

## Hearing Transcript

<b>Project:</b>	Springwell Solar Farm
<b>Hearing:</b>	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) - Part 1
<b>Date:</b>	08 May 2025

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

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:02:20 - 00:00:34:23

Everyone. It's 10:00, and it's time for this hearing to begin. Um, I'd like to welcome you all to the first issue specific hearing for the Springwell solar farm project. Um, can I just confirm? Everyone can hear me at the back. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. And can I also confirm with, uh, the case manager, Miss Weatherby, that the live streaming and recording of the event has started? Yes. Thank you. Okay, well, my name is Jonathan Manning. Um, I'm a planning inspector and a chartered planner, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to examine the application.

00:00:36:02 - 00:00:41:00

Uh, I will now ask the other member of the panel to introduce himself. Good morning.

00:00:41:04 - 00:00:49:04

Uh, my name is Ben North. I'm a chartered architect, and I have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

00:00:50:04 - 00:01:22:09

Okay. Thank you. And together, we constitute the examining authority for the application. Um, before we delve into our all our discussions today, I just need to run through a few housekeeping matters. Um, so all mobile phones or other devices on silent, please. Um, the toilets are back towards the front of the building where you would have come in. Um, with the ladies in the bar area and the gents on the right is. I'm looking. Um, there's no plan. Fire drills. So if the alarm does sound, uh, is the real thing.

00:01:22:23 - 00:01:44:29

Uh, and if the fire is towards the back of the building behind us, um, then we leave straight out of the main exit and convene in the open space next to the Greggs shop. Um, if the fire is at the front of the building, uh, we leave any the door behind us. Um, out of the building, into the garden, around to the same place, uh, by the side of Greggs. Thank you.

00:01:47:17 - 00:02:07:22

Okay. In terms of the agenda and logistics, um, the meeting will follow the agenda, which was published on the National Infrastructure Planning website on the 28th of April. Um, it would be helpful to, uh, have a copy in front of you. And I'm not sure whether it would be possible to put the agenda up on the screen, so if that's okay. Thank you.

00:02:11:29 - 00:02:13:12

Sorry. Mr. Williams, are you.

00:02:23:04 - 00:02:29:24

Um. I will allow interested parties or anyone who has any questions at the end of my introduction to say something, then thank you.

00:02:31:15 - 00:03:04:13

Okay. The agenda for, uh, is for guidance only. And we may add or have follow up questions, depending on the answers received to some of the questions. Uh, and we will conclude the hearing as soon as all relevant contributions have been made and all questions asked and responded to. If the discussions can't be concluded, if we don't have time or say we, um, we will defer those matters into our written questions. Likewise, if you cannot answer the question being asked or require more time, uh, then, uh, we can, uh, request that that's provided in writing instead.

00:03:06:03 - 00:03:42:15

Okay. Today's hearing will be undertaken in a hybrid way, meaning some of you are present with us at the hearing venue, and some of you are joining us virtually using Microsoft Teams. Uh, we will make sure that however, uh, however you, uh, however you participate today, that you will be getting a fair opportunity to speak if you wish. Uh, recording of today's hearing will be made available on the Springwell Solar Farm section of the National Infrastructure Planning website. Uh, as soon as practicable after the hearing is finished. With this in mind, please ensure that you speak clearly into the microphone stating your name and who you are representing each time you speak.

00:03:43:18 - 00:03:51:09

Uh, if you're not able, uh, or if you're not at a table, there is a roving microphone. So please do wait for this to arrive before you start speaking.

00:03:52:29 - 00:04:02:08

Uh, the recording allows any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed at the hearing at a later date, if they wish.

00:04:04:01 - 00:04:34:06

As the recordings are retained and published, they form a public record that contains personal information to which the UK General Data Protection Regulation applies. Participants must do their best to avoid providing any information which should otherwise be kept private and confidential. If there is a need to refer to such information, it should be provided in written form, although this will still be published. Personal and private content can be redacted or removed before it's made publicly available.

00:04:35:04 - 00:05:08:01

Any person who is unclear on this point should ask the case team for guidance before they place personal and private information into the public domain. A link to the planning Inspectorate's Privacy Note was provided in the notification for this hearing. And again, if you have any questions, please speak to the case team. Okay. In terms of timings, we will have a mid-morning break and we'll adjourn at 1150 to observe the two minute's silence at midday for the day. We will likely break for lunch around 1:00 for an hour.

00:05:08:18 - 00:05:14:07

And similarly to the one we were having a mid-afternoon break and aim to finish no later than 5:00.

00:05:21:02 - 00:05:48:04

Okay. I'm going to now ask those who are participating in today's meeting to introduce themselves. When I state your organisation's name, could you introduce yourself stating who you are, who you

represent and the agenda item that you are likely to wish to speak on? Um, if you're not representing an organisation, please confirm your name, summarise your interest in the application and confirm the agenda item upon which you wish to speak. And can we start with the applicant, please?

00:05:49:20 - 00:06:20:26

Thank you. Good morning sir. Says. My name is Alexis Coleman. I'm a legal director at law firm Pinsent Masons. I act on behalf of the applicant, Springwell Energy Farm Limited. I'm joined at the table here by my colleague Olivia Henshall, senior associate at Pinsent Masons. I also have Miss Sarah Price, director at DWD, and miss Jade Garner, principal environmental consultant at risk and online. I have Mr. Gillet, director of Hum Beat and they will assist in responding to agenda items three and four.

00:06:20:29 - 00:06:28:06

I have other colleagues who will probably speak to subsequent agenda items, but if that's okay with you, I'll probably just introduce them. Um, as, as and when.

00:06:28:18 - 00:06:32:23

Okay. Thank you very much for that. Um, and Lincolnshire County Council, please.

00:06:34:16 - 00:07:06:16

Oh good morning sir. I'm Justine Foster, I'm the infrastructure manager for Lincolnshire County Council. Um, at the table today, I'm joined by Mr. Oliver Brown, who is a landscape consultant for AA consulting, who is representing both Lincolnshire County Council and North Kesteven District Council. To Mr. Brown's right, I'm joined by Miss Ella Charles, who's a planning apprentice at Lincolnshire County Council. Um, I'm also joined by other specialist officers from the council today who will be covering topics around heritage and traffic and transport.

00:07:06:18 - 00:07:09:11

Um, but I'll introduce them at the appropriate point on the agenda.

00:07:09:13 - 00:07:14:00

Thank you. Okay. Thank you. And Kesteven District Council, please.

00:07:14:04 - 00:07:37:21

Good morning sir. My name is Samuel Sheikh. I'm of council. I'm instructed to act on behalf of Norfolk Southern District Council. I have to my right. Mr. Nick Feltham, who's the development manager at North Kesteven. And to my left, Mrs. Sylvia Bland, who's an asset planning consultant. I also have because I only have one additional person, Mr. Matt Bentley, who's the council's conservation officer, who I anticipate will speak to item nine, Cultural Heritage.

00:07:37:26 - 00:07:43:21

Okay. Thank you very much. Um, Historic England, are you with us? Virtually.

00:07:45:09 - 00:07:52:18

I am, thank you, sir. Uh, Tim Allen from historic England. I'm here to assist you on item nine.

00:07:53:15 - 00:07:58:18

Okay. Thank you very much. And the Environment Agency. Are you with us? Virtually.

00:07:59:18 - 00:08:10:00

I am, yes. Thank you sir. I'm Jennifer Moffatt, planning specialist for the Environment Agency. And I'm here to assist if needed. On agenda item eight. Water environment.

00:08:11:09 - 00:08:26:21

Lovely. Thank you very much. And can I just check if there's anyone from National Grid, National Highways or the UK Health Security Agency with us? I don't believe there is, but I just check before we move on. Okay. Thank you.

00:08:29:23 - 00:08:39:10

Okay. I'll now ask if there's any other people in the room who may wish to speak today, and if so, on which agenda items that is likely to be on.

00:08:42:01 - 00:08:48:22

Mr. Williams, would you like to. There should be a roving mic if that can make its way to you. Thank you.

00:08:55:05 - 00:09:20:19

Mark Williams I'll be representing Scotland and Kirkby Greene Parish Council and the Springwell Social Action Group. Um, I will be talking about, um, most of the items if necessary, so I'll be listening and if necessary, I will want to speak. Um, will you, as per my hand up at the beginning, will you give me an opportunity prior to going into the agenda to have a couple of points?

