

## Hearing Transcript

<b>Project:</b>	Dean Moor Solar Farm
<b>Hearing:</b>	Preliminary Meeting
<b>Date:</b>	22 July 2025

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# TRANSCRIPT\_DEAN\_MOOR\_SOLAR\_FARM \_PRELIMINARY\_HEARING\_SESSION\_1\_22\_ 07\_2025

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025

00:04

Hey, good. Good morning, everybody. It's now 10am so it is time for this meeting to begin. So firstly, I'd just like to welcome everyone to the preliminary meeting for the Dean Moore solar farm project. First and foremost, can everybody hear me, maybe just a couple of raised hands just to confirm.

00:27

Yes, okay, that's fine. I'll take that as read that everyone can hear me clearly. And can I just also confirm with the case manager, Lily Robbins, that the live stream and recording has commenced? Yeah, I can confirm that cements, yes, okay, I've had confirmation of that. So just to introduce myself, I am my name is Matthew Woodward. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State as a single examining inspector to examine this application. You may also hear me referred to as the examining authority throughout this process. So I'm going to just deal with a couple of housekeeping matters. First, we are in a virtual environment, so it's helpful just to keep devices and distractions to a minimum. So please set phones to silent, for example. And just in terms of breaks, I will be taking a break after approximately 90 minutes, one and a half hours, if anyone really feels the need for a break in the meantime, just please raise your hand and let me know, and I'm sure that can be accommodated.

01:31

So I do aim to keep proceedings focused and efficient. So to assist with this, I issued a rule six letter Annex A which sets out an introduction to the preliminary meeting. Now I'm going to assume that that's been read by everybody in the room as I'm only going to provide a summary from here on in but it is worth noting that the original rule six letter contained a minor formatting error, and that is that the initial assessment of principal issues which should have been Annex C of the letter was input incorrectly labeled as Annex D. That letter was subsequent, subsequently reissued to correct the error, and a copy is on the website. But this is just to draw your attention to the error for those that are using the original copy of the letter, everything else in the letter remains as it was. It was just a minor change to one of the headers,

02:27

and

02:29

just in terms of the application, you will find information about it on the planning inspectorates national infrastructure planning website. And I would strongly encourage everybody in the room to familiarize

yourself with the website, because it is a primary forum in terms of communication. It's what I'll be using to communicate with you and to provide updates and access to documents throughout this examination. In addition on the website, there is a clear link to the examination library. Again, I would encourage you to become familiar with that document, because it provides a very easy way to access all the documents that you would need and all the documents that might be referred to throughout the examination process. So obviously, today's hearing has been undertaken virtually, and we are participating on Microsoft Teams. The chat function I think is disabled, even if it isn't, I'm not going to be using the chat function today, but I am going to acknowledge and use the raise hand function. So if anybody does wish to come in, if they raise their hand, and I will come to you at, sorry, at an opportune moment through, through this morning's meeting,

03:43

just a couple further preliminary issues. Today's meeting will be made available on the dean, more Dean, more solar farm section of the national infrastructure website, and that will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting is finished. And with this in mind, please ensure you speak clearly into a microphone and state your name and who you are representing and that that should be done each time you speak. Now that might seem a little bit tedious, but this is so we can effectively transcribe the meeting and publish the meeting in written form, again that will also be available on the website after today's meeting, and just to say that a copy of the recording will be retained and published on the national infrastructure website for a period of five years following the Secretary of State's decision on the application. And

04:36

just a little bit about the inspectorate's privacy notice. There are details in the rule six letter, and this just establishes how personal data of customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. If there are any concerns about that or any questions, then please feel free to speak to the case manager Lily Robbins about this, or comment.

05:00

Tap the inspectorate.

05:02

So today's meeting is going to follow the agenda as set out in rule in sorry in panics, a of rule six letter. So it's probably going to be helpful if you have a copy of of that agenda in front of you, because we are going to work through that in order.

