

Springwell Solar Farm

Draft Statement of Common Ground – Network Rail Infrastructure Limited

EN010149/APP/8.8
Version 1
Deadline 1
June 2025
Springwell Energyfarm Ltd

Rule 8(1)(e)
Planning Act 2008
Infrastructure Planning (Examination
Procedure) Rules 2010

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') has been prepared in respect of the application for the proposed Springwell Solar Farm Development Consent Order ('the Application') made by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd ('the Applicant') to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero under section 37 of the Planning Act 2008¹ ('the 2008 Act').
- 1.1.2. Springwell Solar Farm ("Springwell") is a proposed new solar farm and battery storage facility located in North Kesteven, Lincolnshire. The proposals also include infrastructure to connect Springwell to the National Grid, as well as any necessary supporting site infrastructure and environmental mitigation, including landscaping and ecological planting ("the Proposed Development").
- 1.1.3. The SoCG is being submitted to the Examining Authority as an agreed draft between both parties. It will be amended as the examination progresses in order to enable a final version to be submitted to the Examining Authority.

1.2. Overview

- 1.2.1. This SoCG has been prepared by the Applicant and Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (Network Rail).
- 1.2.2. Network Rail are a statutory stakeholder defined for the Application.
- 1.2.3. The Order Limits are adjacent to Peterborough-Lincoln Railway Line.
- 1.2.4. The proposed construction / AIL traffic routes for the proposed development, outside the Order Limits, cross railway lines on existing public highway.
- 1.2.5. Collectively, the Applicant and Network Rail are referred to as 'the parties'.

1.3. Purpose of this Statement of Common Ground

- 1.3.1. This Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') is being submitted to the Examining Authority as an agreed draft between both parties. This SoCG is a 'live' document and will be amended as the examination progresses in order to enable a final version to be submitted to the Examining Authority.
- 1.3.2. The SoCG has been prepared in accordance with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Guidance on the examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects ('DLUHC Guidance')¹.
- 1.3.3. Paragraph 007 of the DLUHC Guidance comments that:

"A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is a written statement prepared jointly by the applicant and another party or parties, setting out any matters on which they agree, or indeed disagree. A SoCG helps to

¹ Planning Act 2008: Examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (30 April 2024).

ensure that the evidence at the examination focuses on the material differences between the main parties and therefore makes best use of the lines of questioning pursued by the Examining Authority”.

- 1.3.4. The aim of this SoCG is, therefore, to provide a clear statement of the progress of discussions and agreement met or not yet met between Network Rail and the Applicant on matters relating to the Application.
- 1.3.5. The document will be updated as more information becomes available and as a result of ongoing discussions between the Applicant and Network Rail.
- 1.3.6. The SoCG is intended to provide information for the examination process, facilitate a smooth and efficient examination, and manage the amount of material that needs to be submitted.
- 1.3.7. This SoCG does not seek to replicate information which is available elsewhere within the Application documents. All documents are available in the deposit locations and/or the Planning Inspectorate website.
- 1.3.8. Once finalised, the SoCG will be submitted to the Examining Authority concerning the Application under section 37 of the 2008 Act for an order granting development consent for the construction of the Proposed Development.

1.4. Terminology

- 1.4.1. In the table in the issues chapter of this SoCG:
- 1.4.2. “Agreed” indicates where an issue has been resolved.
- 1.4.3. “Not Agreed” indicates a position where both parties have reached a final position that a matter cannot be agreed between them.
- 1.4.4. “Under Discussion” indicates where points continue to be the subject of on-going discussions between parties.