00:09:20:21 - 00:09:30:15

I'll come to the purpose of the hearing once we've done the introductions, which it maybe sounds like your query might be more related to. So I'll do that then. Thank you. Yes. Thank you.

00:09:35:27 - 00:09:46:27

Hello. Good morning. Uh, Stuart Jackson. Uh, I'm here representing myself. And the particular area I would like to discuss is habitat, which I think will probably come into the section ten.

00:09:51:27 - 00:09:53:19

Okay. Thank you. Anyone else?

00:09:56:13 - 00:09:58:21

Is Overton? I think. Thank you.

00:09:59:17 - 00:10:28:27

Thank you, Councillor Marianne Overton. From the chair of the Cliff Villages Action Group. Solo action group, but also a district and county councillor for the area. Neighbouring, but partly intruding into my division as well. So I would like to contribute a rather similarly. Uh, from time to time, if I can see where I can make a really good contribution. I have prepared.

00:10:29:01 - 00:10:30:15

Thank you. Okay. Thank you.

00:10:32:13 - 00:10:43:19

My name is James Gallagher. I'm a resident of Nathan B, and I want to talk about the traffic. I also want to make a comment about the cumulative effects, but specifically relating to traffic, so I think they'd be best taken together.

00:10:45:12 - 00:10:46:12

Okay. Thank you.

00:10:52:27 - 00:11:01:01

Hello. My name is James Bond, chairman of Digby Parish Council. I would like to speak about the decommissioning at the end of the project.

00:11:06:15 - 00:11:13:24

Okay. Can I just check which agenda item? That's related to decommissioning. Isn't a particular agenda item for today?

00:11:24:25 - 00:11:27:26

Sorry. Could you just repeat that into the microphone? Thank you.

00:11:28:06 - 00:11:34:24

I read the applicant submission submission and it was very vague about it and I wanted more clarity on it.

00:11:35:12 - 00:12:11:29

Okay. I'll come on to the purpose of the hearing next, just to make clear about the discussions that we're going to have today and the comments from interested parties, how they need to be related to the discussions that we're having. So I think maybe we'll come on to that, which hopefully will make clearer, um, the discussions which are open. It's important to point out at this point today is slightly different than it was yesterday, where it was an open floor session for local residents and the local community to come and say whatever they wished. Um, this is a much more structured discussion focused on areas that the examining authority wish to explore.

00:12:12:14 - 00:12:31:08

Uh, and if you do have any concerns about anything else, then they can be provided in writing at deadline one if you wish. Uh, and more detailed discussions would likely take place at the hearings in July, but, um, so I'll explain that again, uh, shortly. Okay. Anyone else that wishes to speak?

00:12:31:10 - 00:12:37:03

Hi, my name's Kerry Fitzpatrick, and I would like to comment on section eight, please.

00:12:37:16 - 00:12:38:12

Okay. Thank you.

00:12:42:02 - 00:12:54:06

My name is councillor Rob Kendrick, councillor for Mothering and Rural Division, in which the proposed site is located. I'd like to speak on item five, possibly and seven. Thank you very much.

00:12:57:22 - 00:12:58:29

Okay. Thank you.

00:13:00:18 - 00:13:09:09

Hello, my name is James Cuffe. I'm a resident. I was hoping to speak about the plume analysis report. Was that that be section six? Maybe.

00:13:10:00 - 00:13:11:08

Okay. Thank you.

00:13:16:03 - 00:13:20:24

Okay. Yes. Very front. If that's microphone can come forward.

00:13:23:23 - 00:13:25:03

Mr. Elvin, thank you.

00:13:26:02 - 00:13:48:13

Yeah. My name is Mr. Elvin. I'm from Digby. I'd like to speak on the. I'm not sure the number of it, but it's the one that deals with pollution of water and soil. That sort of thing. Is it number? Number eight. Water environment. Yeah. Does that. Yeah. Yeah yeah that'd be the one.

00:13:48:27 - 00:13:52:21

Okay. So in relation to the, the flood risk that's the.

00:13:54:17 - 00:14:00:00

Not so much flood. Maybe I'm looking at the wrong one. There's one that mentions soil.

00:14:02:25 - 00:14:08:05

And because it's the aquifer that I want to talk about as well as the soil.

00:14:09:00 - 00:14:19:05

Okay. I think we'll come on to the purpose of the, the hearing, because I think hopefully there's a bit of confusion about what discussion is going to take place today. But we'll come on to that now.

00:14:19:11 - 00:14:22:17

Yeah. The wording has changed a little bit there isn't it, from yesterday.

00:14:23:00 - 00:14:24:22

Um, it wouldn't have been changed.

00:14:25:07 - 00:14:28:28

Uh, no, I mean it's it. Well it's a different display. Yeah I accept that. Yeah.

00:14:29:03 - 00:14:29:18

Right.

00:14:29:20 - 00:14:32:01

Okay. It was definitely on there was soil yesterday.

00:14:32:06 - 00:14:36:07

Um, but it'd be a different agenda for today than it would have been from yesterday, but, um.

00:14:37:00 - 00:14:44:18

Oh, yeah. No, I thought it was one of the, uh. I thought it was one of the sort of subjects that was going to come up listed under, um,

00:14:46:11 - 00:14:47:19

issue specific.

00:14:49:00 - 00:15:04:02

The assessment of principal issues. That's probably where maybe you would have seen it. But, um, that's different from the discussions that we're having today. Okay. All right. Thank you. But I'll explain a little bit more about the discussions to take place today. Next.

00:15:04:04 - 00:15:04:19

Yeah.

00:15:05:03 - 00:15:06:18

That one would be very grateful.

00:15:06:25 - 00:15:07:20

Okay. Thank you.

00:15:10:02 - 00:15:10:21

Thank you.

00:15:11:03 - 00:15:12:03

Thank you, Mr. Irvin.

00:15:16:15 - 00:15:18:21

Okay. I think that's everybody.

00:15:21:23 - 00:16:00:18

Okay. Well, for moving on to agenda item uh, two. Um, I would say I'll just briefly come to matters that I've touched on already, but, um, the hearing seeks to cover a range of issues that come under broad umbrella of Environmental matters. So this hearing will consider high level matters relating to



alternatives and site selection. The grid connection. Cumulative effects. Air quality, traffic and transport, water environment, cultural heritage and landscape, and visual effects. Now, I know many of you wish to have your say on those matters today, and you'll have heard the proposed timings that I've already set out.

00:16:00:20 - 00:16:41:19

As mentioned previously, we aim to finish no later than 5:00 at the latest and if any, if necessary. Any things we can't cover today will be carried over into our first written questions. We do have a fairly extensive list of questions which are primarily aimed at the applicant, but there are also some questions for other parties, particularly the local authorities who are here today. The purpose of the hearing is to enable us, as the examining authority, to gain further understanding of the evidence relating to the various topics within the agenda, And we will both be asking questions on different topics today to help the hearing run as smoothly as possible.

00:16:42:01 - 00:17:18:19

We will run through all of our questions on each topic agenda item before then asking for any contributions from interested parties. Annual representations from interested parties must relate directly to the discussion undertaken, and it is important to say that today is not an open floor session to give wider submissions on each of the topics on the agenda. If you do have wider points to make, please provide these in writing at deadline one. And it's important to note that written submissions carry exactly the same weight as oral submissions, so the only questions in relation to the purpose of the hearing today.

00:17:19:07 - 00:17:22:16

Mr. Williams, I don't know if that's an appropriate point for you to.

00:17:33:02 - 00:18:10:28

Yeah. So, look, I just wanted to raise up after yesterday's hearing. Um, quite a few people came up to me, and there were a couple of concerns, particularly around the summary raised by the legal team at the end of yesterday's event. Um, essentially, the legal team were quite flippant, quite flippantly batted away our concerns around the sourcing of the panels. Um, we feel that it's not acceptable whilst procurement has not started on this actual application. EDF and Luminous Energy have sourced panels for current projects that are currently in operation.

00:18:11:00 - 00:18:28:21

Okay, Mr. Williams, this is an issue specific hearing on this agenda item. If you have any reply to what the applicant said yesterday. Please provide those at deadline. One is post hearing submissions. That's the appropriate time to make those points. Not not here this morning.

00:18:31:02 - 00:18:32:18

Disagree, but okay.

00:18:34:00 - 00:18:38:00

Okay. Anyway, other questions in relation to the hearing today.

00:18:44:23 - 00:18:55:11

Okay. Thank you. In that case, we'll move on to our first agenda item which is alternatives and site selection. And I'll hand over to, uh, Mr. North. Over. Thank you.