05:19

And before I ask people, before I ask those in the room today to introduce themselves, I'm just going to say a bit about what the purpose of today's meeting is, so that we're all clear on, on the focus, on the focus of the meeting. So it's going to it's going to be to discuss how the application is going to be examined. So we are only going to be discussing procedural aspects of the examination. So it isn't to discuss the merits of the scheme or any concerns you may have regarding the application itself. Those concerns or discussions about the merits will be heard and will be considered, but that will commence once the examination of the application begins and the examination is set to commence as soon as this

preliminary meeting finishes today, and I will come on to explain how you can participate further in the examination as we go through today's agenda.

06:15

So thank you. That just is a brief of today's The purpose of today's meeting, I'm now going to ask those of you who are participating in today's meeting just to introduce yourselves.

06:27

So I'm going to try and do this in some kind of order, although my screen may look slightly different to yours, but I'm going to basically ask a couple of the organizations present and some of the interested parties just to introduce themselves. If anyone's missing from that list, at the end, I will ask if anyone else wishes to speak today. So can I start with the applicant? So if you could introduce yourself, just state your name and anyone else within the applicant's team who wishes to speak today,

07:01

that would power. So I'm not sure who to go from the applicant. If the applicant could perhaps speak up first.

07:07

Thank you, sir. My name is so if you'd just like introduce yourself, thank you. Yes, thank you. So my name is Rahul hack. I'm a senior associate at TLT, and we are solicitors for the applicant. I'm joined by my colleague Lee tell who's a legal director at TLT, and he's also part of the solicitors team for the applicant. I have two other members of the applicant team who I can introduce if you'd like, yeah, that'd be helpful. Thank you. Sure. So I am joined by Mr. Jonathan leg of Stan tech. He is planning an EIA for the applicant. And finally, by Miss Rachel Jacobs of IB, vote for the applicant.

07:51

Thank you. That's most helpful. Thank you, Mr. Hack. Is it best to come through you first communicating with applicant? That's fine. Thank you. And

08:01

just to say, if anyone else on the applicants team does wish to speak today and does not introduce themselves, then please just introduce yourselves at an opportunity moment, and I'll add you to the to the list.

08:14

Okay, I understand as well. I'm expecting participation from Cumberland Council. Anybody on the call?

08:25

Good morning, sir. My name is Nick Hayhurst. I'm the planning manager at Cumberland Council, and

08:32

I was anticipating some of my other colleagues would be on the call, but they don't seem to have joined yet. But I do have Stuart Galpin also representing Cumberland Council, and he's our our landscape consultant.

08:48

Sorry, is he on? Sorry, yes, he is on the call. Thank you.

08:51

Okay, Mr. Hayes, are we okay to continue without your colleagues? Yes, that's fine. Yes, that's fine, okay? And if they again, the same applies. If they do wish to speak this morning, and they

09:03

they turn up at some point during today's meeting, just let me know if they wish to speak, and that will be fine. Thank you.

09:11

And then I have on my screen and on the list there is a Mr. Fulton.

09:21

Mr. Fulton. Fulton, can you hear me? I'm not sure whether there might have been some sound issues at your end this morning.

09:32

Yes, it's Malcolm Fulton, speaking. I can hear you. Okay, that's great. Thank you. So that's that's helpful. Thanks. Just, can you just introduce yourselves? I think I know who you are, but if you could just introduce yourself, yourself for the purposes of today's meeting, for the rest of the room, yeah. Well, we have the

09:52

property that's direct next to the proposed

09:58

site. And.

10:00

Them. I think we're going to be the ones that will be the most affected by it.

10:04

Thank you. Chris, could you just highlight, for the purposes of the today's event, just the name of the property.

10:12

The name of our property is [REDACTED]. Yeah,

10:17

we have our business there also, and we, we live there. I've lived there for like, [REDACTED] Yeah, that's fine. That's fine. Ms Fulton, that's helpful. Thank you.

10:29

And could I ask if there are any other interested parties, that is to say people who have got an interest in the application, who aren't organizations?

