in 25 years time, if there is a large replacement and modern technology enables a greater output per panel, that output could exceed the capacity of the cable.

00:40:29:08 - 00:40:45:23

And in that scenario, I would suggest you'd need to pull up all the original cables and lay brand new ones to deal with it. Now, that is a significant undertaking in itself as part of operational maintenance. Is that a likely possibility?

00:40:47:11 - 00:41:20:22

Yeah, I understand your concern. So as I said, they are now oversized based on the our oversized factors. And as we know, we have agreements with National Grid for 840. So my personal view is even if the technology will have more efficient panels, for example, we always need to have to our agreements with National Grid, which is 840 megawatt AC that we need to export. So the cables are now sized based on the other sizing factor that we have.

00:41:20:24 - 00:41:50:28

As you can see in the project description, we have between 1.8 and 2.2 million modules, um, which have um DC installed capacity up to 1300 megawatt peak. And then we have 840 Megawatt AC agreement with National Grid. So we are able to export the. All the electricity from the 1300 megawatt peak. Considering the transmission losses and considering the DC, AC, um losses.

00:41:51:09 - 00:42:07:13

Um, so that's how we we, uh, are designing our cable cross section and in the, uh, executive final detail design, we will take into consideration all of these concerns and try to come up with the best cross section possible for the next years.

00:42:09:06 - 00:42:10:22

Okay. Mr. Yates, you want to come.

00:42:10:24 - 00:42:39:06

Back on behalf of the applicant? If I can just add their taking instructions and understand that in reality, you would turn down the export and you can turn down the export to suit the cables so that the

export capacity would be 840MW. And that export cannot be more than the grid connection agreement. So if you did have more efficient cables, you could turn down that export to suit the more efficient cables to meet that export amount.

00:42:44:00 - 00:43:05:18

Okay. And that would have. So you may be able to produce more, but you could turn it down to fit the agreement that you've got effectively. So there'd be no net additional benefit if you were to put back or replace with a higher spec, higher performing solar panel.

00:43:06:19 - 00:43:07:27

That's my understanding. Yes.

00:43:14:23 - 00:43:33:04

So if I'm if I may be, I'm half of the applicant. Appreciate you. Wanted to follow up in the written questions. So we'll obviously address a full detailed response there. But just if I can give some comfort in the meantime in relation to the point around maintain. Yes. And there's a requirement in the draft DCO Echo at schedule two.

00:43:35:13 - 00:43:45:02

Which I'm sure you'll be aware, requires the applicant to submit an operational management plan for approval. That's a requirement of schedule two

00:43:46:24 - 00:44:33:09

and schedule 16 of the draft DCO that sets out the procedure for the discharge of all requirements, which will include requirement 12. And you'll see it. Paragraph two, sub paragraph three of that. It requires the applicant to make a statement to the relevant planning authority when submitting that plan, to confirm whether it is likely that the subject matter of the application will give rise to any materially new or materially different environmental effects. So to the extent it's submitting its final operational management plan, which would include its proposed maintenance provisions, that would need to include a statement as to whether or not it's expected that those maintenance activities would give rise to anything different to what's already reported as part of the environmental statement.

00:44:34:23 - 00:44:37:15

Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

00:44:41:00 - 00:45:17:28

I've got one further question under this section. Um, I'm afraid it does kind of go back to National Grid a little bit, but not quite. Um, this question emerged from reading your supplementary standalone statement of need. Uh PDB 014. Um, paragraph 3.3.4 of that document states and I'll quote direct. It says the grid supply point at Cowley is now constrained, meaning that there is no ability to connect a generator at that location until distribution reinforcement is complete.

00:45:18:18 - 00:45:51:24

SSN indicate that such reinforcement is currently scheduled to complete in March 2031. Now, I understand that you're you're not connecting at Cowley. You're connecting, you know, within the the the pylons via a new substation by National grid. But how does that interact with the SSN

improvements on the distribution network? Does that mean you are constrained across the network as a whole, even with the new substation? But how does that sort of work?

00:45:53:01 - 00:46:03:05

Maybe it's on behalf of the applicant, some joined hopefully virtually by Mr. Gillet, who inputted into that draft document or that document, and he'll come back on that point. Thank you. Of course.

00:46:04:15 - 00:46:43:22

Good morning, sir, for the applicant. Um, with reference to, um, your specific question. Um, the, uh, the connection of the scheme, um, as designed, um, to a new, uh, grid connection point on the national electricity transmission to the west of Cali will not in any way be constrained by the work required to, um, upgrade specifically the grid supply points at Cowley and the distribution network which sits below the transmission network at that point.

00:46:44:09 - 00:46:44:24

Right.

00:46:45:14 - 00:46:49:09

Okay. Thank you very much. That's that's very clear. Thank you for confirming that.

00:46:57:11 - 00:47:07:21

Okay. That completes my questions. Under that particular agenda item I'll just look around the the room I'll look across to the councils. Are there any concerns? Yes, sir. Your hands raised.

00:47:09:06 - 00:47:42:17

Yes. Thank you. Stuart Walker, on behalf of the Vale of Whitehorse. Um, this is referring to the Rochdale envelope topic, so I just wanted to pick up, um, for clarity. We've. The Vale has yet to receive an application from National Grid for any substation, and we've yet to do any pre-application engagement, so it's just giving a little bit of clarity to that matter. If it is a Town and Country Planning Act application. So we've yet to see anything from that perspective in terms of the Rochdale envelope itself. I'd like to draw the XAS attention to s clarification report PDB 015 and clarification ES three.