00:18:56:10 - 00:19:16:05

Thank you. So starting with, um, the size and scale of the proposed development. Um, can I ask the applicant to explain the approach to considering alternative sizes and scales of the proposed development, including the reason that smaller sites of less than a thousand acres were not considered.

00:19:17:28 - 00:19:29:01

Thank you. Sir. Miss Coleman, for the applicant, I'm going to pass firstly to Mrs. Sarah Price, um, director at DWP, and between Mrs. Price and Mr. Gillett online, they will be able to take you through the approach.

00:19:32:25 - 00:19:35:12

Thank you. Sara Price for the applicant.

00:19:36:25 - 00:20:07:06

So I was going to start by setting out a sort of a summary if it's helpful, says on our approach to site selection and identifying alternatives. And then I'll move on to the specific question that you've asked on the agenda. Thank you. In doing so, um, I'd make reference to a number of documents, um, for the hearings benefit, where we deal with our approach to alternatives and set out the policy position, um, for that.

00:20:07:16 - 00:20:41:05

Um, and particularly I'd draw the, um, your attention says to appendix one of the planning statement, which is the site selection report, and that's document reference as 018. Um, and also to, um, the planning statement paragraphs 1.26 to 8.1 .37, where we set out the policy principles that we've been guided by and have followed in terms of consideration of alternatives.

00:20:43:25 - 00:21:14:07

I'd start by saying that in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning EIA regulations 2017, the applicant has considered reasonable alternatives, including sizes and scale, where that's required. And I'll come on to how we've done that. And importantly, the applicant has only considered reasonable alternatives, which are those that are genuine alternatives that meet the need for the development in the time scales available.

00:21:14:13 - 00:21:19:00

And again, I'll come on to where we set out and explain that

00:21:20:24 - 00:21:54:24

overall. And there's no general requirement to consider alternatives Additives, or to establish whether the proposed project represents the best option from a policy perspective that's set out in paragraph 4.3.9 of N1. However, as set out, the applicant has looked at the reasonable alternatives and explained those that have been studied, taking into account environmental, social and economic effects, including, where relevant, technical and commercial feasibility.

00:21:55:01 - 00:22:03:09

And again, the policy reference for where that set out is. Paragraph 4.3.15 of n1.

00:22:07:19 - 00:22:49:20

And one also explains that the applicant should only consider alternatives that deliver the same infrastructure capacity in the same time scale, and that's set out in paragraph 4.3.23 of Npci Option one. And I think that that's particularly important for the context in which the applicant sought to consider sites that were capable of delivering a utility scale solar project. Um, there are, of course, certain cases where there is a policy requirement to assess alternatives, and I'm sure that we'll come on to those later under other topics.

00:22:50:00 - 00:23:23:03

Um, those are set out in the paragraphs I referred to previously in the planning statement and for instance, include, um, where we're compulsory acquiring land and those, uh, reasons for where we need to do that or where the applicant needs to do that is set out in statements of reasons. Um, there are also other policy requirements, for instance, in relation to impact on biological and biodiversity and geological conservation interests, which the um, in this case the scheme doesn't trigger.

00:23:23:21 - 00:24:10:06

Um, and also, um, in relation to the sequential test, which I know that we're coming on to, um, later, um, bearing in mind those key principles and the applicants ought to identify sites as so as you've identified over 1000 acres or more, um, on the basis that sites of that size would be capable of delivering a utility scale solar farm of around about 250 to 500MW, and that thousand acre size was identified based on the rule of thumb of 2 to 4 acres per megawatt, which is, um, explained in paragraph 2.10 .17 of NPS three.

00:24:12:13 - 00:24:46:20

So the applicant didn't consider smaller sites on the basis that this wouldn't meet the identified objectives to the scheme, which was to deliver a utility scale solar farm. And before setting out a bit more detail, how we've considered those alternative size sites. And I wanted to pass over to my colleague, Mr. Gillet online, just to explain a bit more about why we initially focused on this location.

00:24:46:29 - 00:24:51:14

And would that be helpful to you, sir? I appreciate it goes slightly beyond the size and scale.

00:24:52:21 - 00:25:20:00

That that would be helpful if I could just ask, um, just a follow up question. Uh, does that the the size and scale that you have considered, does that represent an optimum scale for solar development, or is that in terms of efficiency or functionality, is there is there a certain scale or capacity of solar development that that represents the best efficiency.

00:25:20:21 - 00:25:47:23

So I think, sir, actually, that Mr. Gillett might be able to help with that question as well, because what he will be able to run through is the grid connection and capacity available in this area, and why we why the applicant was looking to deliver a project of this size. So, um, if asked Mr.. Get it to perhaps answer that question and then for you sirs and then move on to some of the other principles.

00:25:48:09 - 00:25:48:24

Okay.

00:25:48:26 - 00:25:49:22

Thank you. Thank you.

00:25:53:03 - 00:25:57:13

Hi. Good morning. For the applicant. I hope you can hear me. Okay.

00:25:58:11 - 00:26:07:16

That's fine. We can hear you. Um, is it possible? One asked, two screens in front of us to swap over from the agenda. There we go. So we can see you properly. Thank you very much.

00:26:10:00 - 00:26:53:07

Um, fantastic. Thank you for confirming that. You can hear me. Um, so I was going to spend a couple of moments drawing from the statement of need. Um, to answer the point that my colleague Miss Price raised around why the applicant, uh, started to look or looked for a suitable site for the proposed developments in the area. Um, that the proposed development, um, is located. Um, I'll deal with, with two, um, principal aspects, those of network connection, um, and also of irradiance, um, in relation to the suitability of site.

00:26:54:22 - 00:26:55:29

Um, so.

00:26:58:07 - 00:27:29:23

The UK is delivering towards its legal obligations to meet net zero. Um, significant progress has been made in reducing electricity system emissions, but more progress is needed to achieve the government's aims. So the need for low carbon infrastructure is urgent and unprecedented in scale, and government has established a mission to deliver clean power from 2030.

00:27:31:20 - 00:28:05:09

Um, the applicant is preparing an addendum to its planning statement, which will be submitted to the examination, um, in due course, which will um, in written form, address the implications of the Clean Power 2030 action Plan, which was delivered in December. Uh, published in 20th December 2023. Um, and also of the um, uh, their incorporation in, uh, the draft updated, uh, national policy statements, um, of April 2025.

00:28:06:12 - 00:28:40:22

Um, the context I wanted to describe was that UK decarbonisation, decarbonisation progress to date has been achieved primarily through the closure of all UK coal generation and the development of renewable generation capacity um, both to replace capacity which has been or is due to be closed, um, and also to meet the expected growth in electricity demand which is required to achieve net zero.

00:28:42:15 - 00:29:25:04

And the important point is that although all UK coal generation is now closed, and to put a number on that, uh, ten years ago there was approximately ten gigawatts of coal generation active, and there is now zero generation or zero capacity, um, active. Um, the important point is that the transmission infrastructure, which was designed to flow the power from those assets to where it is consumed is left behind, and the use of that infrastructure is critical to the delivery of government's net zero plans.

00:29:27:03 - 00:29:57:21

Section 3.13 of the statements of Need, which was submitted to the application, describes the Collections Action Plan, which was published in November 2023 by government and Ofgem. And it describes also how the efficient utilisation of existing networks can defer or negate the need for expensive infrastructure, and therefore is aligned with net zero objectives.

00:29:58:21 - 00:30:31:11

So the existing infrastructure, which previously ensured the safe and secure bulk transmission of electricity from historical coal production from the Midlands, which is historically an area of predominantly coal generation, to. Wherever in the country that power is needed. Um, that includes the transmission line between West Burton and Beca Fen, and that's shown in the statement of need figure 8.4.

00:30:32:09 - 00:30:37:08

And the proposed development would, if consented, utilise. Sorry sorry

00:30:39:04 - 00:30:39:19

sorry.

00:30:40:00 - 00:31:12:20

That this is this is helpful context and I think it it'd be it's useful to have in writing but perhaps rather than go through it go through this context now. I wonder if you could address the, um, address, the question of what drives the most appropriate scale of development in this place. And I appreciate that. Um, the, the context of the network connection feeds into that, But I wonder if you could move on to that.

00:31:12:28 - 00:31:13:18

Is that okay?

