



Planning Inspectorate  
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## Event Transcript

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| <b>Project:</b> | Frodsham Solar Farm  |
| <b>Event:</b>   | Open Floor Hearing 1 |
| <b>Date:</b>    | 4 December 2025      |

**Please note:** This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

It is not a verbatim text of what was said at the above event. The content was produced using artificial intelligence voice to text software. It may, therefore, include errors and should be assumed to be unedited.

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

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:07:05 - 00:00:40:17

Good morning. The time is 930, and this first open for hearing for Frodsham sailor is now open. Thank you for joining us this morning. Please could a member of the case team confirmed that I can be heard clearly, and that the live streaming and recording has started? Thank you. My name is Stuart Cowperthwaite, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State of the panel, member of the Examining Authority to examine the application by Frodsham Solar Limited for an order granting development consent for this project, sitting alongside me as a lead member of the Examining Authority.

00:00:40:19 - 00:01:15:20

Mr. Jason Rowlands, Mr. Rowlands and I are employed by the Planning Inspectorate, was supported by the Planning Spectrum's case team. They are managed by Robert Cook who is with us today. He's at the back. Today's hearing is a hybrid event, meaning that some of you are present with us here in the room in person, and some of you are joining using Microsoft Teams. I intend to make sure that you'll be given a fair opportunity to participate. However, you have decided to attend. I'll now deal with a few housekeeping matters. Please set all devices and phones to silent to avoid disrupting the hearing.

00:01:15:26 - 00:01:29:28

And please keep microphones muted until I invite you to speak for those of you in the room, I understand that no fire alarm is planned for today. Should an alarm sound, then please leave by the nearest fire exit and congregate in the car park.

00:01:31:14 - 00:02:02:02

A recording of this hearing will be made available on the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as we can, after the hearing is finished. Please contact a member of the case team if you don't know how to find the website. A link to the Planning Inspector Inspector. Its privacy notice was provided in the rule six letter of the 8th of October, 2025. This sets out how the personal data of customers is handled in accordance with data protection law. And I assume that everyone has familiarized themselves with it.

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

Please speak to a member of the case team if you have any questions about this.

00:02:07:14 - 00:02:26:06

I will not invite any introductions at this stage. There will be an opportunity for you to introduce yourself later. If I invite you to speak. I will follow the agenda that was provided in the rule six letter of the 8th of October. Please could a member of the case team now share a copy of the agenda on the screen?

00:02:31:21 - 00:02:34:00

Thank you. And if you could zoom in a bit, please.

00:02:38:21 - 00:02:51:20

That's great. Thank you. Um, so I'm just about to complete agenda item one. Does anybody in the room have a question about the agenda or the arrangements for this hearing, please?

00:02:53:08 - 00:02:58:24

Does anybody on Microsoft Teams have a question about the agenda or the arrangements for this hearing, please?

00:03:02:11 - 00:03:37:03

Thank you. So let's move over to agenda item two. The purpose of this hearing and how it will be conducted. The purpose of this open floor hearing is to give you an opportunity to raise things that you think should be considered for the decision about whether development consent should be granted. You're free to raise any topic that is important and relevant to the examination. This is an opportunity for us to hear your thoughts about the application at first hand. This hearing is subject to our powers of control over its conduct as established by the Planning Act, 2008.

00:03:37:16 - 00:04:15:08

To be clear, the purpose of this hearing is to assist our examination and is not to be used as a political platform. Each person that wishes to speak will be invited to speak at the appropriate time. Oral representations should be made should be based on representations previously made in writing by the speaker. However, they should not simply repeat matters previously covered in a written Submission, but rather provide further detail, explanation and supporting evidence. Please be assured we have read through all relevant and relevant representations that interested parties have submitted.

00:04:16:08 - 00:04:29:13

I set out in the agenda. We have suggested that each speaker completes their submission within ten minutes, and we have a timer set up to help us to keep track of that.

00:04:31:18 - 00:04:39:00

We will, as we consider necessary, ask questions of the speaker, and I will give the applicant an opportunity to respond at the end.

00:04:41:08 - 00:04:57:27

All comments, questions and answers are to be directed to Mr. Rowland and I rather than anybody else. Does anyone in the room have a question about how this hearing will be conducted? Please know. Does anybody on Microsoft Teams have a question about how this hearing will be conducted?

00:05:00:02 - 00:05:06:12

Not seeing anything. Thank you. So that includes your agenda item two. And I will now turn to agenda item three.

00:05:09:23 - 00:05:26:12

I'm going to invite people who wish to make an oral representation representation at this hearing to identify themselves. When I invite you to speak, please make sure you speak clearly into a

microphone and please state your name until you you you are representing if anybody each time you speak.