00:47:43:12 - 00:48:36:09

In paragraph 2.4.2, it states that the Elvia assessment has taken account of the project design parameters, including the Net substation, and correctly assumes the height to be 12 to 12.5 metres high. Paragraph 2.43 states references to height of 15m in the guide to the application and the statement of statutory nuisance are not accurate, and those documents have been updated. However, in the Statement of Statutory Nuisance PDB 004 and 005, paragraph 1.4.1, it is stated that the area is required to be set aside for the substation amounts to an area of 3.8m 3.8 hectares, and within that area, which I assume the substation will occupy 87m by 30 and the state in the height of 12m, excluding the tower structures.

00:48:37:14 - 00:49:10:22

And that's secured in the outline. Layout and design principles are submitted alongside the procedural deadline, which was another document. Um. However, the paragraph does then go on to say it is understood from ingot that the building containing the switchgear will be 14m high, 16m wide and

76m in length, with an annex building alongside. Um. The Vale wish to seek clarity on whether the switchgear building is part of the development consent order process, because it is referred to in the schedule one as switchgear as part of the main substation.

00:49:11:09 - 00:49:25:19

And if that's the case, then we're looking at heights of 14m, not 12, and it was just getting clarity on that point because the Vale do have concerns about the lack of information on the main marine substation for Njit with regards to this project. Thank you.

00:49:26:06 - 00:49:37:26

Thank you very much. Yes, thank you for that day. The the in the definitions of the authorized development, it just says the National grid substation rather than break it down per component. Do you have any responses to what you've just heard there?

00:49:39:11 - 00:49:57:23

Maybe it's on behalf of the applicant. We've made a note of the comments made and we'll we'll come back to that in writing. Um, in terms of the definition of the National Grid substation in the DCO that has been shared with National Grid, who agreed with the scope of that definition. So that's why we're not broken it down by specific numbers.

00:49:58:15 - 00:50:03:11

So but we'll the switchgear building as asked be be part of that.

00:50:03:13 - 00:50:05:01

That's the point. I'll have to come back on sir.

00:50:09:15 - 00:50:16:06

You'll get a response in due course, I guess. Uh, any other councils wishing to say anything on this matter?

00:50:18:02 - 00:50:22:16

Okay. Does anyone else wish to say anything on this matter, either in the room?

00:50:24:29 - 00:50:25:23

Virtually,

00:50:27:16 - 00:50:55:24

no. Okay, then we'll move on to agenda item three B, which is to look at strategic alternatives and project choices. Um, I believe the applicant may be able to share um es chapter five, which is app zero. 42. Um, the alternatives chapter. And in particular, if we could start at paragraph 5.6.7 please.

00:50:59:21 - 00:51:30:29

Excellent. Thank you very much. Um, this paragraph describes a process where the applicant looked at 19 possible substations, uh, to establish the ability for a new connection and whether it was close enough to, to to land to construct the solar farm. And in that paragraph, it says several substations had

capacity and haven't had a look at the document. The document there that's in the bold, uh, font on your screens about substation locations.

00:51:31:18 - 00:51:41:09

I've assumed that there's several includes locations of northeast Lanham, Manhattan and Iron Acton, as well as Cowley

00:51:43:06 - 00:52:02:00

having done that. Norfleet is the only one of those several that is mentioned in the chapter, and it is only mentioned once, um, when it is discounted. Now we'll come back to the reasons for discounting in a moment. But can I ask what happens to the others in terms of your assessment of alternatives?

00:52:04:00 - 00:52:08:17

Maybe it's on behalf of the applicant. I'll hand over to Mr. Larkin to answer that one. Thank you.

00:52:18:17 - 00:52:26:29

So I'm told it's fun for another member of the applicant team, which is Mr. Ian Lloyd, who's sat in the the gallery at the back. So if I can bring him forward if he's comfortable speaking.

00:52:49:09 - 00:52:54:09

Good morning sir. Mark Owen, Lord for the applicant. Um, could you repeat the question, please?

00:53:00:23 - 00:53:02:14

Sorry. You'd like the question repeated.

00:53:02:23 - 00:53:04:17

Yeah. Would you mind repeating the question?

00:53:05:15 - 00:53:36:14

Okay. So in this paragraph, 5.6.7, it says there are several substations that were assessed or that were had capacity. And of those several which are Norfleet, Langham, Mornington and Iron Acton, as well as Cowley, only Norfleet is mentioned and it is mentioned once in being discounted will return to the reasons for that. But I want to know what happened to the other alternatives.

00:53:37:17 - 00:54:08:20

So? So yeah, the capacity was judged by using the National Grid's online, uh, connection tool, which they ran at that time, where you could put in your location where you thought you might be able to obtain land. And the online, um, connection to would tell you which substations potentially had capacity. You could then make a decision to request a pre-application call with National Grid's connection engineers, which would take about 6 to 8 weeks for you to be offered that.

00:54:09:02 - 00:54:51:02

Uh, and that would then tell you the actual situation at the substation. It's then your decision whether you make a connection application at that substation at a cost of some between 80 and £100,000. So you have to think very carefully about that. Um, what happened with these substations was that, uh, subsequent discussions after using the connection tool, subsequent discussions with the connection

engineers before asking for a preamp, they informed us that the information, because of the sheer volume of connection, uh, applications that they were receiving and connections they were offering, the online tool was out of date.

00:54:51:11 - 00:55:23:23

When you obtain that information. So you needed to ask for a preamp. So we had to make the judgment whether it was worth waiting for a preamp in a substation which looked like the the the capacity was not what we needed. There was also no way of of getting a cable into it, because it might well be landlocked or there was nowhere for us to build the client substation alongside. So it was purely taking a judgment on whether it was worth the weight and the time to to to wait for those pre app calls.

00:55:26:26 - 00:55:35:13

Forgive me for being blunt, but so on that basis you didn't consider those alternatives any further at all.