10:41

I am sorry. Susan Carlin. I'm Malcolm Fulton's partner, and as Malcolm said, we live, our home is on the boundary fence of where the proposed solar panel is.

10:56

Thank you. And so I the details that Mr. Fulton's provided are the same effectively for yourself? Yes, yes. [REDACTED], yeah. Okay, thank you.

11:09

Okay. Are there any other organizations? I don't think there are any. Well, there aren't any others on my list. But Is anybody else in the room who wishes to speak today, who's not been introduced and who would like to speak?

11:25

Okay, thank you.

11:28

As I say, if anybody does attend this morning, then I will be able to permit them into the room and allow them to speak, and I will ask them to introduce themselves later on, but I think we're okay to proceed. I Okay, thank you. I have already covered the raise your hand function. It might not be necessary, because I do intend to bring parties in. But if there is something that you desperately wish to say and you haven't been given an opportunity to speak, then feel free to use that function.

12:08

Are there any comments in terms of today's meeting, in terms of the virtual way of working? I know it's slightly different from being in a room in person. Are there any issues or concerns with today's today's meeting in that sense.

12:26

Okay, thank you. So I'm going to now move on to item two on the agenda, and that is and what I'm going to do is just introduce the examination process

12:37

very briefly, so some of you will be familiar with the Planning Act and the examination process, but some of you may not, so I'm going to outline some of the essential features of that process now.

12:52

And really the purpose of the examination is to enable me to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to whether the project should receive consent in the form of a development consent order under the Planning Act 2008 1008

13:07

so it is a process in which I take the lead and I establish what is important and relevant to the decision that the Secretary of State needs to take. So therefore, I will be looking for and testing the evidence put forward to see how robust it is. It is

13:23

important to recognize that the primary method of examination and examining the application is through written submissions. So it is very likely I will hold some hearings, but I am only going to hold an oral hearing into an issue that I consider is necessary to assist the examination

13:45

in terms of the timescale. So the Planning Act sets a fixed time scale for the examination and determination of the application,

13:55

and this is a six months. So this includes six months in which the examination must be completed and a further three months in which I must complete my report with my findings, conclusions and recommendations, which is then sent to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State then gets a further three months to reach a final decision on the application. So therefore, as a ballpark figure, you can expect a decision to be published in around 12 months time, but as we go through today's meeting, I am going to make some more comments about the timetable and procedure in a bit more detail,

14:32

but just in terms of opportunities to set out your case and raise any concerns, there will be ample opportunity through the examination process, so you will be able to make submissions in writing,

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and so you'll be able to be an opportunity, as we go through the examination timetable, to submit your comments in writing, but also you have an opportunity to comment on the submissions made by other parties.

15:00

Is in writing as well. Through the examination process,

15:05

documents can be introduced to the examination in a number of different ways, such as written representations, as I said, a written answer to examining authority's questions, comments on material submitted by others. Or I may request material as we go through the examination as well.

15:23

I will, as you will see from the timetable, I will be issuing first written questions following the close of today's meeting.

15:32

So that is effectively a list of questions I'm going to ask of the applicant, but it may be directed to other bodies and other interested parties as well.

15:43

There will be a significant number of first written questions, and they will be wide ranging. Some of them will address quite fundamental issues, and some of them will be more focused on detailed points.

15:57

But when you see my first written questions, you might think some of the answers are already contained in the application.

16:05

Even so, I would encourage you to answer the question as best you can. And if you do need to cross reference material from other documents or from the examination library, then please do that in your written response.

16:19

Again, the examination timetable sets a deadline for the responses to my questions, and all the comments and responses and my questions will be published on the Project webpage for everybody to see.

16:32

There may also be a second round of written questions, and that will come later on in the examination. Again, it's in the draft timetable, so we will come on to that shortly.

16:46

In addition, I do have the power to ask for further information or request further ask further questions as and when necessary through the examination process, but I will be using that more sparingly, and I will try and focus any questions I have at the correct most appropriate time, which is through the written questions or verbally through through hearings.