00:31:14:15 - 00:31:50:02

Of course. Yes. Certainly. Do that. Um, the question that you raised earlier around an optimum and size of sewing facility is really a question which relates to specific developments. So, um, uh, there are benefits to larger scale developments because they bring forward larger benefits, more significant benefits, and as I said, are able to utilize, um, existing capacity, which is efficient from a um, an existing infrastructure perspective.

00:31:51:04 - 00:31:51:19

Um,

00:31:53:15 - 00:32:46:22

the, the, the line, um, which I mentioned, the transmission line between um, West Burton and Bic often um, is a high voltage line with available capacity and the applicant sought to deliver, um through a, um, an application to the grid for a grid connection into that line. Um, a significant quantity of energy generation over the life of the or the expected life of the project, and has brought forward an application which seeks to make the best use of, um, the transmission connection infrastructure and the connection offer, which was obtained, um, in order to bring forward the greatest benefits, um, to, uh, to the net zero aims.

00:32:48:23 - 00:33:16:20

I guess the corollary, therefore. So and this might be what you're getting at, is that, um, a different scheme in a different location, maybe at a different size or a different scale. And that may be optimal for that scheme. But the proposal that has come forward here has been designed to be optimal for this scheme, in this location. I'll pause there just to see if that answers your question.

00:33:16:25 - 00:34:00:03

Yeah, yeah. That's helpful. And, um, the next agenda item for will be in relation to grid connection. So I think that's helpful. And if we if we move on from there now. Thank you. Um so my next my next question with regards to alternatives and site selection is whether and I'm not sure who from the applicant team is best to answer this. Um, whether the criteria of a maximum of two landowners indirectly limited the search to areas of agricultural lands instead of, uh, previously developed land, which may involve, uh, more landowners and greater complexity around that.

00:34:04:05 - 00:34:36:25

Thank you, sir. Sara Price for the applicant. And so again, I'll draw attention to some references in the application documentation which deal with this point. And then I'll answer your question. So again the site selection report which is appendix one of the planning statement as 018, deals with the point about landowners at paragraphs 3.2. 1 to 3.2 .13.

00:34:37:15 - 00:35:08:26

Um, just as a starting point set out in those paragraphs, it's reasonable in the context of the need, the need identified by Mr. Gillett, for the applicant to seek to develop a site with as few landowners as possible. Having fewer landowners means that the site can be brought forward and delivered more speedily, and also reduces the need for potential compulsory acquisition powers.

00:35:09:04 - 00:35:15:18

And that's why the applicant initially sought sites with as few landowners as possible.

00:35:18:09 - 00:35:50:00

Looking at the grid connection capacity identified on the West Burton to be a fence line, and the applicant used their judgement and knowledge of the area to seek to identify large landholdings along that line that would be capable of delivering a utility scale solar farm, and those identified five relatively large landholdings, including the blank estate, which now forms the site of this application.

00:35:50:08 - 00:36:45:23

And another benefit of the blank Nie estate was that it was a very large landholding, and so gave opportunities to be able to develop a scheme which is the applicant has set out is able to, um, also

deliver mitigation and enhancement and to seek to provide suitable offsets from community and other environmental constraints, which I know will come later to in the hearings. Um, so in terms of your specific question about whether the number of landowners, um, specifically meant that there wasn't, um, an agricultural land of other grades or previously developed land considered, it didn't artificially limit that there was a, um, a desire to limit landowners, and the applicant found a suitable site that was close to the overhead lines and performed well in terms of a range of different criteria.

00:36:46:14 - 00:37:12:05

So I'm sorry, can I just ask on that point then? So did the applicant look at sites with more landowners to kind of to confirm that? Um, that that's a site with more landowners, didn't in fact use less agricultural land, or didn't in fact offer the chance to use more previously developed land.

00:37:13:18 - 00:37:44:00

So it's dealing with the agricultural land point first. And this part of Lincolnshire, um, has high levels of agricultural land. And indeed, um, that's the most versatile land. All of the land within the search area, um, was either a mixture. Well, it was a mixture of grade two and grade three land, um, with similar characteristics from an agricultural perspective, from um, the application site.

00:37:44:11 - 00:38:31:07

Uh, what, um, the landowners, um, sorry, the applicant's search did identify. Was that, um, the further east you go, for instance, there's higher levels of agricultural land. Um, sorry, BMV agricultural land. And one of the reasons that they sought to keep as close to the overhead line as possible and identified the blankly state and the other land holdings, was that they largely avoided that large area, a grade one agricultural land. So, um, having sort of looked at this again, having that criteria of being able to keep the number of landowners up for the principal solar PV site, I should say, because the cable route obviously crosses a number of different landowners.

00:38:31:22 - 00:39:06:05

Um, didn't, in the applicant's view, artificially mean that there were sites with more landowners that would have been able to reduce the amount of agricultural land. Um, so in relation to the point on previously developed land, I know that you've asked a question on this, and we will come back in further detail. The applicant has now done some further work as well to identify that there that there isn't any large enough sites for previously developed land within the search area identified, but we will provide some further detail to you on that.

00:39:06:13 - 00:39:25:25

So that's in response to the the ask one question in relation to that. Yes. Okay. That's great. Thank you. Um, okay. At this point, um, I will ask if there's any comments from either the local authorities or other interested parties, um, on the criteria for site selection.

00:39:36:29 - 00:39:41:18

For North Coast and District council. So we don't have any comments at this stage, I should say. I,

00:39:43:08 - 00:39:51:24

I should say I want to reserve our position in respect of we may address some of these aspects, not la, uh, in due course, but for the purpose of this hearing, don't have anything further.

00:39:52:13 - 00:39:54:23

Okay. Thank you. Lancashire County council.

00:39:54:25 - 00:39:55:10

Counsel.

00:39:56:07 - 00:40:11:26

Thank you sir. Stephen Foster for Lancashire County Council. Um, we've listened to what the applicants said today, and we've I've made a note of the fact that there'll be some more detail provided on previously developed land, and we may come back in due course in some comments in our written representations.

00:40:12:08 - 00:40:17:14

Okay. Thank you. Um, any interested parties? Yes.

00:40:19:25 - 00:40:36:14

That's a good question. As of ignorance. Why specifically look for areas of land north of Vik? Often, given that the energy is predominantly in the south of the country, why was the selection criteria defined to areas north of that often, rather than looking at land south of often?

00:40:37:23 - 00:40:44:11

Thank you. Could the applicant, uh, address that point on, um, location within the country? Thank you.

00:40:44:23 - 00:40:59:13

It's common with the applicant. Um, we think it might be something Mr. Gillet can help with. Um, online. Um, he may be able to provide a short answer. And again, obviously we're picking up on the points generally in writing. So he can also expand there. But I'll just pass to Mr. Gillet.

00:41:01:22 - 00:41:05:19

Thank you very much. So let's for the applicant. Um.

00:41:07:28 - 00:41:39:09

Try try not to go over um, uh, ground that I've gone over before. There is a significant, urgent and unprecedented need, um, for, um, new low carbon energy to be connected to the grid. Um, and the grid, um, infrastructure is, uh, currently a limit to that. So, um, my answer to that, um, uh, that that question would be that there may be, um, and I don't have the detail in front of you.

00:41:39:11 - 00:42:18:13

There may be applications, um, or developers who are looking at land south of BIC often for alternate sorry, not alternate for additional schemes for other schemes, different schemes. Um, but the applicant, um, looked at land, um, combining those combinations of available infrastructure along the line, um, suitable land and uh, levels of irradiation, um, and the, the area that they, um, that they looked at, um, has been narrowed down to the application, um, for the proposed development, which has come forward.



00:42:20:12 - 00:42:26:28

Thank you. Um, there's a couple more hands up in the front. Front row to my right. Um,

00:42:28:20 - 00:42:29:19

Mr. Alvin.

00:42:30:28 - 00:43:08:09

Mr. Elvin, uh, from Dubai. Yeah. Um, during the presentation that the applicant was making at the beginning, uh, they talked about. Well, she talked about, um, sorry, excuse me, but I'm talking about the applicants generally. Um, talked about having a conducted a search for, you know, various alternative sites of various sites and what have you. Is there some kind of record or any documentation? So would it be possible for, uh,

00:43:09:26 - 00:43:36:08

spectra and ourselves to see that, to see some evidence that there was a search made for a possible alternative site on less productive agricultural land? And it wasn't just the fact that Blanca Estates had a huge amount of land there, and they were ready to, uh, let some of it be leased. So I'm asking that question.