00:55:36:13 - 00:56:05:06

We didn't consider them because we didn't think we'd be able to get land. There was no land alongside the substation for our substation, and they didn't seem like based on the information that the National Grid's engineers gave us in informal discussions. It didn't seem like there was a likelihood of getting a connection there. Yeah. So that that is true. It was not worth the time. You had to pick carefully the substation that you would make your application to.

00:56:06:11 - 00:56:12:06

Okay, let's let's pursue this, this landlocked and get an A cable in even further.

00:56:14:26 - 00:56:48:04

You mention in respect of Cowley substation, um, that it was chosen initially because there was land available. Now I've driven when I was driving up here, I've driven to the Cowley substation there fields to the east, fields to the southeast, and fields to the southwest. So it appeared that there was land available around there. And yet as the crow flies, your site and your main substation is some six miles to the west of Cowley.

00:56:48:24 - 00:56:55:14

Am I missing something here in terms of the land being available? Because it seemed there's land directly available next to Cowley substation?

00:56:55:29 - 00:57:07:03

Yes. No, you're not missing something. Um, we, uh, that's why we originally, uh, we held three pre-application calls on Cowley, at which we got various different

00:57:08:23 - 00:57:42:00

information from National Grid about the capacity. Cowley is one of their key assets, so they'd spend a lot of money increasing the capacity there. Uh, they've also installed a 15 megawatt, um, battery installation and an experimental battery there. So it was being expanded. They were investing in it at the, uh, at the third preamp. They then said that the land all around it, and we had discovered this by

doing land searches. The land all around Cowley substation is owned by Thames Water, who owned the um.

00:57:42:02 - 00:58:17:16

The sewage treatment works, which is nearby, and Thames Water have plans for that land. They're therefore not, uh, prepared to negotiate, uh, cable easements. So National Grid themselves view and this is something that they have a great fear of is to have their key assets landlocked. So you cannot get cables in the last routes that we could have used to access Cowley's substation was down the maintenance and access road, but they gave that to pivot power to run their battery, uh, their 50 megawatt battery cable down.

00:58:17:18 - 00:58:36:01

So they told us in that preamp that they saw no way of accessing that substation with the cable. And it was at that point that they said to us, however, given the location of your potential land, we would like to build a new substation at, uh, at Botley West.

00:58:37:21 - 00:58:46:16

Okay. So would you, because of the Thames Water land, would you say, for example, that the Cowley substation is in effect, landlocked?

00:58:47:19 - 00:58:49:02

It is landlocked, yes.

00:58:50:08 - 00:59:01:25

And yet, because of a connection into the pylons leading into that substation, the landlocked doesn't stop you, if you like, from doing the proposed development.

00:59:03:12 - 00:59:39:16

Know because we are connecting to the 400 kilovolt overhead line which runs up at Hinkson Meadow and then across to farmer. So that is how we're able to do it. Now, National Grid had had a plan for some years to reinforce that line, which runs from Cowley to Waltham, which is outside the city of Gloucester, because that line is at is at capacity and has high fault levels. So our when we propose connecting at Cowley with our site where it is, it automatically got them to think that a new substation would solve their issues and, and our issues.

00:59:39:18 - 00:59:45:18

And under the grid code, they do need a customer in order to trigger a reinforcement works.

00:59:46:18 - 01:00:23:16

The reason why I'm hung up on the landlocked argument is because that is the very reason why Northfleet was discounted. Now Northfleet, I assume it's the one east of London in Kent. Um, aside from the A2 being underneath. Once you're over the A2 again, there's fields. And so Northfleet was discounted because it was landlocked. And yet you're telling me that Cowley is landlocked? And yet why why was Norfleet discounted when in effect, it had the same the same scenario as Cowley?

01:00:23:26 - 01:00:57:27

It was landlocked. It also. We weren't sure that it had sufficient capacity. I didn't do a full pre-amp call on that because we didn't think it was worth it also. Our negotiations for land nearby had not obtained any land. So it was it was because discussions that Cowley became advanced with National Grid, and they showed willingness to entertain a connection, either at Cowley or at a new substation that we pursued that the, the, the, the, the, the feeling I got from National Grid talking to them about other substations was not.

01:00:58:16 - 01:01:06:19

Of a level of enthusiasm that I got at Cowley, because they had the plans to reinforce the 400 kilovolt overhead line.

01:01:10:04 - 01:01:55:02

So if I can just jump in there, Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant as well, just to take a step back and set the framework again here in terms of what we're talking about. And if I direct these, I'm an authority to MPs in one paragraph, 4.3. 24. And that sets out there. And it's in relation to the Secretary of State decision making, that the Secretary of State should not refuse an application for development on one site, simply because a few adverse effects would result from developing similar infrastructure on another suitable site, and should have regard, as appropriate to the possibility that all suitable sites for energy infrastructure of the type proposed, which includes this project, may be needed for future proposals.

01:01:55:25 - 01:02:33:14

And in that light, I understand as well that some of these other substations that we're talking about have now got applications made in relation to them. So from that policy perspective, it's not a competing alternative, but it's actually additional schemes looking to meet the critical national priority. And just one further point building on that is at paragraph 4.3.17 of MPs, Ian one. And that says the alternative proposals which mean the necessary development could not proceed, for example, because the alternative proposals are not commercially viable or alternative proposals for sites would not be physically suitable.

01:02:33:16 - 01:02:46:00

So the two points that they focus on their commercial viability and physical suitability, as opposed to availability, can be excluded on the grounds that they are not important relevant to the Secretary of State's decision.

01:02:46:14 - 01:03:17:01

Okay, I understand what you're saying. I want to explore this a bit further. And as we're in the realms of campaign and one, I direct your attention to paragraph 4.2.1 and then there it says applicants for CMP infrastructure must continue to show how their application meets the requirements in the MPs, the relevant technology specific MPs applying the mitigation hierarchy as well as other legal and regulatory requirements.