2. Proposed Development Description

2. Introduction

- 2.1.1. The Proposed Development comprises the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array electricity generating facility with a total capacity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW), a Battery Energy Storage system (BESS) with an import and export connection to the National Grid.
- 2.1.2. The Proposed Development comprises the installation, construction and decommissioning works, with the details to be defined at detailed design and subject to approval by the Local Authority. The detailed design of the Proposed Development will be undertaken within the parameters assessed in the Environmental Statement (ES), which are secured through a range of control documents including the **Works Plans [EN010149/APP/2.3] [APP-007]**, the **Design Commitments [EN010149/APP/7.4] [APP-0138]** and the requirements set out in the **Draft Development Consent Order [EN010149/APP/3.1.2]**.
- 2.1.3. The design of the Proposed Development has evolved throughout the environmental assessment process to avoid or minimise environmental effects and in response to consultation and engagement feedback, where appropriate. The location of the Proposed Development is shown in **ES Volume 2, Figure 1.1: Location Plan [EN010149/APP/6.2] [APP-058]** and described in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 2: Location of the Proposed Development [EN010149/APP/6.1] [APP-042]**, with the consideration of alternatives and the evolution of the design of the Proposed Development presented in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: Reasonable Alternatives Considered [EN010149/APP/6.1] [APP-044]**.
- 2.1.4. The Proposed Development will be located within the 'Order Limits' (the land shown on the **Works Plans [EN010149/APP/2.3] [APP-007]** within which the Proposed Development can be constructed, operated and decommissioned). The extent of the Order Limits is shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 1.2: Order Limits [EN010149/APP/2.1] [APP-058]**. The principal components of the Proposed Development include:
- Solar PV development including;
 - Ground-mounted Solar PV generating station. The generating station will include Solar PV modules and mounting structures;
 - Balance of Solar System (BoSS), which comprises inverters, transformers, and switchgear;
 - 400kV Grid Connection Corridor to connect the Springwell Substation and proposed National Grid Navenby Substation;

- Satellite Collector Compounds comprising switchgear, transformers, ancillary equipment and operation, maintenance, security and welfare units;
- A project substation (the 'Springwell Substation') compound, which will include substation, Main Collector Compound, switching and control equipment, office/control/welfare/security buildings, storage areas, and provisions for vehicular parking and material laydown;
- BESS compound, including batteries and associated inverters, transformers, switchgear and ancillary equipment and their containers, enclosures, monitoring systems, air conditioning, electrical cables, fire safety infrastructure and operation, maintenance, security and welfare facilities;
- Underground cabling will connect the Solar PV modules and BESS compound to the BoSS, Collector Compounds, and the Springwell Substation;
- Ancillary infrastructure works, including boundary treatments, security equipment, earthing devices, fencing, lighting, earthworks, surface water management, internal tracks and any other works identified as necessary to enable the Proposed Development;
- Landscaping, habitat management, biodiversity enhancement and amenity improvements; and
- Works to facilitate vehicular access to the Order Limits.

3. Record of Engagement

3.1. Summary of consultation

3.1.1. The parties have been engaged in consultation throughout the early stages of the Proposed Development. Table 1 shows a summary of key engagement that has taken place between the parties in relation to the Application.

3.1.2. This records formal engagement with Network Rail and their legal representatives, agreeing Protective Provisions.

Table 1 – Record of Engagement²

Date	Form of correspondence	Key topics discussed and key outcomes
Jan 2023	Letter	Notice of Non Statutory Consultation as prescribed consultee (no consultation response received)
Jan 2024	Letter	Notice of Statutory Consultation as prescribed consultee (no consultation response received)
30/07/2024	Email from Applicant / Letter	Springwell Solar Farm Protective Provisions Letter to Network Rail from the Applicant
07/08/2024	Email from Applicant / Letter	Springwell Solar Farm Protective Provisions to Network Rail from the Applicant
Aug 24 - Dec 25	Emails	Between Applicant and Network Rail seeking to find correct contact in Network Rail to discuss.
04/02/2025	Emails from Network Rail	<p>Network Rail raised concern over impact to footpath which leads to a railway crossing. Network Rail recognised that there is Network Rail owned land within the Order Limits.</p> <p>Request for shape files of the areas adjacent to the railway (plots 1/4 and 2/12).</p> <p>Email states Network Rail consider that a Framework Agreement will be required due to potential impacts on the railway, and therefore an Undertaking is requested.</p> <p>Request for meeting to discuss.</p>
12/02/2025	Email from Applicant	Shapefile shared. Applicant contact details provided for a meeting to be arranged
17/02/2025	Relevant Representation	Issued to PINS by Network Rail - [RR-296]

² This table is not intended to be a record of every call or email exchanged between the parties (for example emails organising meetings) but should record the key exchanges of information and meetings.