00:43:36:18 - 00:44:03:13

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Alwyn. So, um, I'll ask the applicant to respond, but, um, I, I expect that you will say the, um, the various options there were, there were a number of options that were presented within the environmental statement. Um, and as and we're expecting a response to that. The HC one regarding previously developed plans as well.

00:44:03:28 - 00:44:40:09

Um, for the applicant. Um, yes, absolutely. And we have set out um, so if you go to our, um, planning statement on the website and we can assist you if help is needed in this respect, but we have appendix one to that document. Um, the reference is as dash 018 and it has an appendix one, which is the site selection report which will set out, um, various the whole approach that Mrs. Price and Mr. Gillet have been speaking to in terms of setting the parameters and how that process worked, and then also part of the environmental statement, which I think is chapter four, um, in terms of alternatives as well.

00:44:40:11 - 00:44:48:06

So we've set out the approach there and what the outcome of that process is. But obviously, if you have difficulty, um, locating those documents to let us know.

00:44:50:23 - 00:44:53:05

Thank you. And Miss Overton.

00:44:56:07 - 00:45:27:12

Thank you. Councillor Marianne Overton from the, uh, the ward member. It's my division. The issue that I wanted to just pick up was the breadth, the length and breadth of the options that you've considered. I did have a look at your site selection. It seemed to me to be very narrow. It seemed to

me that you decided that it had to be somewhere near Nathan Bay. Um, I think the one of the scripts, um, it was very. It wasn't broad at all.

00:45:28:09 - 00:46:02:08

The landowners were invited to put forward land. Um, and I think that's, you know, I understand that, but they weren't, you know, many of them were not selected because you'd already decided. It seems that, you know, a couple of big landowners that'll do us And actually, the planning is not supposed to be about what's convenient for developers, nor for landowners. Planning is supposed to be about what's good for the whole. And that means that we should be setting out where we think.

00:46:02:19 - 00:46:34:15

Actually, I would like to see the planning set out. Where is the best places to put these? Certainly on top of an aquifer, on wide open landscapes with good farmland is not a good place. Um, notwithstanding the comments that were made earlier about the amount of sun it gets and so on, I don't think those are, um, so anything like as decisive. The and the point about the line anywhere between often and um, you know, the whole length of it that you've pointed out.

00:46:34:17 - 00:46:56:15

Um, Burton I think it was that's a long distance. So why not even be you know, it still doesn't pick out that this area that you've picked out for spring? Well, it does not. You haven't made the case that this is the right place. I don't see the justification is sufficient to validate that remark. Thank you.

00:46:57:20 - 00:47:01:06

Thank you. The applicant likes comment on that comment.

00:47:01:08 - 00:47:33:20

The applicant I'll just respond briefly. And I think obviously we'll come back in writing in more detail, but just to pick up several points. Um, the area of search was very much focused on the available grid infrastructure, which is that overhead line, and that's entirely in accordance with n three. Um, I think probably 210, 25 and 24. Um, definitely. And the site selection report sets us out. It's always a balance of factors looking for the site, including environmental factors, as you said. So best and most versatile land flood risk, um, and various other factors that you know, to do with ecology and heritage.

00:47:33:22 - 00:48:06:03

All those have played a part in that, in that approach, and we've set that out in the site selection report. But it also comes down to other obligations that play into that, such as a legal obligation to minimise use of compulsory acquisition powers. And there are also environmental benefits to having willing and not too many landowners, because it actually helps us to work with landowners to achieve, um, benefits from an environmental perspective on the site. So it is a range of factors. All of the ones you've mentioned are included, but it's a balance of all of those.

00:48:06:10 - 00:48:15:13

Um, we can expand upon that further to the extent we haven't already in the site selection report and in response to the questions. But, um, yeah, I think that's probably all we need to say for the moment.

00:48:16:13 - 00:48:19:25

Thank you. Are there any other Mr. Williams?

00:48:21:00 - 00:48:53:29

Yeah. Mark Williams, Springwell action Group. Um, I think there was a couple of really interesting points made by the applicant there. Um, the use of the term rule of thumb. I'd like to use the word finger in the air. Essentially, when when you were looking at, um, the, the compelling reasons for solar. It very much is finger in the air. You've got no idea how much sunshine there is in the area. You don't know how many days it's going to be cloudy. It is just a fishing exercise. Then when we look at the actual land that you've chosen.

00:48:54:01 - 00:48:59:11

Again, another fishing exercise. There was a there was an estate that is

00:49:01:00 - 00:49:26:22

probably struggling financially. And they were very, very keen to do this. You know, it's not about the right location. You went on a fishing exercise and a greedy fish grabbed hold of that hook very quickly. Um, so let's be honest about it. You know, this isn't an environmental. It's pure and simple, and we all know what it is. It's a money grab.

00:49:32:15 - 00:49:46:19

Thank you. Can I just make a slight observation in terms of, um, making representations? Can they be aimed at the examining authority rather than directly at the applicant. And obviously if we need to ask questions, we will do so through. Through us if that's. Thank you.

00:49:48:23 - 00:49:52:05

Thank you. The applicant want to respond.

00:49:52:18 - 00:50:08:06

For the applicant. Um, no, I'm not going to come back in detail on that. Um, obviously I don't agree with the comments, and the other factors very much play a part in site selection. And, um, yeah, I don't think I need to expand on that further in terms of what I've said and what's in our documentation.

00:50:08:12 - 00:50:19:04

Thank you. Just before we move on, can I just check that the further work that's going to be undertaken, does that consider more landowners than to? Is that part of the exercise in looking at.

00:50:20:11 - 00:50:56:05

Um, Sarah Price for the applicant? Uh, the our response to the first written question is going to look at available brownfield land, um, in the area. Um, because we've sort of been through that exercise, but I don't want to sort of prejudge the fact that we haven't submitted that to you yet, and there is very little brownfield land in the search area, and certainly none that meets the size criteria. So we won't be then moving on to looking at sites with further landowners, because there there isn't that land available to look at.

00:50:56:17 - 00:51:32:18

Um, if that answers your question. So we're not planning on doing an exercise to look at what further landowners might have been available had we looked at the time, partly for the reasons that I set out earlier when we were talking about the policy and establishing that we're not seeking to find the absolute best site here, there's a very significant need that if alternatives were available, we believe those would be in addition to this site. And for all the other reasons that Miss Coleman set out then as well, in terms of the balancing exercise that we undertook.

00:51:33:07 - 00:51:34:10

Okay. Thank you.

00:51:36:06 - 00:51:41:02

Thank you. Um. Are there any other interested parties, Mr. Williams?

00:51:44:14 - 00:52:15:15

Just one more point on the on the site selection. There are there are brownfield sites, just not where you're looking. Places like Scunthorpe Steelworks, which are gradually being decommissioned and getting smaller. Have acres and acres of land which are absolutely connected, um, have grid connections, etc.. Um, it is pure and simple that you don't want to look for alternative sites. You've made your selection and you're prepared to wreck the countryside for that decision.

00:52:18:09 - 00:52:27:15

Okay. Thank you. Um, does the applicant want to respond, or is it the case that you'll be providing information on brownfield sites at deadline one?

00:52:28:06 - 00:52:35:04

Thank you. Miss. For the applicant. Yes. I won't repeat what I've already said. Um, and we'll provide the information that Mrs. Price referred to.

00:52:36:19 - 00:52:42:21

Thank you. I see one more hands. There's a microphone next to you, sir.

00:52:45:26 - 00:53:01:04

At the start of the situation. Did the applicant realize that navy was the limestone aquifer? And now that people have pointed out to him, do they realize it's a big mistake to build a batteries on top of the limestone aquifer?

00:53:07:15 - 00:53:10:01

This is it. Sorry. This is the applicant one, sir.

00:53:10:26 - 00:53:41:08

It's common for the applicant. Um, the. I don't think I have that information to hand immediately. Um, in terms of. Sorry, in terms of the specific point around site selection, certainly our assessments have considered the aquifer and we've got appropriate, um, assessments and mitigation also management measures in place in terms of, um, I think it crosses over into the water topic perhaps, but, um, certainly we're obviously very aware of it and have management measures in place to ensure there's no impacts in that respect.

00:53:41:13 - 00:53:46:25

Um, the specific point around the site selection aspect, I don't have the right to hand at the moment is my point.

00:53:47:09 - 00:54:18:00

Thank you. Sorry. Can I just make a point that, um, it it's not appropriate to, to, uh, laugh or, or other such interjections when, when someone else is speaking. If we can all be respectful of each other. Um, and sometimes, uh, further information does need to be provided after the hearing, and that's perfectly acceptable. We said that in the introductions to the hearing. Thank you. Um, is there anyone else who wants to talk on site selection criteria? Yes, sir.