01:03:17:23 - 01:03:48:17

The Infrastructure Planning Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations at regulation 14, in relation to environmental statements. Paragraph D of that says that you must provide a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the applicant. Notice that's alternatives without a bracket. So it's

plural which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of environment on the environment.

01:03:49:12 - 01:04:21:07

There will be one further question about environmental impacts in a moment, but what I'm faced with in this chapter is a mention of one other substation. It's been disregarded for being landlocked. And yet I'm hearing that the substation that was chosen was landlocked, and so I'm struggling to see on a reasonable alternatives that were considered. How a decision was made, how that process followed.

01:04:21:09 - 01:04:34:01

Now, if there's more rationale behind it, if there's more discussions, more impact with national grid discussions that led to the process being refined, that information is not before me, and that's what I'm after.

01:04:35:13 - 01:05:17:04

So it's on behalf of the applicant that's understood to turn to the extent you want to discuss that further, Mr.. And Lord will be more suitable than, than, I suppose. Just an initial observation there is that I suppose just because two of the sites are landlocked doesn't necessarily mean that they have the same physical suitability. And as Mr. Lloyd is getting at the site that the applicant has chosen, they have got a way to make that site physically suitable. Whereas for the Northfleet site that wasn't the case. And I understand from the TDC register that actually no schemes are proposing to connect into the Northfleet site, which also supports what the applicant's position is that the landlocked nature of that site means that it's not physically suitable.

01:05:17:06 - 01:05:27:03

Whereas, as Mr. Owen Lloyds explained, whilst it may be landlocked as part of the applicant scheme, there is a way of making that physically and commercially suitable.

01:05:29:13 - 01:05:30:24

So anything further you wish to add.

01:05:30:26 - 01:05:50:24

Michael and Lloyd for the applicant are there? You're correct. They're both landlocked. But Cowley, there was a solution to it being landlocked in that we could connect to that 400 kV line at a new substation, which National Grid wished to build and subsequently have received for connection applications to.

01:05:52:24 - 01:05:53:12

Okay,

01:05:54:27 - 01:06:15:07

let's just stick with Northfleet for a moment. Appreciate that's not the scheme before us, but I just want to understand the alternative. That was considered the second reason why that was not taken forward. It says there is no reasonable prospect of securing land. Can I ask how you knew that?

01:06:17:12 - 01:06:28:18

That was based on the on our land team's work locally. Yeah. So they had approached landowners locally, and they told me that there was no prospect of securing land in sufficient quantity.

01:06:31:25 - 01:06:42:18

Okay, then can I just ask for clarity as to, in terms of the land here? Um, when did negotiations start with the landowners here?

01:06:45:06 - 01:06:52:27

I would defer to my land team and to Mr. Yates on that. But they were they were concurrent with my negotiations with, with Njit.

01:06:54:03 - 01:07:11:09

So based on behalf of the applicant, we're not joined by the land agents on behalf of the applicant. Um, this morning. And I appreciate the the questioning here, sir, and where you're getting at. And I suggest that we can follow up in writing with some more detail around those paragraphs you referred to in the alternative chapter.

01:07:12:03 - 01:07:23:11

Okay. Okay. One further line of questioning. Um, whoever's operating the document, if you could go back to paragraph 5.6.2 for me.

01:07:25:05 - 01:08:03:28

Excuse me. Apologies for that. Um, in this paragraph, you list out the the requirements from NPS in three, um, providing the considerations that developers should take into account when considering a solar farm. Now the top one on there is irradiance. Now, I'm not a scientist and I'm not a meteorologist by any stretch of the imagination. But for me, anyway, having lived in this country a number of years, Kent would seem to receive more sun or be more radiant, if you like, than Oxfordshire.

01:08:04:18 - 01:08:26:12

That you know, you see the weather patterns coming in and how they go across the country. Now, apart from that word irradiance appearing in that paragraph, that doesn't appear again in the document. And I'm just wondering how irradiance helped shape your alternatives. Bear in mind MPAC and freeze says it should be a top consideration.

01:08:35:14 - 01:08:37:24

For the applicant. I'll hand over to Mr. Lecounte here. Thank you.

01:08:42:18 - 01:08:43:29

Where's the point? Um,

01:08:45:28 - 01:09:21:06

I just wanted to, um. No, your point about irradiance. I'm not an engineer either, but, um, if I may, I'd just like to make a policy, uh, point and, um, uh, which may or may not help you, but I hope it will. But, um, from the applicant's point of view, there wasn't a single factor, uh, that was determinative of

the site that we selected. So it wasn't only substation, for example. And I can understand why you're inquiring about, uh, each substation or several substations that we looked at.

01:09:22:00 - 01:09:54:28

But, um, I think the the reality is, at the same time as you're exploring the ability to connect to a substation, you are also at the same time exploring multiple other, uh, issues, Is, um, including land available, including land availability, for example, including the wider planning and environmental constraints. So, so in practice, the process that went through wasn't binary.

01:09:55:00 - 01:10:26:24

Let's find a substation and then let's do everything else. It was several work streams happening at the same time, and that mosaic of tasks were considered holistically. And as a result of considering all of those, we ended up with where we where we have ended up. So a combination, yes, of substation, ability to connect to a substation and which is a moving feast, by the way. Uh, that that isn't always static.

01:10:26:26 - 01:11:14:17

So we have to be agile in the decisions that we make and availability and, um, suitability of, of nearby land. Um, and so it was a combination of factors. So, so. And indeed in the policy, as I'm sure you're aware, recognizes that in terms of site selection, there's no it's not overtly prescriptive in terms of how an applicant should go about this. Um, there's no absolute criterion that we should be following when it comes to site finding. Um, and indeed, the, the NPS in three para two 1018 recognises that there are multiple factors that can influence the choice of location and indeed that that is in reality the process that we in effect, followed to, to, uh, to end up with where we've ended up.