17:10

So I've spoken very briefly about hearings, but I'm just going to say a bit more about how the hearing process works.

17:17

So in addition to the written process, which is the primary method of communication. I have made provision for hearings during the examinations.



17:28

Now the hearings are intended to build on the foundations of documents comments that have been made by interested parties through the process.

17:38

And with that in mind I would I? My advice would be to rely on the written process, as opposed to waiting for the hearings to try and put your point of view across. So for example, if you have a particular concern about some aspects of the proposal, or you have some comments to make, it is better to make those in writing, rather than assume it's going to be covered in an upcoming hearing. That is because the hearings, as we move on to them, they may not address the questions that you might have, or they might not ask the questions that you wish to ask. So please do try and use a written process as a primary means of communication. But in terms of hearings, there are three different types. They are open floor hearings, compulsory acquisition hearings and issue specific hearings. So if I just touch upon the open floor hearing type, first, that's a hearing that must be held if it's requested by an interested party, and that is an opportunity for anybody to tell me what their concerns are or what their comments are on the proposal. And it's an open floor, as the name suggests.

18:51

So I have to hold one if it's requested by an interest to party, but I do intend to hold one anyway, and I will when I issue the main the final examination timetable, there will be provision for an open floor hearing through the examination. The second type of hearing is a compulsory acquisition hearing, and that is one that must be held if it's requested by an affected person. So those are persons with an interest in the land which might be affected by the proposal. So that is to say,

19:25

it might become, there might be a proposal to acquire that land compulsorily, or to take temporary possession of land. So if affected persons request a hearing, a compulsory acquisition hearing, they have to be held.

19:39

The third and final type of hearing is an issue specific hearing, and I will hold an issue an issue specific hearing if I feel it's necessary to ensure the adequate examination of an issue or to ensure an interested party has a fair chance to put their case forward on a specific matter.

19:56

And again, they are timetabled within the draft timetable, and there.

20:00

All within two blocks. There are two two weeks, as we'll come on to where these potential hearings are going to take place.

20:09

So as I've said, the draft timetable identifies provisional dates for the hearings. Now, if you would like to participate in a hearing, then you are required to submit a request to register for each hearing on or before the date set out in the timetable. Information on how to submit a request is set out in the rule six letter. However, if you wish to simply observe hearings, you do not need to request to register, and a public live stream and recordings of the hearings will be also made available on the project web page after the hearing has taken place.

20:50

Just a couple of minor points about the hearing process. I'm not going to go into too much detail about this, because I will cover it as and when hearings take place.

21:01

But if there are groups of interested parties with a common view, it's something it's usually advisable for those parties to group together and put their points of view forward in a coherent manner, rather than repeating material

21:18

and anyone who wishes to speak at the hearing. I may ask questions during the hearing of those people as well.

21:29

And in terms of any submissions made at hearings, orally, the applicant will be provided with an opportunity to respond to any other points raised by interested parties. And I am also asking that any verbal submissions made at hearings are also made in writing after each each hearing and again at the deadline set out in the draft timetable,

21:55

and in terms of the material that

22:01

and material that's submitted to the examination, I'm going to be seeking information through the examination process to help me make a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

22:15

So I'm going to be looking for representations and testing evidence to make sure the application either complies or does not comply with policy guidance and legislation. And so that's how I'm going to be assessing all the submissions that are made by interested parties and all the material that's submitted with the examination. And it's just to say that you should be aware the process is not a public vote on the merits or otherwise of the applicant's case, and it is. It's about testing evidence and making sure that the evidence submitted is robust.