00:05:29:08 - 00:05:40:00

If you're taking part using Microsoft Teams, please switch on your camera when I invite you to speak. If you're comfortable to, please switch microphones and come as off again when I move to the next speaker.

00:05:43:06 - 00:06:16:09

So, um, I'm firstly going to ask we've had indications. So this initial part is just for me to understand who would wish to speak and then to establish a speaking order. Um, so we've had indications of two interested parties. Um, so I'd like to look at those first. So firstly Mr. Christopher Cleaver of Climate Action, Frodsham. Mr. Cleaver, would you like to speak today, sir? Yes. Thank you. And then Samantha Grange of intervene.

00:06:17:23 - 00:06:19:24

Morning, sir. Yes, I would like to speak.

00:06:20:12 - 00:06:26:09

Thank you. Um, is there anybody else in the room who would like to speak today?

00:06:28:16 - 00:06:32:07

Is there anybody on Microsoft Teams who would like to speak today?

00:06:34:13 - 00:07:07:15

Okay, we have two speakers, so, um, we'll take those, um, speakers in the order that I just went through. So, Mr. Cleaver, first, um, Mr. Cleaver, um, please, if you'd like to use the table, um, the microphone, uh, you should see a switch on white. When that's on red, you can be heard. Um, we are going to try and stick to the ten minutes in broad terms. which is hopefully sufficient. There'll be a little bit of, um, flexibility in that, obviously.

00:07:07:22 - 00:07:38:20

Um. I have read your written submission. Your written representation. This your relevant representation. Sorry. This morning. Um, and, uh, note the detailed comments you've made, um, in regard to the assessment of views from the Frodsham Hill War Memorial, um, which you've set out in some detail. Um, as I said before, please don't feel that you need to repeat any of that. Um, if you want to expand on it, then that's very helpful. If you want to go over other matters that are relevant to the examination, that's helpful as well.

00:07:39:09 - 00:07:50:14

Um, so, um, if we could start the timer, um, when, uh, Mr. Cleaver starts to speak, please. Over to you, sir. Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity.

00:07:51:02 - 00:08:25:09

I feel we are standing in front of a steamroller, and we're relying on the examining authority to reduce the damage that it causes. Climate action fraudulent is in favor of renewable energy, including solar

farms. We feel it would have been best if there were a central planning so that developments were in the best location, rather the most than the most profitable location. But unfortunately, that is not the case. From Frodsham, solar scheme has given climate action fraudulent a dilemma.

00:08:25:28 - 00:08:44:09

We are not promoting Nimby, but we do not wish to accept the developer designing bin B badly in my backyard. We object to the scheme because the developer has not done their best to minimise the impact of the scheme on Frodsham.

00:08:45:26 - 00:09:16:25

The submission is very complex, so we have concentrated on one simple issue. The visual impact assessment, which we believe has misrepresented the view and attempts to minimise the radical impact of the scheme on the view of the marshes. And we believe that mitigation measures are essential to reduce this impact. I'm not going to use the time to repeat the detail of our representation in the belief that it has been read and taken into account by the examining authority.

00:09:17:27 - 00:09:42:05

I have a couple of questions. Does the examining authority have the necessary expertise to review in detail the submissions by the developer and the responses by interested parties? And secondly, do you have the power to reject a submission and ask the developer to repeat or revise the study until you find it acceptable? Thank you.

00:09:47:00 - 00:09:48:12

Is that the full extent of your submission?

00:09:48:14 - 00:09:48:29

It is.

00:09:49:01 - 00:09:54:11

Yes. Thank you. Could you just repeat that? Your second question, please?

00:09:55:28 - 00:10:09:26

Um, does the examining authority. Um, sorry. Can the examining authority reject a submission and ask the developer to repeat or revise the study until it is acceptable?

00:10:23:12 - 00:10:58:27

So I will address your questions. Thank you. Um, so, uh, we are appointed by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has been through a process of deciding what skills are necessary to consider the application, and has decided that we have those necessary skills. Um, we are supported by a broad team within the planning inspector to have a very wide range of technical and legal expertise. Um, so please be assured on that point. On the second point, um, the application was accepted for examination.

00:10:59:09 - 00:11:19:03

So at that point it passed a bar. Ah, um, in terms of the, um, sufficiency of the quality of that examination of that application for um, examination. So it reached that bar of sufficient quality for examination. Um, we, um.

00:11:21:09 - 00:11:54:03

Submissions, um, from any party which are, um, relevant to which are important and relevant to our recommendation. Um, it would only be in the very rarest of circumstances, for example, if there were, um, if there were vexatious, if there was anything of that type in a submission, we would accept into the examination. So we would not refuse. Generally we would not refuse, um, the submission of material into the examination.