01:11:14:23 - 01:11:33:15

And in terms of site, location, substation and size. So all of those factors are blended together to, uh, to, to lead to the decision point that will be reached. No one factor is determinative. Substation location is extremely important. Of course, without a substation connection point, we haven't got a project.

01:11:35:23 - 01:12:13:18

I fully understand that. And may I just say what you've just said should be in that chapter? Because for my reading of the chapter as it goes through, there isn't that clarity, if you like. Um, it very much reads that you looked at one other alternative, which was Norfleet. You discounted that quite quickly because it's only mentioned once in one sentence in that document, and then almost immediately you're saying, we've got landowners, we've got land, and that's where we decided to build.

01:12:13:25 - 01:12:36:21

And yet there's no mention of any of the other substations, any of the reasons why they were discounted. As you're right, within the NPS. It doesn't say you have to choose the best option, but nonetheless, you have to give reasons for the options that you have chosen. And at the moment, I think what you've just said needs to be in there to justify why you've come to the conclusions that you have.

01:12:40:26 - 01:13:14:22

Um, can the applicant have an action to take away the irradiance point? Because I am interested in that when MPAC and three puts it. You know, you've even got it there in your document. You know, that should be a key factor. And in my limited knowledge, purely just living in the country, Kent would seem to receive more solar on a day to day basis than Oxfordshire. But again, I'm not a scientist. I've got no numbers to prove or disprove that. But just to help substantiate your case there, please.

01:13:15:28 - 01:13:25:21

So be. It's on behalf of the applicant. Yes, we'll put a clarity note in at deadline one, which we'll pick up on the point you've raised that have been submitted orally and also the evidence point. Thank you.

01:13:26:05 - 01:13:26:20

Okay.

01:13:28:08 - 01:13:29:23

Fair enough. Just, um.

01:13:32:18 - 01:14:09:12

Just one other sort of question. It's not. It's related to alternatives, but it's a bit a bit more obscure. Um, in terms of the other location that National Grid are looking at for their, um, new substation.

Obviously, outside of the order limits, you've said that the site that you would vacate or the site they would vacate if they'd got permission outside, would then be covered with solar panels, in effect, that would put a distance between your main project substation and the National Grid substation.

01:14:10:01 - 01:14:13:03

Any idea as to what distance that would be?

01:14:28:22 - 01:14:32:17

Debates on behalf of the applicant. I'm told we don't have an answer for that immediately, but we can find that out.

01:14:33:12 - 01:14:55:27

The only reason why I ask is that for the main project sites substation, there are no alternatives presented as to where that could go, and I assumed that the reason why it was right next to the National Grid substation was to prevent transmission losses. But if

01:14:57:12 - 01:15:33:17

if they're pushing their substation west, for me, again, not being a scientist, whatever. It would make more sense from a logistics point of view to push your main substation west to reduce that distance, but instead you're looking to fill that with solar panels, which seems to suggest that those two bits of infrastructure, the main project substation and the National Grid substation, could be separated. And that makes me think, well, what other alternatives were considered for the main applicant project substation, when there could be that distance in terms of clustering or that infrastructure in one place.

01:15:36:02 - 01:15:49:27

To be it's on behalf of the applicant. The assessment that's carried or been carried out at the moment is for the main project substation to be, as it's shown on sheet 13 of the land plans. Sorry, the works plans, um, reference for that is

01:15:51:19 - 01:16:09:15

as 005. And as you've explained, that's on the basis that it would either be a national grid substation or solar array immediately to the west. But we'll take that away and consider it. As I say, the current assessment hasn't assessed anything more broadly than that, which is why the main project substation is where it is.

01:16:17:02 - 01:16:54:27

Apologies. Um, and on a similar vein, uh, within the project itself in terms of project Alternatives. There are six or proposed six secondary substations, each claimed to be 18 by ten meters length and width, six meters in height um and 156 PCs units as well. Now there's no information in ES chapter five as to the the the potential locations of these and the reason for the locations of these.

01:16:55:03 - 01:17:22:17

Now, appreciate this is not alternatives in the truest sense, but you're looking at delivering pieces of infrastructure in terms of the six secondary substations of considerable size, and that there's no information that I see that says, right, that substation has to be there. And in putting that substation there, we've considered the views of residents or whatever else. Can you enlighten me as to why that sort of detail is not available anywhere? Please?

01:17:24:18 - 01:17:57:24

Toby. On behalf of the applicant. So, as I'm sure you're aware. Number three B as set out in schedule one. The draft order relates to secondary substations. And if you look at the works plans with the application, same references just given that sets out the locations of where there's secondary substations works powers apply to. And it's those locations that form the basis of the assessment using the parameters that you've referred to. And they're secured in the outline, Layout and Design Principles document, which is secured under requirement five of the draft eco.

01:17:59:09 - 01:18:21:06

Fully understand that. And maybe I've been maybe I didn't put my question quite clearly. I know where they're going. I don't know why. I don't know whether you'd scoped the whole area and said, oh, we could put that substation here, here or here. But there represents the best option because it has limited impact. That's the bit that I'm missing at the moment.

01:18:23:00 - 01:18:25:22

On behalf of the applicant for the Y. I'll pass over to Mr. Le Point.

01:18:28:15 - 01:19:01:09

In in reality. It was an iterative process. So the the current locations for the substations and the PCs units and the main substation, National Grid substation are shown on an illustrative master plan that that master plan evolved over a number of years. Um, and it evolved, um, in a way that um, minimized environmental effects. Um, uh, whilst at the same time, um, acknowledging any engineering constraints in terms of the positioning of the pieces of equipment.