22:50

I will consider and read every submission when I make my recommendation to the Secretary of State, and as I've said, there's no need to repeat points that have been made in previous submissions. I

23:12

just to summarize, right? I'm not going to go any more into any more detail about this, because in Annex B of the rule six letter and the various annexes, there are details about the examination process, explains how I'm going to conduct the examination, so I'm going for expediency purposes. I'm not going to go through that verbatim, in too much detail, having said that, if anyone has any questions at this stage about the examination process, then please do let me know. I am going to come on to the timetable shortly, but in terms of a broad understanding of the examination. Does anyone have any particular comments or concerns?

23:58

Okay, thank you. I

24:06

so I'm going to now just touch upon some of the procedural decisions that I've taken in rule in IHC of the rule six letter. So I'll cover these first, and then, as you'll see from the agenda, I'm going to move on then to discuss the IRP and then the examination timetable, and then we will conclude by discussing some other procedural matters and any other matters. So

24:34

I'm hoping that the annexe of my rule six lecture is self explanatory, but I'm going to just briefly touch upon some of the points that I've made in responses to points that I've raised that have been made by the applicant in the intervening period.

24:49

So can I start with statements of common ground the applicant has provided a response to my request and my procedural decision to request statements of common.

25:00

Ground from various local authorities. And the response, in short, is that some of those local authorities, according to the applicant, don't wish to engage in the process. And I do note that there aren't any requests to be IPS made by some of the local authorities. But could I just ask the applicant to come in on this point in terms of

25:22

which local authorities have been approached and the responses that have been received, and how they intend to proceed with the statements of common ground.

25:32

So Mr. Hack, if you could come in, thank you, sir. Rahul Haq, on behalf of the applicant,

25:37

thank you, sir, so we did set out our position in our response to your rule six letter and just for just make sure everybody's got the right reference, it's our letter was PDA, 001, in the examination Library. Thank

you. We, we made contact with Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council, Northumberland National Park Authority, Scottish Borders Council and Westmoreland and fairness Council, all of those, except for Westmoreland Council, have come back to us, confirming that they have no desire to take part in an socg. We do have some emails which we might be able to provide to you, if that would assist, or you could ask them to provide you with them.

26:23

In terms of Westmoreland, in our letter, we said that we were still awaiting a response, and as of today, we still are waiting for a response. We have been chasing them, but we're hoping to hear back from them shortly. We will provide you with an update as soon as we have that. It's worth saying that, in principle, we don't object to having an socg with any of these parties. It's more case that if they've chosen to not submit representations as of yet, or they've they've said they don't, they don't want an socg. And there's also a limited impact on these parties. In light of that, we feel that it may not be necessary, although with Westmoreland and fairness Council, if they do come back to us and say they would like an socg, we will take that up.

27:06

And it's also worth mentioning that all of these parties can still take part in the examination process, so if they do change their mind, or if they wish to submit representations further on,

27:18

we can review them and continue to engage. Thank you, sir. Thank you. That's most helpful. I will make a, I will make a procedural decision on this as part of the rule eight letter, but I note the points that have been raised in terms of engagement with those parties, so that's fine. Thank you.

27:39

And yeah, as you rightly say the decision I take, it's not going to prejudice their potential future involvement in the examination process. It doesn't change any of their status.

27:49

Okay, I'm going to move on, but I'm going to also ask to come back in actually, because

27:56

just turning to Cumbria Wildlife Trust, just to summarize, at the time of issuing the rule six letter, Cumbria Wildlife Trust hadn't made any relevant representation on the application. Since then, they have made a submission which fell out the fell outside the timescale for receiving relevant representations, but I have accepted it,

28:17

and effectively I've made Cumbria Wildlife Trust another person for the purposes of the examination, so they can participate, at my discretion, and make submissions on that point. Mr. Hagg, I think in your response as well, you did confirm you were engaging with Cumbria Wildlife Trust in relation to a statement of common ground,

28:38

if you could just come in on that point first.