Date	Form of correspondence	Key topics discussed and key outcomes
25/02/2025	Email from Applicant	Follow up email sent regarding a meeting request. Applicant stated cannot provide an undertaking at this stage, until they understand the extent of the interface, and the need for any Protective Provisions or Asset Protection Agreement.
04/03/2025	Emails	<p>Network Rail Contact details provided for contact person to discuss.</p> <p>Applicant requested meeting with point of contact to discuss the scheme and comments. Shared project information and key Application document links. Requested to review 2no. bridges referenced in Relevant Representation, prior to meeting.</p> <p>Network Rail email confirmed would share available dates for a meeting.</p>
14/03/2025 & 07/04/2025	Email from Applicant	Follow up requesting dates for meeting
12/05/2025	Meeting	Discussion with Network Rail on Relevant Representation next steps, additional information or direction to Application documents shared

4. Current Position

4.1 Position of the Applicant and Network Rail Infrastructure Limited.

- 4.1.1. The following tables set out the position of the Applicant and Network Rail following the Relevant Representation regarding the Proposed Development. This includes matters where discussions are ongoing.
- 4.1.2. As noted above, this is a ‘live’ document, with matters that have yet to be agreed upon between both parties. The intention is to provide a final position in subsequent versions of the SoCG, addressing and identifying where changes have been made, and ultimately, documenting agreement by both parties on relevant points.

Table 2 – Topics Discussed

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant’s Response	Status
1	Construction	Part of the Scheme (Springwell East) directly abuts the Peterborough to Lincoln line and the potential impacts on the safe operation of the railway during construction and operation must be properly considered and mitigated as part of the Scheme.	<p>The Parties have discussed the proposed works and that the Order Limits do not span the railway line, and there would be no need to cross the abutted railway line for construction, decommissioning or operational purposes.</p> <p>The Applicant has directed Network Rail to ES Volume 3, Appendix 5.4: Glint and Glare Study [EN010149/APP/6.3.2] for assessment by their liabilities team, which states ‘no impact predicted and mitigation not required’ on the railway.</p> <p>Network Rail have requested a discussion with their Asset Protection team to understand if a Basic Asset Protection Agreement is required, based on offsets of construction activity away from Network Rail land. These discussions have commenced.</p> <p>There is existing, well established vegetation (hedgerow/tress) between the Proposed</p>	Under Discussion

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant's Response	Status
			<p>Development and the railway line. The Design Commitments [EN010149/APP/7.4] [APP-0138] provides for a buffer of 10m between hedgerow and solar PV fence line. Network Rail are concerned if anything can fall within 4m of railway land.</p> <p>The maximum height of the development in those adjacent fields would be 3.5m as defined in ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Proposed Development Description [EN010149/APP/6.1.2] and ES Volume 2, Figure 3.2: Height Parameters [EN010149/APP/6.2.2].</p> <p>The Applicant deems no level of risk to operational railway land.</p>	
2	Property	Network Rail are reviewing whether there are also any currently unidentified property rights which may be affected by the Scheme and have now received Shapefiles from the Applicant to allow this exercise to be completed. They reserve their position on any such property rights and will provide fuller comment should any conflicts with railway property and / or rights be identified.	<p>The Applicant has not identified any affected property rights, as per the Book of Reference [AS-007].</p> <p>If Network Rail identify any known rights, the Applicant will discuss further.</p> <p>Network Rail, agree no property clearances required, pending review of the Order Limit shapefile, for any unidentified land rights.</p>	Under Discussion
3	PROW - Potential Impact on Railway Level Crossing	The Outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan (oPROWPPMP) proposes changes to a public right of way which includes a railway crossing (the Scopwick Yard Level Crossing which connects existing Public Rights of	<p>The Applicant has reviewed the comments regarding the Scop/8/2 east/west PRow, which connects to the M/tin/7/1 PRow via the referenced railway crossing.</p> <p>The oPROWPPMP [EN010149/APP/7.12.2] states the potential for temporary closures of PRows and Permissive Paths to facilitate safe</p>	Under Discussion