01:19:01:28 - 01:19:34:18

Um, and so, for example, um, over the time we were repositioning particular PCs units to steer away from nearby public rights of way or to minimize noise from sensitive receptors. And that was an iterative process leading to what we add to the layout, the illustrative, illustrative layout that we have at the moment. Now, we didn't articulate all of those combinations because there's probably thousands of combinations or of precisely where you put a pieces unit and, and the substation.

01:19:34:26 - 01:20:14:20

But there are also engineering factors as well that come into play, which I'll pass on to Mr. Tbilisi, if I may, in a moment. But, but so, um, I just wanted to, if you like, reassure or convey that the process we went through was iterative, leading to the position that we've got to be driven always by the desire to avoid environmental effects or mitigate them applying the mitigation hierarchy. So we think we've optimized the layout as far as we we can so far, um, and the project has been assessed on that basis from noise, amenity, etc.

01:20:14:26 - 01:20:27:03

but it may help you if we then explain the engineering, some of the engineering criteria that goes into the need to position PCs, units and other substations throughout the layout, if that's okay.

01:20:30:11 - 01:21:12:15

On behalf of the applicant. So in the case of the detailed design, we try to best locate the PCs which are connected to the modules to have the least transmission losses possible. So we try to put the PCC's, the 165 PCs along the um, maintenance road so that in case of disturbance, we can reach the PCs. And then those peaks are connected with 33 kV cables to the secondary substations, where the voltage will be stepped up from 33 to 275 to enable the transport of the electricity, um, across the longer distance.

01:21:13:00 - 01:21:55:01

Um, so those cables were put as far as possible at the edge of the, of the um, fields so that we can reach, uh, in case of disturbance or in case we need to replace the transformers or any switch gear, and so that the distance or the length of the cable is as least as possible, and we have less disturbance from a visual impact or, uh, disturbance to residents. So we optimized our location of the PCCs and the and the transformers or the secondary substation in order to have less losses and less disturbance from environmental point of view and, uh, from a visual impact also.

01:21:56:29 - 01:21:59:05

Okay. Thank you for for that.

01:22:01:03 - 01:22:02:23

Excuse me. Um,

01:22:04:13 - 01:23:04:14

I appreciate that you haven't articulated because of the thousands of possibilities, but one of the things that come up in the open floor hearing yesterday was concerns about noise and in particular that some of these PCs units, some of the secondary substations, were sort of five meters away from a public

right of way. Um, less than 100m away from residential properties in some instances. And so I would like to see the rationale as to why, maybe not why everything was discounted, but certainly why the ones that feature in the master plan are even in the works plans, why they were chosen and considered to be the best in terms of environmental effects in all aspects, because I, I think no, not just the examination, not just us and the Secretary of State, but also the public do need some reasoning, some justification as to why it's been laid out the way that it has, which at the moment doesn't appear in this chapter.

01:23:05:23 - 01:23:42:25

Yes. Um, you're right, we didn't articulate the numerous combinations of positions of those pieces of infrastructure. Um. Um. But, um, the point about noise is something that we have considered the, uh, the author of the noise chapter was well aware of the sound power levels from, uh, different pieces of electrical infrastructure. Uh, and the, uh, the proximity of relevant sensitive receptors and made their assessment, uh, and likely, um, assessment of likely significant effects on that basis.

01:23:43:10 - 01:24:13:21

Uh, and I recall that there were several instances where, as a project team, we were uncomfortable with the position of several of the PCs units, for example. And we deliberately, within engineering constraints, moved that unit away so that we, uh, positioned it at to a point where those effects were either avoided, minimized, or mitigated. Now, um, I could we could probably give you an example of what we did, where and why.

01:24:14:07 - 01:24:21:13

Uh, and that probably, uh, could be regarded as representative. But what we did in most other instances, if that would help.

01:24:22:04 - 01:24:31:10

Um, yes. Perhaps not only now, but certainly in, in writing. Following up from this, I would very much appreciate that.

01:24:33:28 - 01:24:52:01

Okay. I am conscious that we'd be going nearly an hour and a half. Um, that has completed my questions on this particular agenda item. Uh, first of all, open it up to to the room. I'll come to the council's in terms of alternatives, any comments from anyone? Any concerns.

01:24:54:21 - 01:24:55:13

Okay.

01:24:55:22 - 01:25:04:16

And sorry George. George going to county council. So if the applicant does submit information uh, after this area obviously we'll comment on that and the written submission. Okay.

01:25:04:27 - 01:25:20:01

Thank you very much. I See at least two hands from the three hands from the audience. Um, a microphone is on the way to you. If you could just first of all, identify yourself if you're with an organization. And then I'd invite your comment.

01:25:20:22 - 01:25:51:29

David Rogers, an independent member of the public and also a member of the citizen science group Sola. Q. Mr. chairman, I'm sitting here quite shocked because the whole concept of solar energy depends on irradiance, which the team failed to define for you and failed to emphasize its importance. Cable sizes, PCs. And so they all depend on the sun's energy received at the Earth's surface, which are watts per meter squared. They're not sunshine hours. They're related to it, but they're watts per meter squared.

01:25:52:01 - 01:26:25:18

Why is it important? Well, the world Bank did a survey of the world's 240 countries five years ago for their solar photovoltaic potential. How good are they for solar PV? The UK came 239 out of the 240th. It was the worst country in the world. If they were the solar equivalent of the Eurovision Song Contest for solar PV, the UK would be in its usual position. No point. Last on the list. The UK really isn't very good for solar, but that's to a side.