28:42

Thank you so Rahul hack, on behalf of the applicant, that's correct, I can confirm we are in discussions with Cumbria Wildlife Trust on a statement of common ground, and the plan is to submit that deadline too. Thank you that again, that's most helpful. Again, this is probably going to be relayed in my rule eight letter as a procedural decision, but it would help if that focused as I'm sure it probably is going to focus on Dean Moore county wildlife site, which is an area that falls within the order limits. I don't know if you've got any comments on that this stage probably. It's probably not really for discussion at this meeting, but it's if there's anything you'd like to add on that, and please come in Rahul hack, on behalf of the applicant. Thank you. So we'll take that into account when producing the draft. Okay? Thank you.

29:31

And then the final point I have, in terms of statements of common ground, I will ask the council to come in shortly. Sorry, Cumberland Council, but before I do, the applicant, you have confirmed you're engaging with the coal authority, or as it's now called, The mining remediation authority, with a view to producing a statement of common ground.

29:50

I hadn't requested this in my original rule six letter as a procedural decision, having said that I do think it will help the process and narrow areas of potential.

30:00

Full dispute and disagreement, Mr. Hack, if you'd again like to come in on that point.

30:07

Thank you. So Rahul hack, on behalf of the applicant, we have been engaging with the mining remediation authority for some time, and we are planning on submitting an socg deadline to my understanding is that that socg is in an agreed form as it stands, but we'll update you a deadline too.

30:27

Okay, thank you.

30:37

Okay, I have a bit of detail about statements of common ground, but I don't think I need to say too much on these because the information that I'm requesting is set out quite clearly in the rule six letter in terms of the factual information, and

30:54

encouraging both parties affected involved in the statements of Common ground to identify points of disagreement and agreement. I think that's fairly self explanatory. But just Can I ask Mr. Hack just to come in on the other parties or the other IPs that I have had requested since of common ground, but

between the applicant and the list of other other parties on on that list, which is national highways and several others.

31:26

Has there been any progress? Are there any I think, are there any issues, is the first question, but I assume that it's in hand in terms of producing the statements of common ground by deadline two with those part, with those parties.

31:39

Thank you so royal hack. On behalf of the applicant, I can confirm that we are on track to submit sscgs With all of the parties mentioned in your rule six letter, other than the local authorities I mentioned previously. And we're on track to do that by deadline too. For completion, I can list them, if that would assist, but they do match up with your list, plus Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the mining remediation authority, I think, for the purposes of today's meeting, because those parties aren't present, I don't think we need to verbatim list those in today's meeting, but thank you.

32:12

And because Cumberland Council are here today, Mr. Hagers, I will come to you. Are there? Do you have any comments at this stage on the statements of common ground, I think sounds, as it sounds to me, as though things are in train in relation to Deadline two.

32:29

Nicke Hirst, on behalf of Cumberland Council, yesterday, I can confirm that things are on track in terms of the timetable for the statement of common ground. Could I just ask a question that related to a previous point about statements of Common Ground. If that's okay, of course, yes. I was just wondering if any approach had been made to the Lake District National Park Authority in terms of producing a statement of common ground.

33:01

Thank you. I'm going to double check my list. Mr. Hack, while I'm doing that, would you like to come in on that point?

33:09

Thank you. Rahul hack, on behalf of the applicant, yes, I can confirm Lake District National Park Authority are on our list of sscgs, and we will provide a draft deadline too.

33:20

Thank you. You You had me worried there, Mr. Hagers, but yeah, they are. They are on the list, and it sounds like again that's in progress. Thank you.

33:32

So I'm going to just again, move back to the procedural decisions made as part of the rule six. So I'm going to move on now from statements of common ground. I um,

33:43

I have made a procedural decision regarding site inspections, and you will see again from the draft examination timetable that I have earmarked some time

33:55

to carry out, if necessary, an accompanied site inspection.

34:02

Just a note, I have visited the site already. I have visited the site from a few public viewpoints. I may visit the site again before the potential

34:16

acts accompanied site inspection, and again, if I do so that will be published on the national infrastructure website. Are there any comments about the site inspection, either the one that's taken place, or the future site inspections?