00:11:55:01 - 00:12:25:21

Um, and that gives all parties, the applicant and any of the party are treated equally from that point of view. We will. As you will see, and have started to see already. We will ask detailed questions about any aspect of the application or any submissions that we would like to have clarified where we think they are. Perhaps not clear where we think that more information is needed for us to reach a recommendation. So that's the process we go through.

00:12:25:24 - 00:12:50:23

It's not so much refusing to have them submitted, but it's then making sure that we have a full understanding of, um, uh, sufficient for us to make our recommendation and sufficient for the Secretary of State to make the decision. Are those. Hopefully, I've been clear. I've not prepared those answers, but hopefully that's clear enough for you, sir.

00:12:52:03 - 00:12:54:02

Yes. Thank you. That is clear for me.

00:12:54:04 - 00:13:00:26

Okay. That's good. Right. Thank you very much for your submission and for doing it so efficiently.

00:13:00:28 - 00:13:02:14

Thank you for your opportunity.

00:13:02:16 - 00:13:11:07

Thank you. Um, right. Um, let's move on to, um. Sorry. Just bear with me.

00:13:13:06 - 00:13:22:05

So we're now going to, uh, Microsoft Teams, uh, online, and, uh, we have Samantha Grange, please.

00:13:24:24 - 00:13:41:22

Sir? Yes. That's right. My name is Samantha Grange. I'm a legal director at Eversheds Sutherland. Um, and I'm representing Enumclaw Vinyls Limited and Vivian Enterprises. Um, I refer to them collectively as anything just for ease.

00:13:42:05 - 00:13:48:27

Thank you, I appreciate that. Should I refer to you by your full name, or are you comfortable with that?

00:13:50:17 - 00:13:54:29

Perfectly comfortable with that. Just Miss Gray, however you want to say.

00:13:55:11 - 00:14:28:24

Okay, Miss Grange, thank you. Um, so, um, again, I've been through, uh, the relevant representations from Indian Enterprises Limited and Indian Vinyls Limited. I notice that those are predominantly in relating to land rights issues and safeguarding the interests of the companies which are representing today. Um, before you start, and you are, of course, free to take the ten minutes to use as you wish.

00:14:29:02 - 00:15:00:15

Um, um, before you start, I would point out that, um, it is very likely that we'll be having a compulsory acquisition hearing. And at the compulsory acquisition hearing, um, we will be considering land rights matters and related matters, um, in some detail. Um, that won't be until 2026. Um, there's a deadline. One in the examination timetable, which is the 22nd of December. I don't think that's going to change.

00:15:00:27 - 00:15:35:06

Um, and by deadline one, If we receive a request from an infected person, which in a Vin would be courtesy of the rights that you have in the order land. Um, if if if you wish to request a compulsory acquisition hearing by that deadline, then we have to hold one. Um, I think whether we have a request or not, we're very likely to have a compulsory acquisition hearing. But I just want to point out, um, to hopefully help understand the process a little bit that we will tend to deal with.

00:15:35:09 - 00:15:53:05

Uh, I think the type of matters that perhaps you're going to raise today and certainly the ones in your relevant representation, we will be dealing with those in detail at a later hearing. Um, so against that background, um, if you're ready, um, please feel free to make a request. Representation. Thank you.

00:15:54:02 - 00:16:36:00

Thank you sir. That that clarification is very helpful. Um, and you quite rightly identify that in Ivan's primary concerns are around the compulsory acquisition proposals. In respect of this project and those concerns, as you've also said, are set out in detail within intervenes relevant representations. I'm not proposing to go into those in detail here. As you say, it's likely that there's going to be a compulsory acquisition hearing in the new year that my client may clients may feel the need to attend in the event that those concerns subsist at that point in time.

00:16:36:16 - 00:17:07:04

And the purpose of my sort of statement this morning, which will be very brief, is really just to put on record and the radar of the examining authority that we are in active negotiations with the applicant, with a view to resolving our client's concerns around compulsory acquisition. That's likely to take the form of a side agreement with some property related documents that will flow from that.

00:17:07:11 - 00:17:59:29

And. However, given the accelerated examinations of program and timetable which we're very aware of. Um, I think we're just very conscious that those negotiations, those discussions need to proceed at pace. If we're to get ASI agreements in place before the examination is due to close, if there's any risk of that side agreement not being concluded, uh, within a relatively short period of time, then I think the purpose of my sort of being here today is really just a flag that we may need to look for other options, other, um, ways and means in which to secure the necessary protections for intervene, which are likely to take the form of protections on the face of the development consent order, whether that be requirements, whether that be protective provisions.