01:26:25:21 - 01:27:06:12

We do need solar as well in the mix. I'm surprised the whole team couldn't answer your question, but I have a question. The county substation is connected to the 400 kilovolt overhead line. This is the backbone of the UK distribution system. The new proposed substation would connect to the same line. The 400 kilovolt overhead line. And as your questions about cable sizing within the project suggested. The capacity of cables is very important. Now, there was a comment from the design team earlier on that the National Grid had said that the 400 kilovolt vault overhead line was at its design limits.

01:27:07:12 - 01:27:33:07

Did I misunderstand that? Because that's suggesting that the 400 kilovolt overhead cables may be near their limits, which indeed they might be, because if we're going to double electricity output in the next 30 years, a lot of the national grid itself, those cables will need replacing. But I would like clarification, because if that cable is design limits, then any new input into it must take it over its design limits.

01:27:35:11 - 01:27:35:26

Yeah.

01:27:36:01 - 01:27:42:27

Thank you very much. Before we move on to the next speaker there. Was that a misunderstood point or can you provide clarity, please?

01:27:43:25 - 01:27:48:18

So for the applicant, that's a technical point. So I'd have to rely on my colleague Mr. Trabelsi on that one.

01:27:52:28 - 01:28:28:27

On behalf of the applicant. So maybe we can give some figures and information about the irradiance and the choice of the location of the project South of England. So from from north to to to to south,

the irradiance is between 800 and 900 kilowatt hour per square meter and 1150. So if we take your example, um, comparing Kent to Oxfordshire, we will see a small difference of maybe 100 or 50 kilowatt hour per per square meter, which is really which is significant.

01:28:28:29 - 01:28:56:09

But as my colleague Mr. Larkin said, there are a lot of other factors. Um, for example, the land and if it's flat or not flat and a lot of other, uh, availability of the grid. And that's why we took into consideration all relevant factors. And we mentioned irradiation in our description, project description. But that wasn't the first, uh, criteria. So it's a combination of a lot of criteria.

01:28:57:09 - 01:29:07:17

Okay. And in relation to the point from the gentleman about the existing National Grid 400 volt line being at its design limits. Is that. Was that the case?

01:29:08:27 - 01:29:27:00

Mark Lloyd for the applicant. The plan for the new substation includes reinforcement of the 400 kV overhead line. So there will be there will be, uh, replacement of the cables, uh, concurrent with building of the new substation so that the capacity is increased.

01:29:30:07 - 01:29:44:24

Okay. That obviously leads back to understand they're going to do a town and Country Planning Act application. But if they're doing wider reinforcement works. Yeah. No. Okay. Um, if we could have the next speaker at the back, please.

01:29:49:13 - 01:30:28:08

Look. Good. My name is John Nguyen, director of Bright Stream. We have a project with our designers. I brought this up yesterday. Um, it's a Department for Energy Security. Net zero. Um, and we it's a regional solution to renewables, which is embedded into a bigger, um, resilience agenda within any particular area. Um, the concern we have is with the fact that this project we have is ongoing, and it's significantly connected to Oxfordshire County Council as well, because they've just started a programme with over Arabs, the engineering company.

01:30:28:19 - 01:31:05:07

Um, and the project is called Oxley Local Energy Plan, in which there's lots of accountability to do with social, uh, metrics and social impact. Um, on a much grander scale than any of us are used to. So our project with designers and with Arabs and Oxley is incredibly importantly, targeting that much bigger agenda in which the resilience becomes central. This particular project with the West barely even what? It doesn't even encounter that at all.

01:31:05:21 - 01:31:48:28

So I'd like to make sure that we have this as a specific issue going forwards for the list that you have. In addition to that, the cumulative impact specific issue would also be impacted, because our concern is that with the likes of Oxley, our frameworks that have much broader metrics, that's not something that's been taken into account here at all. So what happens at the end of the Oxley program that other Arabs are the lead consultant for when they come in with a program across the whole of Oxfordshire that requires a strong social component that is not even taken into consideration in this process here.

01:31:49:21 - 01:31:57:03

Okay. So I'd like to make a request that that is also brought in on this list that we're talking about today for specific issues.

01:31:58:04 - 01:32:19:09

Okay. I understand your position. We obviously have set the the agenda and the questions for today. I'll ask the applicant to take that that point away. Um, to, to deal with. But in relation to alternatives, I believe there's one more speaker in the public gallery at the back of the room. I appreciate there's also a hand available online. I'll come to you later.

01:32:20:06 - 01:32:51:04

Hello, I'm Harry Sinjin. I'm a member of the public. Um, I'm really disappointed that, um, National Grid are unable to send a representative today because, um, for most of the morning, we've been talking about what National Grid are or aren't doing. Um, and they're not here. Um, so is there any means of your, um, giving him a three line whip.

01:32:51:22 - 01:33:23:24

Um, I don't know the rules, but it does seem absolutely vital, uh, on this project, um, that they are in attendance to be able to contribute to the discussion and your investigation as to the suitability of this site. Um, I in particular wanted to ask the representative from, um, National Grid, um, what, uh, the parameters are for connecting into a 400 kV pylon line.

01:33:24:18 - 01:33:58:07

Now, as you know, uh, the root of this, um, pylon line, uh, travels from Oxford to Gloucester. And if you follow it like I have, um, there is a great stretch of countryside, much of it much of which is flat, um, and maybe of lesser quality land, um, where someone ought to be looking and to seeing. Could you connect that? But I don't understand the technology of connecting into a pylon line.

01:33:58:09 - 01:34:11:21

Which is why I wanted to ask them the question. Can you connect anywhere along that line? Um, and he's not here to ask, or he or she is not there to answer it. And that's the sort of thing we need to know. Thank you.

01:34:13:01 - 01:34:43:02

Thank you very much. We obviously have that question on the recording. National grid will be asked to view the recording, and we will ensure that that question is answered. Um, unfortunately, one of the, uh, powers of the Planning Act is not to be able to issue a summons on people to attend. So I'm afraid that I'm not able to compel anyone to attend. But we will continue to invite and we will pursue them through written questions. Thank you. I've. There's a further. I'm at the back.

