

Meeting note

Project name Fenwick Solar Farm
File reference EN010152
Status Final
Author The Planning Inspectorate

Date 23 May 2023
Meeting with Boom Power
Venue Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives Inception Meeting
Circulation All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

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

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will be located approximately 12 km north of Doncaster and will encompass the installation of the solar PV site, will connect to the Thorpe Marsh Substation with associated electrical equipment and energy storage facilities as well as the Grid Connection Corridor search area. The Applicant confirmed that the application would include scope for biodiversity enhancements. A grid connection agreement had been established for 237.5 MW. The Applicant explained it had two different grid connection options at that time.

The Applicant has confirmed that environmental assessments would be conducted sequentially. National data showed that the land is largely agricultural grade 4 with some areas of grade 3 land, no heritage assets had been identified as of yet with further engagement with Historic England currently underway. It was stated that there are no public rights of way on site, the Inspectorate queried how many residential properties surround the proposed site, 600 properties had been identified with a leaflet drop implemented for these properties.

Consenting Programme

The Applicant planned to submit an EIA Scoping Report in June 2023, with a Development Consent Order (DCO) application submission date of Q2 2024.

Environmental data

The Applicant had commenced collection of desktop data, as well as further ecological, heritage and soil surveys. A number of these surveys were subject to seasonal constraints.

Environmental surveys to date included Phase 1 habitat surveys that were ongoing, these included badger, wintering and breeding birds, great crested newts, bats and reptiles. Additional surveys for phase 1 habitat and habitat conditions were also planned. The Applicant had also completed a geophysical and archaeological trial trench evaluation, as well as landscape and visual surveys. Noise and traffic surveys had been completed with additional walkover surveys still to be undertaken. The Applicant had worked within an 8km cable corridor length, this was refined when the surveys were initiated.

Stakeholder engagement to date

The Applicant had mapped and identified local stakeholders and was currently engaging with them. Initial consultation had commenced, including with Historic England, South Yorkshire Archaeology Service and the Environment Agency. The Applicant had also contacted City of Doncaster, the host authority. After 1 June 2023 the Applicant would send letters to MPs and the local councillors. Conversations with landowners were underway to secure any necessary land.

Consultation strategy

The Applicant planned to hold non-statutory consultation from 27 to 25 June 2023, with information hosted online, a questionnaire would be available and queries would be responded to via email. Statutory consultation would take place from December 2023 to January 2024 over a seven-week period. This would comprise of a mixture of online and in-person events, specifically planned to be two in person events and an additional two online. Targeted events and meetings would take place with key stakeholders. All responses from the statutory consultation would be published in full in the consultation report. The Applicant was working to secure a Planning Performance Agreement with Doncaster Council.

Compulsory Acquisition and Crown Land

The Applicant aimed to acquire land through the use of voluntary agreements with landowners. It was confirmed that heads of terms were also being agreed. The Applicant was yet to confirm the presence of any Crown Land, this would be informed by future land referencing.