00:54:19:20 - 00:54:30:27

Could I just ask if the examining authority would want the applicant to provide a justification for restricting the search area to north of BIC, often as part of the further deliberations?

00:54:30:29 - 00:54:31:14

Operations.

00:54:34:08 - 00:54:37:28

Is that something that the applicant would be able to provide?

00:54:46:14 - 00:54:48:10

Thank you sir. Yes, we can do that in watching.

00:54:49:02 - 00:54:49:22

Thank you.

00:54:51:04 - 00:55:03:05

Um, okay. If there's no further comments on the site selection criteria, I will hand, uh, back to Mr. Manning to take us through agenda item four, grid connection.

00:55:03:18 - 00:55:42:20

Okay. Thank you, Mr. North. Over. Um, so just a bit of preamble, I guess is, you know, the proposed development is reliant on, uh, National Grid constructing a new substation. It may even be, uh, to enable a point of connection to be made to the national electricity transmission system. However, the substation does not currently have planning permission. Um, my question is for a mix, I guess, for the applicant and National Grid, but National Grid on here today. So I'll ask the applicant for for an update on the progress of the planning application and whether you can provide any more detail, um, on its delivery timescales that are not already being put before us.

00:55:44:29 - 00:56:19:29

Thank you sir. Mr. Coleman, for the applicant. Um, yes. We're in regular discussions with, um, National Grid in relation to the connection and their application. Um, we understand it's due to be submitted in Q4 of 2025. Um, and they still consider that they'll be able to deliver the substation to allow the proposed development to connect in Q4 2029. I would just note that is a slightly different

date to what is in our grid connection statement at application stage. But we did flag at that point that there was a um, mod application going through.

00:56:20:01 - 00:56:36:05

So we will update you. Just the dates have changed slightly, um, which doesn't impact anything else, but that's why they reference that date. But um yeah, they're on track for 2025 is what they've told us. And, um, our aim is to confirm that to you in an SG.

00:56:36:07 - 00:56:42:17

Okay. So Q four of 2025, that is that permission received or application made.

00:56:42:19 - 00:56:47:07

That's when they're submitting the submitting application. That's their their target for that. Yes.

00:56:56:01 - 00:57:30:05

Okay. I'll, um, I will ask, uh, in written um questions, um, for National Grid, um, to to that question to um, okay. Uh, the district council has raised concerns about construction timescales, the validity of the environmental statement and potential um, and also reduced benefits if the delivery of the substation is delayed. Um, if I could ask the district council on the matter of validity of the. Yes. Could you explain in more detail what you mean, what you meant in your written representation about what the implications could be.

00:57:31:11 - 00:58:01:27

For Norfolk District Council? Yes. So specifically on that question, I think the point is in relation to the construction timetable, which is relied on for the S chapters for the project. That's on the basis that the Navy substation will be submitted and receive consent in early 2026, which is the deadline and the date set out on National Grid website. And that's reliant on submission being built for all of this year. And that is on the basis that there is no delay in receiving permission.

00:58:03:00 - 00:58:58:07

Obviously, I can't indicate what the council's view would be. There is no submission yet of that application. It may or may not be granted consent. If it's refused, it would be subject to an appeal. I don't know if it would be subject to any legal challenge thereafter. There may be delay in short. And the extent to which this project is reliant on that scheme being constructed, therefore is relying on the Navy substation being granted consent and there being no delays and therefore following the construction timetable. And we've raised points about the concerns we have in respect of securing and making sure that this project doesn't come forward in the absence of the Navy substation, and that construction can currently occurs so that this project isn't constructed without the Navy substation reaching certain stages, either of consent and or construction, which is one for the applicant and national grid as opposed to us.

00:58:58:15 - 00:59:16:02

I think the concern in respect of the ISS and their validity is that they are premised on those construction timetables, and our concern is in respect of lack of security, uh, of of the two being constructed simultaneously and not in isolation and the relevant time frames.

00:59:16:12 - 00:59:46:28

Okay. I just wanted to check if the suggestion is if there's a delay to the delivery of the substation. Are you suggesting the US we become out of date? Is that what your suggestion is in terms of some of the assessments? Okay. Um, on that point, in terms of if, for example, um, this was to be granted development consent and there's an implementation implementation time of maybe three or sometimes five years. Is that not the same circumstance in terms of the validity of the year? Is that a fair point or comparison to make?

00:59:56:25 - 00:59:59:10

Sorry, sir. Could you repeat could you repeat the point?

00:59:59:12 - 01:00:27:27

Absolutely. So ultimately the district council are concerned about, um, the validity or maybe the age of some of the assessments becoming outdated if there was a delay to the delivery of the project, given that there could be a 3 or 5 year implementation period, should it be granted consent? Is that ultimately not a very similar scenario? That actually construction may take place considerably later than the date of the year. And is that a directly comparable situation?

01:00:34:21 - 01:01:09:04

For North Estevan District Council. So in respect to the validity of the assessment, I think the point that we've relied on is the fact that the applicant says that the construction will be carried out and completed by 2029. The other point is, in respect of the planning balance more generally, is that obviously the applicant relies on, um, promoting and achieving or um, contributing to net zero by or the net zero targets, um, in accordance with 20, 30, etc.. And so if that is delay, that will have an implication for the amount of weight you attribute to that in the planning balance ultimately.

01:01:09:06 - 01:01:23:04

But in terms of the ES validity and the point that we've relied on in respect of the construction period being before the implementation and the extent to which the ES Yes. Assessments rely on that construction being borne out.

01:01:26:04 - 01:01:29:21

Okay. Thank you. The applicant like to to respond to those particular points.

01:01:29:23 - 01:02:01:06

Thank you for the applicant. Um. Thank you. Just firstly on the ES validity point. Um, the point you make, um, so is it is entirely right, because the environmental assessment can only ever be based on a set of assumptions about on a worst case set of assumptions. So we have assessed a worst case, 48 month, 48 month construction period from 2027 to 2030. Um, yes, that could change because it is, um, informed by by other factors, including the nave and B connection. But um, that's our connection at the moment.

01:02:01:08 - 01:02:22:03

So that's what that's our best, um, assumption. And that's a reasonable worst case assumption to the extent that does move, that we are tied to the environmental effects in the environmental statement.

And that is by virtue of schedule 16 of the DCO, which requires that every time we go to discharge a requirement under I think it's paragraph.

01:02:23:23 - 01:02:57:04

Paragraph two in their, um, subsection or I think, um, at the same time, we need to confirm that the content of what we're. Um, having approved under a requirement doesn't result in any worse or different adverse effects than the what in our er. And that's, that's how the outcomes of the s are secured. Because the ES can only ever be a, a, you know, looking into the future and based on assumptions, it's not an exact precise, um, in setting concrete set of timeframes and that sort of thing.

01:02:57:06 - 01:03:31:03

It's, that's the whole approach to s in terms of the Rochdale envelope, etc.. Um, the point around whether that goes to the weight, um, for the benefits of addressing the need. Um, I think in one, I think it's 3.26 to 3.28 is very clear in this respect about the need and that, um, and that it should be given substantial weight. So I don't think that changes any aspect of that there. And the policy is quite clear in that respect. And, um, that policy exists in that way because of other decisions in the past getting into difficulties in, in trying to unpick the need in that way.

01:03:31:19 - 01:03:46:25

Um, so and we can address you further, obviously in that in writing if that's, if, that's if that's the submission from the district Council in terms of the weight there on the benefits. Um, did you want me to address you on the point about the requirement?

01:03:47:27 - 01:03:53:02

Um, we will come on to that. But, um, as it follows on from the discussion, then, um, yeah, I think.

01:03:53:04 - 01:04:04:00

Um, our environmental experts, if you want to talk more about the approach to the assessment, um, I have miss, um, Jade Garner who can also expound upon that. Um, far better than I can. So if that would be helpful, we can.

01:04:04:17 - 01:04:29:20

Um, well, if we could talk about the, uh, whether there needs to be a requirement within the draft eco, which ultimately says that the development, the proposed development can't commence until, um, a certain whether it's the permission of the substation or whether it's, um, tied to the construction of it. I'd be interested in the applicant's, uh, view on that suggestion from the district council.

01:04:30:29 - 01:04:35:14

Okay. Thank you. Um, miss Coleman, for the applicant. Um, I think.