01:34:43:04 - 01:34:50:16

Is that right? Just, uh. We'll just deal with yourself, sir. Then the handle online. And then I believe one of my colleagues has a question.

01:34:51:07 - 01:34:52:23

Thank you. Mark Juniper.

01:34:52:25 - 01:35:29:07

Representing the University of Oxford. Um, I just wanted to highlight a few matters that I think fall under this section of the agenda, but they could fall under others. But I think for expediency, I'll try and raise them now because they do relate to cable routing and options choices. Um, so the university are not involved in promoting the promote the proposed scheme, other than they've been approached by the developer, uh, to discuss terms of the installation of a cable route over their land to export power from the southern site near the university is therefore seeking to ensure that its interests and that of its tenants are reflected in the scheme.

01:35:29:09 - 01:36:05:26

Design. The choices that are made, the planning and delivery of all measures to ensure that any disturbance is mitigated and that losses are accounted for. I've got a number of key considerations that I'd like to raise, and the first one is that, um, the university has made a response to the DCA consultation through their legal advisers at gateways, that has been submitted on the 25th of February, 2025. Um, so it sits in the background, but I thought I'd just raised that as part of this communication. The elements that we've raised in that response are not in any particular order, but I've noted them down.

01:36:06:05 - 01:36:50:21

Impact on White and Woods triple SC. The university owns White and Woods, which is a thousand acres of ancient woodland, which is a triple SC and is reputed to be the most research area of woodland in the country. There's been research and education going on there for nearly 100 years. Um, it's species rich and there are all sorts of research and education and outreach projects that go on in that woodland that lies very close to and overlooks the proposed southern site by far more. And I would invite the examiner to come and stand and stare on university land by white and woods and from Hill, and also the Outdoor Education Center, which is also owned by the university but operated by Highland Charity.

01:36:50:27 - 01:37:27:17

I'd invite the examiners to come and stand and stare from there to better understand the impacts, because I know that that is of great concern by a number of local residents, the operators of that outdoor education charity, and also the university itself. So I'd like that to be noted, please. Um, I'd also like to, um, flag that there is impact on a woodland project that is currently underway on university land where there's a large area of new woodland planting that's been implemented, um, and, uh, that is being used to promote education and research linked to the species composition of new woodland planting for climate change purposes.

01:37:27:28 - 01:37:51:20

Uh, that is going to be directly affected by the cable route or one of the cable route options as currently proposed. So again, that is a scheme design matter. And we seek assurances around how that impact is going to be mitigated without that detailed design being available at this stage. Um, there's a significant impact on agricultural use of, uh, of the land. Um, the land that is identified for the cable routing.

01:37:52:03 - 01:37:53:18

Sorry, sir. I'm just going to.

01:37:53:20 - 01:38:05:06

Stop you there. I appreciate the cable routing option from before, but it does sound a bit more sort of generic rather than focusing on the alternatives of the proposed. Do you have a specific point about the alternatives?

01:38:05:19 - 01:38:29:01

I think we have lack of visibility as to alternatives or understanding as to why these cable routing options have been chosen. We we have had engagement through ardent management, suggesting a number of cable routes, but limited information about the whys and wherefores. It just seems to be a sort of fait accompli. So understanding that to mitigate some of the impacts that I've raised, um, would be really helpful.

01:38:29:17 - 01:38:42:17

Okay. Thank thank you very much. And I think I've already asked the applicant at as an action, if you like to, to provide more detail on those routing options throughout the examination so we can narrow those down.

01:38:44:15 - 01:38:52:15

Okay. Thank you. Uh, I believe there's a hand raised online. Apologies. I don't have your name on the screen. I just have the initials H.

01:38:54:02 - 01:39:25:12

Yeah, sorry. It's Alan Hearn representing big Brook and Johnston. Um, so mainly just to draw attention to the fact that our group has done a lot of work on the, um, applicants, uh, site selection, alternative site, site definition, uh, documents. And you find that in our relevant representation number 92, section one, uh, some of which, uh, picks up what you picked up earlier in your questioning. But we also make bigger points.

01:39:25:14 - 01:40:05:26

And I think this is sort of to emphasize that the applicant seems to have given no importance at all to try and find a real alternative, which was not affecting so much. Green belt, not affecting so much best and most versatile land, and not reasonably adjacent to a World Heritage site that just doesn't seem to have featured. And I think it's the case that your organization only has. This is the only DCO for a solar farm, which affects a large area of best and most versatile and green belt, and indeed is obviously adjacent to a World Heritage site.

01:40:05:28 - 01:40:21:20

So we were really quite surprised when we read the documents to see nothing really of substance about why some other site couldn't be found that had less impact on those three major designation types.

01:40:24:06 - 01:40:28:25

Okay. Thank you very much for that. Does the applicant wish to say anything in response.

01:40:30:01 - 01:41:04:21

To be it's on behalf of the applicant, not in detail. So I appreciate we're going to discuss green belt Greenbelt specifically this afternoon. And as requested, we'll follow up with more detail on the alternatives case and the factors from MPC and three as we've applied to them. The only specific point that I just reiterate I appreciate is this before, it's just on the BMV land point. And that as set out in our assessment, we conclude that only 5.5 hectares of BMV land will be permanently lost. And that is not significant in EIA terms, and therefore we don't consider it to be that impact on BMP land.

01:41:06:17 - 01:41:27:05

Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you everyone for your contributions. It is now 20 to 12 and we've been been going a while. I suggest we have a 15 now. Let's make it a 20 minute break then. It's a nice round number. Let's resume at 12:00 and we'll resume with the matter of cultural heritage. It's now adjourned. Thank you.