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant's Response	Status
		<p>Way Scop/8/2 and M/tin/7/1). It does not appear that the impacts on the railway or on continuing use of the public rights of way using the level crossing in this location have been considered.</p> <p>The PROW Plan sets out various alternative routes for Scop/8/2 but these do not facilitate access across the railway to connect with the existing path on the other side, and would therefore render the level crossing obsolete while any diversions are in place.</p>	<p>construction, over the Order Limits.</p> <p>The Streets, Rights of Way and Access Plans [EN010149/APP/2.4.2] [AS-005] show a cable crossing over Scop/8/2, between points SW94 and SW95. Based on the offsets defined in the Design Commitments [EN010149/APP/7.4] [APP-0138] – there will be at least a 15m offset between the Solar PV field development either side of the existing PROW. The cable route construction will therefore be able to be phased to maintain this PROW in constant use, with minor temporary alignment change within the Order Limits.</p> <p>The Applicant is amending the oPROWPPMP [EN010149/APP/7.12.2] to state that PROW Scop/8/2 will not be temporarily closed during the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the scheme. This will ensure the east / west route via the railway crossing and Scop/8/2 and M/tin/7/1 is not impacted. This update will be submitted to the ExA at Deadline 1.</p> <p>The oPROWPPMP [EN010149/APP/7.12.2] shows alternative routes, if a PROW is required to be temporarily closed during construction. Access to the Scop/8/2 from the west, would be maintained by either of the two existing North / South routes (Scop/739/1 or Scop/8/1), which all meet at the easterly point of the Scop/8/2. Any diversion would maintain access to the wider network of footpaths in Springwell East.</p>	

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant's Response	Status
4	Potential Traffic Impacts - HGV Routes / Crossing	<p>The application (via the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan) describes the proposed HGV route and the route for abnormal loads. These Routes interact with several of Network Rail's lines in the area. There are potential impacts on the Sheffield to Lincoln Line and the Peterborough to Lincoln Line, with potential impacts on 2 bridges owned by Network Rail. HGV and Abnormal Load route</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cattle Creep (See Gwj/2 Underline Bridge (where crosses A15 south of Lincoln) Abnormal Load Route only • A180 Road - 2 Skitter Beck Underline Bridge [Sheffield to Lincoln line, north of Immingham] <p>Network Rail wishes to ensure that the Scheme will not have a detrimental impact on the Bridges or the operation of the Railway and that the safety of the Railway is maintained during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Scheme.</p>	<p>Network Rail are reviewing the Applicant's response with their liability team.</p> <p>The Applicant believes, following their analysis of the two structures mentioned, that neither bridge referenced are on the proposed AIL / HGV route.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cattle Creep Underline Bridge, is believed to be an old crossing between two agricultural fields, which Google Earth Pro shows was demolished in the 2010's, as part of the Lincoln A15 bypass construction. There is a new overbridge at the same location (OS Grid Ref TF002706) carrying the railway, where the AIL/HGV route would pass underneath the overbridge, on the A15 road. • 2 Skitter Beck Underline bridge (OS Grid Ref TA125145) appears to be a bridge asset to the north of the indicated AIL/HGV road route, on the A180. It appears the underline bridge referenced is to carry the watercourse (Skitter Beck) underneath the railway. <p>The Applicant has discussed their assessment with Network Rail, and does not believe either structure is impacted by the scheme and AIL/HGV traffic will not use these underline bridges. Network Rail will review and respond.</p>	Under Discussion
5	Traffic & Transport	<p>The Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan highlights that there will be 7 AILs using recognised heavy load routes (HR144 and HR226) and sets out the proposed traffic increases</p>	<p>The Applicant notes the seven AILs using recognised heavy load routes of the A180, M180 and the A15 – from Immingham to the Site, as per Appendix 3 of the oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7.2], and that Network Rail continue to review with their technical team.</p>	Under Discussion