01:04:39:18 - 01:05:15:01

Starting point. Um, and I think in terms of from your position in terms of determining or making your recommendation, um, it's probably 14, 11, eight of in one. So that does envisage that there are times when it's not possible to coordinate applications and that there will be separate applications coming forward. Um, we have addressed all the requirements of that section there. So it requires us to in that



case, make sure that we have given details of the other scheme. Um, also assess to the extent possible what the combined effect would be, which again, we've done and we can speak to that if that's helpful.

01:05:15:15 - 01:05:48:22

Um, we, um, have confirmed and we will be able to provide for the detail on this, that there's no obvious reason why other elements are likely to be refused. And I've given you the details of National Grid pursuing its tpa application. Um, we've looked at the policy position in that respect as well, and we, um, maintain the position that there's no obvious reason why those, um, why that application shouldn't be approved and why that shouldn't come forward. Um, and so if the secretary of state and, and if you are satisfied in that respect, there's no suggestion in one that a requirement is necessary.

01:05:49:01 - 01:06:29:00

Um, I think that aligns with the Secretary of State's approach on other schemes. Um, certainly examples of, um, carbon capture projects such as the Drax specs order from 2024 and other offshore wind examples as well. Um, there's not not support for that approach. Um, I think it also doesn't reflect that there are potentially different lead times in construction and delivery. Um, and it's probably not consistent with, um, the general approach in the NPS is about the urgent need to deliver, um, these projects, such as 4.2.2, um, that we need to enable development of new low, low carbon sources of energy at speed and scale.

01:06:29:18 - 01:07:06:02

Um, I think I'll just add to that that 411 nine also acknowledges that there's a risk for an applicant in that situation, and I think that should be recognised in practice. The commercial reality is that there are other levers and drivers in place so that you won't end up in a situation where there's a whole solar farm sitting there without grid connection. Um, because the applicant will obviously take commercial decisions at various stages of the project, having regard to the certainty it has around the delivery of that grid connection. So I think the whole combination of those factors, in terms of us being able to give you confidence that, um, there's no reason why that connection shouldn't come forward.

01:07:06:04 - 01:07:17:04

Precedent of other orders, which you can obviously expand upon in, in writing. Um, and that those other considerations and levers are in place. We would say there's no need for such a requirement.

01:07:17:27 - 01:07:42:04

Okay. We sort of I've got several other questions which we sort of touched on there. So I think maybe it's worth running through those. The other thing that the district council raised was along with the grid connection, there was potentially the need for overhead lines to be provided as well. Um, and whether that could act as an impediment. And is the situation ultimately the same as the proposed substation?

01:07:42:26 - 01:07:53:03

Um, yes. The the position is the same. Um, and we can obviously again, expand more in writing. But, um, everything I've said that applies to the, um, the grid infrastructure generally, I think.

01:07:53:05 - 01:08:11:18

Okay. And you mentioned that, um, you would be able to provide further evidence in line with section 4.11 of MPAC and one about why it shouldn't act as impediments. And as, you know, um, in terms of no obvious reasons why either the proposed substation or the overhead lines wouldn't come forward.

01:08:12:07 - 01:08:18:25

Yes. And I think I'm right in saying that there's a proposed question on that as well. Um, so we can we're doing work with that.

01:08:18:27 - 01:08:33:11

Okay. Thank you. So we'll tailor those questions based on the discussion, as obviously we're discussing that question now. But um, yeah, we'll we'll note that as an action point for, for for the applicant to take away. Um, ultimately, if.

01:08:35:15 - 01:08:40:16

Um, is there any fallback if the substation isn't delivered?

01:08:43:17 - 01:08:49:10

All the overhead lines, which I understand equally, are required in the same manner.

01:08:49:28 - 01:09:23:13

Uh, Miss Coleman, for the applicant. Um, I think, in short, no. Um, we obviously have a grid connection with, um, National Grid, and we understand they're under various obligations. Um, pursuant to that and pursuant to their duties generally, um, in their role as the, um, in their role is providing that connection. So, um, no, as I understand it. But, um, we can again expand upon that in writing and we can perhaps expand a bit around the, um, duties for that that national grid are under and that we feel we can rely upon in that respect.

01:09:25:16 - 01:09:30:04

Okay. Thank you. So the District council will have any comments on anything we've heard from the applicant there.

01:09:31:06 - 01:10:06:09

In district council. Yes. So we certainly welcome, I think, um, particular application of section four point 11.7 and eight of MPAC and one because whilst whilst it's understood that uh, under 4.1, 1.8 where there are reasons for separate applications coming forward, there needs to be, um, confirmation that no obvious reasons for why other elements are likely to be refused is demonstrated. We haven't seen that as of yet, so we certainly welcome that. That also needs to be read in conjunction with 4.11.7, which explains that if applications aren't coming forward together.

01:10:06:20 - 01:10:44:17

And then justification also needs to be provided as to why that approach is being taken. Because generally a holistic planning regime is supported. So to the extent that the Navy substation is a tcpa scheme being brought forward by National Grid, we'd also welcome clarification as to whether there has been consideration. As for it to all be within the order limits and all part of one this project, as opposed to two separate applications under two different um, statutory regimes. So that deals with

MPs in one in respect of the um whether or not a requirement is appropriate, we consider it a requirement in the draft.

01:10:44:19 - 01:11:17:14

It is appropriate. And once we understand that commercial decisions might mean that if the project is granted consent, that the substation doesn't come forward for whatever reason, that the project is unlikely to be constructed, that would be in the absence of anything actually securing the same in the DCO itself. And we think that's important because if the substation isn't granted consent or is granted consent but isn't constructed, then we would want to ensure there's a mechanism to avoid the harms associated with this scheme being constructed and not producing any of the benefits, i.e.

01:11:17:16 - 01:11:39:16

the electricity. So we do think there needs to be some sort of mechanism, and whatever that mechanism is, we don't mind. It's up to the applicant. We can review what's proposed, but we do think there needs to be some sort of mechanism to ensure that there is, um, a holistic approach that is taken to the construction, if not the consenting mechanism for the two different.

01:11:39:18 - 01:11:47:03

Okay. Can I just ask, do you think it would be likely, um, that construction would proceed in the absence of permission for the substation?

01:11:47:05 - 01:12:01:28

I can't comment on that because it would be subject to the applicant's decision, and I understand the applicant's decision would be subject to a number of factors, including commercial reality. Um, but that doesn't mean that there is a there shouldn't be a mechanism within the draft DCO to actually secure that.

01:12:03:21 - 01:12:04:20

Okay. Thank you.

01:12:06:14 - 01:12:08:01

Any reply from the applicant?

01:12:09:07 - 01:12:41:16

Um, for the applicant. I mean, on that point, I think that's, um, I disagree. I think that's probably highly, um, would be an unreasonable requirement for the point that you, um, may well, in terms of the the direction of your question, in terms of it's a highly improbable and unlikely situation that would that would come about. Um, and so it seems unreasonable that a requirement would be necessary in that respect. I think on some of the other points, um, Mrs. Price was just going to respond to some of the other, um, points made by Ncdcc.

01:12:42:12 - 01:13:14:09

Thank you. Sara Price for the applicant. I was just going to confirm, in the absence of National Grid and to reiterate the points made by Miss Coleman earlier, that we are in regular engagement with them. Um, we had our last update meeting with them just a couple of days ago, and they confirmed a position that I understand that they're going to put in writing to you because they were unable to

attend this hearing. And part of that is just to clarify. National grid electricity transmissions, normal approach to these things, which is to consent their own infrastructure.

01:13:14:20 - 01:13:36:26

And that's partly and mainly because they wish to maintain control over their own consenting process. It's also because in this case, Nathan B substation is obviously planned to serve more developments than Springwell. And so they would want to ensure that it was appropriately sized to accommodate those additional developments as well.

01:13:39:02 - 01:13:39:21

Thank you.

01:13:41:04 - 01:13:44:05

Thank you. Just would you like to reply.

01:13:44:12 - 01:14:24:04

Just one point North Steven district Council, the other point in respect of the requirement is whilst we've been considering or addressing a requirement for whether the schemes should or not come forward together, the other point is just in relation to Construction. So if if, for instance, the other scheme said the substation was granted consent and the project was granted consent, we would be concerned with a lack of interrelationship or concurrency with the construction build out. So whilst this scheme could start being constructed, for example, and construction could be completed, and then the scheme be sitting waiting for the substation to be constructed, the homes would be there, but there would be no benefits.