34:35

Thank you. Okay,

34:40

I'm going to skip through a couple of the other procedural points in the rule six letter, because I don't think they're content contentious. When I get to the end of this point, this item, If anyone wishes to raise anything else, I will invite comments. But just to move on now to item six of annexe.

34:57

So the applicant provided a response to my request.

35:00

For additional visualizations and photomontages. I acknowledge the response, but as this is a procedural meeting, I'm not going to say anything further about the response, or make any verbal response to it, because to do so may risk straight into formal examination territory.

35:21

So I'm not going to go there, and I note that

35:25

Mr. Hack, there is a statement of common ground potentially to be agreed between yourselves and Cumberland Council, but also National Park and

35:36

Historic England as well.

35:42

And then Item nine of annexe is just to confirm that written representations on the application should be submitted by Tuesday the 26th of August, which is deadline two.

35:55

Now the written representations are an opportunity for interested parties to make further written submissions on the applications. On the application, you do not need to submit a written representation if you've nothing to add to your relevant representation. So if you've already commented, there is no need to repeat what's already been said. But if there is a new point or something else you wish to add, then again, this is a further opportunity to provide a written response.

36:25

And item number 10 of annexe is just to confirm that any other party who wishes to be an interested person

36:32

should make that request by the deadline that stated, and I will make a decision on each request individually.

36:42

Thank you. Are there any other comments on the procedural decisions in relation to the rule six letter before I move on to look at the IRP? Thank

36:56

you.

36:59

So if we can now look at the Appendix C of the rule six. It is Appendix D. In the old letter, the new letter, it is Appendix C. So the IRP is the initial assessment of principal issues, and it is intended to set out what I consider to be the main principal issues at the start of the examination. So it isn't a complete list. It's likely that some of the issues may change as we move through the examination. Some issues may become more or less important, and the issues listed are not in order of importance, as I've stated in the rule six letter.

37:37

Now, does anybody have any comments on the i appy as I'm as, that's an acronym, but at the initial assessment of principal issues, anyone have any comments to make?

37:52

Okay? Thank you.

37:57

So I'm going to move on now just to the draft timetable again, it's helpful. I would, I would assume to have a copy in front of us as we go through. I'm not going to go through each and every one of the deadlines and dates in the timetable, but I am going to try and summarize



38:14

how the timetable has been formulated so far and address some of the comments that the applicants made as well.

38:22

Bear with me a second while I find my timetable.

38:34

Just to say that not all sort of being timetabled will be necessary, so you should check the project page regularly for updates. So this is in particular relating to hearings. And crucially, once the examination is closed, I cannot take further submissions. So any submissions made after the deadline

38:56

must be I will not be able to consider and they will be sent straight to the Secretary of State for consideration, so I won't be able to take them into account when I'm writing my report.

39:07

So the timetable it's not set in stone. I may amend it during the course of the examination, and if I do so, I will write to interested parties to explain the reasons why any changes have taken place.

39:24

Now you will note that there are two things in particular to note from the timetable. Well,

39:32

there are several points, but the first point is that it isn't six months Exactly. It's short of six months. It's five and a half months the examination timetable. So

39:44

this is there are several reasons for this, but

39:50

principally, this is because I consider that the proposal

39:57

that is before me can be considered with.

40:00

In a time period of less than six months, and we are encouraged to try and determine applications under the statutory timetable

40:12

prior to the statutory timescale of six months where possible.

40:21

Sorry, just fair with me that's been sidetracked

40:25

while I try and find my timetable.

40:30

Thank you.

40:37

So the first deadline to know if we just go through the timetable is sorry, I'm going to do this on the screen, so you may hear a mouse cursor moving as well.

40:57

So the day that the the examination is set to close on the fifth of January,

41:03

2026

41:05

and the final deadline therefore will be before the Christmas period. Now this is a purposeful deadline, because I don't wish

41:16

the applicant or interested parties to have to consider or provide material over the Christmas break, because that's typically when people are on holiday. So there is a deadline there, straight before the Christmas break. And as I've said, the fifth of January 2026 deadline is approximately five and a half months after the dead, after the examination commences.