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant's Response	Status
		<p>for deliveries over the 4 year construction period. There is, however, no information currently provided in the OCTMP in relation to the operational or decommissioning phases.</p> <p>Network Rail wishes to ensure that the vehicle and HGV movements under or near the Bridges are undertaken safely at all times. Network Rail must be able to exercise adequate control over the use of the Bridges by the Applicant and its contractors to ensure that vehicle and HGV movements are properly regulated.</p> <p>The detail of the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan is therefore being fully reviewed by its engineers to allow a more detailed response to be made and discussions undertaken with the Applicant.</p>	<p>AIL movements will be subject to a formal application process prior to loads moving and that this is controlled by current AIL legislation and permitting, allowing Network Rail (and other infrastructure operators) a technical review and permitting process at that time.</p> <p>The Applicant welcomes any early indications of concern at this stage on the proposed routes, and further discussion as required.</p> <p>ES Volume 1, Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport [EN010149/APP/6.1.2] [AS-010] does not predict AIL movements required in operational or decommissioning stages.</p> <p>Construction traffic routing is defined in ES Volume 3, Appendix 14.1: Transport Assessment [EN010149/APP/6.3] [APP-123]</p>	Under Discussion
6	Protective Provision	<p>In order for Network Rail to be in a position to withdraw its objection Network Rail requires:</p> <p>(a) agreements with the Applicant that regulate:</p> <p>(i) the manner in which rights over any railway property are acquired and the relevant works are carried out including terms which protect Network Rail's statutory undertaking and agreement that</p>	<p>The need and proposed required contents of any Protective Provisions and Framework Agreement are under discussion between the parties pending discussions with the Asset protection team, and Network Rail's property check, and review with liabilities team.</p>	

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant's Response	Status
		<p>compulsory acquisition powers will not be exercised in relation to such land; and</p> <p>(ii) the carrying out of works in the vicinity of the operational railway network to safeguard Network Rail's statutory undertaking;</p> <p>(iii) the use of the Bridges by vehicular traffic;</p> <p>(iv) the liability of the Applicant for necessary repairs and upgrades to the Bridges as a result of its use by construction, operational and decommissioning traffic associated with the Scheme, including terms which protect Network Rail's statutory undertaking; and</p> <p>(v) a safe system of work for regular and irregular large and/or slow moving vehicles.</p> <p>(b) the inclusion of protective provisions in the DCO for its benefit.</p>		
7	Protective Provision	A draft of protective provisions for Network Rail has not been included in the draft of the Order, as the Promoter did not view this as necessary. Network Rail disagree and request that their standard version	The need and proposed required contents of any Protective Provisions and Framework Agreement are under discussion between the parties pending discussions with the Asset protection team, and Network Rail's property check, and review with liabilities team.	Under Discussion

Ref.	Description of Matter	Stakeholder Comment ³	Applicant's Response	Status
		<p>Protective Provisions should be included. Adjustments may subsequently be agreed with the Promoter and will require to be attached to the requested Framework Agreement when this is in final form.</p> <p>A draft Framework Agreement will be prepared and shared with the Applicant's solicitors and will require to be adjusted and agreed. Network Rail is hopeful that an agreement can be reached with the Applicant but until such time, to safeguard Network Rail's interests and the safety and integrity of the operational railway, Network Rail objects to the Order</p>		

Signatures

This statement of Common Ground is agreed upon:

On behalf of the Network Rail.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

On behalf of the Applicant

Name:

Signature:

Date:

DRAFT