01:14:24:06 - 01:14:34:19

And that's why we say it's important that there is some sort of, um, concurrency or timeframes or mechanism to secure that between the two schemes. And that's why we say requirements are also important.

01:14:34:28 - 01:15:09:25

Okay. In terms of the point about sort of joint construction, at the same time, the ES doesn't rely on that, does it? It's assessed on the basis of purely the construction of the solar farm. So in terms of the yes, that does it doesn't rely on, you know, the actual overall potential impacts are sole construction of the solar farm. So there wouldn't be any issues there in terms of, um, if the if the construction of the the substation was delayed, it wouldn't mean the s was no longer any relevant or the worst case scenario hadn't been assessed.

01:15:09:27 - 01:15:11:06

That's correct.

01:15:11:11 - 01:15:45:25

In terms of the benefits that are being produced, it does rely on the substation being constructed in accordance with the timetable set out by National Grid, and that is aligned, as far as I understand, from the ES with the construction for this project. And so the the intention is that the construction will be completed at similar times and therefore grid connection can take place subject to the modification

application being granted, so that the grid connection time reflects the actual construction period. So it would be the benefits associated with the scheme as opposed to reasonable worst case scenario for the harms.

01:15:45:27 - 01:15:52:12

It would be that no benefits could then start being produced, i.e. there could be nothing going into the grid because the substation hadn't been okay.

01:15:52:29 - 01:16:04:15

So um, in a, in a scenario where construction of the it was delayed by three years, what different weight would the council place on the benefits of the project as a whole?

01:16:04:29 - 01:16:23:12

So we may need to take that one away and respond. Respond to that one. Um, and give it some thought. Also this this probably to some extent depends on, um, the, the information we have from National Grid, uh, in respect of their time frames. So we'll, we'll take that one away and respond in writing.

01:16:24:17 - 01:16:26:08

Okay. Anything from the applicant.

01:16:27:25 - 01:16:44:05

For the applicant? Um, I don't think so. I think I would just repeat what I've said in terms of that requirement. I mean, the commercial realities of the situation suggest that the the types of scenarios being discussed are highly improbable. Um, and we maintain the position, really, that a requirement is not necessary.

01:16:44:19 - 01:16:58:25

Okay. Thank you. Um, we'll come on to my final question in relation to grid connection. And it's the point made by National Grid, uh, and their view that the, Um, not even being proposed, and even the substation site should be excluded from the order limits.

01:17:00:10 - 01:17:04:00

Could I get your thoughts on on National Grid's view there? Thank you.

01:17:04:19 - 01:17:37:18

Comment for the applicant. Um, yes, I appreciate that is often national grid situation, but we're in a situation where we don't know where the substation precisely will be in that area. We have included that area within our order limits in order that we can make sure our, um, cabling goes right up into the substation. Otherwise, we're at risk of there being a consenting gap between where our cable gets to and their substation is. So we're not seeking to consent their substation, but we do need to bring our connection right up to, um, their substation.

01:17:37:20 - 01:17:48:16

I think the view was it should only be the cable corridor that should be included in the order limits. And if there's a suitably wide and flexible corridor, why is the whole state substation site needed?

01:17:49:02 - 01:17:59:12

Well, it is just the, um, the connection that that's the works package that's in that area, but we don't know exactly where in that area we need to get to and where we will connect in.

01:18:00:10 - 01:18:03:07

And so it may be more a compulsory acquisition any more.

01:18:03:21 - 01:18:10:19

Um, land or, you know, doing. We're not intending to use that whole area, but we do need the flexibility at this stage because that is an unknown.

01:18:10:21 - 01:18:14:06

But it does fall within within the order limits, doesn't it? The substation site?

01:18:14:08 - 01:18:17:15

Yes, yes, because we need to literally connect into it.

01:18:17:17 - 01:18:25:07

Yeah. And and there are compulsory acquisition rights sort over that land isn't there. Yes, yes. So it is an important part of the order limits.

01:18:25:14 - 01:18:26:06

Yes. Absolutely.

01:18:26:08 - 01:18:33:19

Yeah. Okay. Well maybe it's a compulsory acquisition question and difference between you and the national grid, which we can discuss.

01:18:33:21 - 01:18:54:14

Yeah. And our works in that area are quite likely to be captured by the protected provisions with National Grid as well, in terms of doing things near their assets and near their, um, or near their assets in terms of them wanting to approve that, it will be dictated largely also by the layout of the substation where the bays are, which one we're connecting into that sort of thing. So that's why that that, um, flexibility is is there.

01:18:54:21 - 01:18:55:20

Okay. Thank you.

01:18:57:06 - 01:19:03:03

Okay. Anything else from the table in terms of grid connection before I ask interested parties?

01:19:05:18 - 01:19:07:11

Yes. The county council, please.

01:19:07:24 - 01:19:37:28

Thank you sir. Justine Foster for Lancashire County Council. Um, I just wanted to, um, say that I did have some points, um, on, on this topic. Um, however, they have all been, um, very thoroughly covered by, um, the district council, so I don't propose to go into any of those. Um, but I just wanted to say I do support the comments of North Kesteven District Council on this matter and in particular, um, the consideration of a requirement regarding the commencement of the development in respect of the Navy substation. Timing of delivery.

01:19:39:00 - 01:19:42:16

Thank you. Sorry. Yes, the district council.

01:19:43:00 - 01:20:13:23

North Kesteven district council. Yes, sir. Just just to provide clarification. What we're not suggesting here is that, um, we'll. We'll provide this in writing, not least because we've got to provide our written representations in terms of weight to benefit the benefit of this scheme, in conjunction with the MPs and the production of renewable energy, will not change. But what we're talking about in terms of benefit is the pre 2030 grid connection agreement slash offer and the extent to which that benefit might be affected by the construction timetables.

01:20:13:29 - 01:20:42:04

So that is the point we are addressing, which is a separate point. Um, and we're not suggesting that reduced weight would be given in conflict with the MPs, which deal with substantial weight to renewable energy. So we'll pick that up in writing in due course, because that's probably something that's going to need to be addressed in our Lill and or written representations. So I don't want to pursue it much more at this stage because that's not in, um, the examination, but that's I anticipate just to make the point. That's the distinction.

01:20:42:06 - 01:20:54:04

Okay. Thank you. We'll consider the points made in due course. Okay. Yes. Any interested parties would like to see anything on Grid Connection? Uh, Davidson, you got your hand up.

01:21:00:01 - 01:21:12:04

Thank you very much. And thank you very much for the very useful discussion that we've heard. Uh, Councilor Marianne Overton, the issue I wanted to pick up about the grid connection is that if,

01:21:13:22 - 01:21:45:16

firstly, the important point is that I do think that we should not be able to start this solar development before the actual substation. They should come together. And I think, you know, I said before, actually, I would like to see all come together because when I asked and I'd be interested to get an answer, I'm not sure that the substation will consider themselves sufficiently significant if there's only one development.

01:21:46:01 - 01:22:04:21

They might want to delay it then, because they want to have, you know, other parts of the country have a more pressing need. So I think that's why I think it actually nothing should start until it's all collected together and passed, if it's going to be or not at all. Thank you.

01:22:05:21 - 01:22:06:11

Thank you.

01:22:07:17 - 01:22:08:29

Anything from the applicant?

01:22:09:01 - 01:22:28:15

Please comment with the applicant. And we have a grid connection with National Grid. It's for two connection dates of 2029 and 2030. They are under general obligations as the system operator to deliver on that. Um, and everything else is as is, as I've said. Um, so I don't have anything further to add to that, really.

01:22:30:12 - 01:22:31:27

Mr. Williams, would you like to.

01:22:34:21 - 01:23:08:21

I'd just like to refute that there is no grid connection, pure and simple. There is no grid connection. There may be a good connection if North Kesteven Grants consent to it. At the moment there is no grid connection. And, you know, we need to be absolutely clear on that. And, you know, so I don't understand how this application can could be consented to if theoretically North Kesteven declined the substation because if the substation doesn't get granted, this application can't exist.

01:23:08:23 - 01:23:18:25

It's a waste of time. So the reality is, Mr. Chairman, um, Inspector, you really need to wait until North to Stephen have made their decision.

01:23:19:03 - 01:23:19:26

Oh, there we go.

01:23:22:15 - 01:23:28:24

All right. Thanks. The real thing. We were told there was no drill, so we best straight out the front.

01:23:32:08 - 01:23:34:27

Adjourn until the end of the. The fire is.