00:18:00:08 - 00:18:34:13

Um, now, we haven't engaged in detail on those aspects, yet because we are focusing all time, effort and resources on the on the side agreement in the hope that that private treaty, um, agreement can be reached. But as I say, it may be that, that if we get to a critical juncture or point where we feel that that's not going to be concluded, we have to look at those other those other options. And I just wanted to, um, to flag that at this stage so that you're aware of, um, the broad sort of intention and way forward that we're anticipating.

00:18:36:12 - 00:18:38:13

Thank you. Is that the end of your submission?

00:18:38:19 - 00:18:39:26

It is, sir. Yes.

00:18:40:03 - 00:19:20:15

Thank you. And thank you for being so concise. Um. Um, yes. Very much appreciate your position. Um, it's it's a common position, I think probably on the, on this type of development. Um, we'd certainly very much welcome regular updates about the progress from, from, uh, in Ivins point of view, in terms of the side agreement and, um, if you felt able to attend and felt it appropriate. Obviously there will be commercial confidentiality within that agreement, but if there are any matters that you would want to bring to our attention in terms of the the headings, if you like, of the topics that haven't been agreed, then we'd welcome that.

00:19:20:17 - 00:19:56:07

But certainly to for us to keep a tab of of a progress is very helpful. Um, very helpful to hear of your thoughts regarding proceeding at pace to to trying to get those in place. It will help us in terms of the reporting that we need to do. Um, it can it is very beneficial to conclude these matters by the end of the examination. Um, I said yesterday, um, sometimes that's not possible, and sometimes there have to be things that pass to the Secretary of State later to determine.

00:19:56:09 - 00:20:18:00

But that that, um, is, is really not preferred as a step but has been taken in the past. So the end of the examined examination isn't necessarily the absolutely final opportunity to conclude things, but it will generally be easier for all if that is met. So, um, but hopefully that makes sense. Um.

00:20:18:02 - 00:20:20:09

It does. Yes. Thank you sir. That's understood.



00:20:20:24 - 00:20:38:18

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for your submission. Grateful for that. Thank you. Um, okay, so those are, um, the parties who wish to make an oral representation. Thank you for those, uh, very much appreciate those submissions. Um, if we could have the agenda back on, please.

00:20:40:11 - 00:20:59:23

And we're, um, approaching the end of item four. Um, we've had two submissions. Um, as is conventional, I'll invite the applicant to respond if it wishes to. It's not essential, but if the applicant wishes to. Thank you.

00:21:06:15 - 00:21:38:18

Thank you, sir. Mr. Fox, on behalf of the applicant. We'll keep it brief. Um, so, first of all, for Mr. Cleaver. Um, just said, first of all, thank you for participating in this process. Um, I think we would say, sir, that, uh, we stand by the assessment that we've undertaken in the landscape visual Impact assessment, chapter 039. Um, in designing the scheme and bring it forward with we have applied the mitigation hierarchy and we have taken account of, um, the landscape and the views in it as described in our design approach.

00:21:38:20 - 00:22:09:26

Um, document at 130. Um, yeah. So I think, I think the overall message is we stand by, um, our assessment and the mitigation measures we brought forward. Um, and to Miss Grange and to intervene. Again, thank you for participating. Um, and just to say, we agree with how, um, she's characterized the position as it stands. Um, and, uh, we agree that we want to get the monetary agreements done as soon as possible, and we will keep the examining authority updated.

00:22:10:09 - 00:22:17:25

Um, I'll just finish there by thanking, um, the case team and yourselves for the last few days and the hearings. Thank you, sir.

00:22:18:01 - 00:22:54:00

Thank you, Mr. Fox. Um, okay. So, um, we're moving forward very efficiently. Um, that completes agenda item four. And I will turn to agenda item five. Um, which is any other matters? Does anybody in the room have anything else to raise within the scope of this hearing, please? No. Um, does anybody on Microsoft Teams have anything else to raise within the scope of this hearing, please? No. Um, the recording of the hearing, as I mentioned before, will be published on the National Infrastructure Planning website.

00:22:54:02 - 00:23:29:03

Um, for all to see. Um, we've now covered all items on the agenda. Um, thank you from Mr. Rowland and I, um, for everyone who's has contributed over the last three days. Um, and we're very pleased with the level of participation by all parties. Um, we do genuinely feel that we have helped surface and hopefully help to progress a number of key matters. There are, as I said yesterday, a number of other very important matters that we haven't addressed yet, not least of which are the views from the Frodsham Hill War Memorial.

00:23:29:13 - 00:23:58:00

Um, other items I set out yesterday which I won't go through again. Um, our written questions will follow. Um, as soon as we're able to, um, and those will service a number of other issues as well to go through. Um, that's enough for me from us. The Christmas period is approaching. Um, wish you all the very best for the Christmas period. Um, and we look forward to engaging with you all in the new year. Um, this open floor hearing is now closed.