41:39

Now, the key dates in the deadline, in the in the timetable, aside from

41:46

the

41:47

final deadlines, are

41:50

deadlines one and two. I'm not going to read through these in any great detail, but Please familiarize yourself with the draft timetable in terms of

42:00

when comments, sorry, when requests for to speak at open floor hearings are made, any requests

42:10

to carry out accompanied site inspections, again, they should be made by deadline number one, which is Tuesday the 12th of August,

42:21

and any requests affected persons to be heard at compulsory acquisition hearings, and any per any interested parties wishing to speak a token floor here. Sorry, I've already touched upon that one. So that's deadline one. And then deadline two is Tuesday, the 26th

42:37

of August, and that is where the examining authority myself expects written representations

42:46

and summaries for any that written representations to be submitted by deadline two, and those should be summarized where they exceed 1500 words,

42:56

any request To attend, any issue, specific hearing.

43:02

And then there are various deadlines for the applicant, specifically in relation to statements of common ground and various updated documents.

43:11

And then again, moving down the the examination timetable. So the week commencing the 15th of September is when

43:19

the open floor hearing issue, specific hearing or compulsory acquisition hearings, when they will take place. The dates of those hearing potential hearings have not been set out at this stage. However, we will send notification, firstly, if those hearings are to take place, and secondly, the dates of those hearings during week commence in the 15th of September and during that week,

43:45

there may be an accompanied site inspection as well that will largely be informed by any submissions made at deadline number one, which is in terms of requests for locations for site inspections. And then I will take a view as to whether an accompanied site inspection is necessary or not.

44:07

I'm not going to go through the other deadlines because they are fairly repetitive in terms of repeating the types of material, the sort of material that has been requested at previous deadlines. I

44:27

because of the

44:29

because the deadline is under six months, I would suggest this limited scope for

44:36

or less scope for any change requests, particularly if they come on come later in the examination. So for those unfamiliar, change requests are essentially where the applicant wishes to make changes to their application, and if they wish to do so, they require the examining authority to agree to accept those changes.

44:58

With this in mind.

45:00

And at this stage and without prejudice, Mr. Hack, do you have any

45:05

do you envisage any change requests being submitted during the examination? And I've said this is without prejudice, because I understand things do change.

45:15

Thank you. So Rahul Haq, on behalf of the applicant, at this stage, we are not envisioning any form of change application, okay, thank you.

45:27

Just going back to the timetable, just to raise to address one of the points that the applicant raised in terms of

45:39

the differing timescales for requesting to speak at open floor hearing and compulsory acquisition hearings. So you'll see from the draft timetable, there's a point there where there is a requirement for anyone wishing to speak at open floor or compulsory acquisition hearings on the 12th of August, deadline one to make that request. There is a separate request on deadline two for those wishing to speak or attend open floor hearings. Now, there is a reason why there is a difference between the two, why there are two separate deadlines. This is because,

46:17

put simply, I want to know if there's any interest in an open floor hearing or compulsory acquisition hearing first before I subsequently decide whether a hearing is going to take place.

46:32

Whereas deadline number two, I will decide if an issue specific hearing is going to take place, and the notification will have already been issued, and that will be that will be based on responses to my written

questions and responses to relevant representations as set out in the deadline. So I'm not sure whether that addresses coherently. Mr. Hacks point, but the point is, there is a reason why there are two different deadlines in the draft timetable. Are there

47:01

any comments, Mr. Hack, from your yourself or your team on that Rahul

47:07

hack on behalf of the applicant, thank you, sir, that's understood. We're happy to be led by you. In the timetable, the comments we made in our procedure deadline a submission were only intended to help from a logistical perspective, from our perspective of helping newspaper notices.

47:22

And yeah, I see my colleague, Mr. Till, has his hand up so I may hand over to that's okay. Yeah. Mr. Till, would you like to come in on this point?

47:31

Lee till, for KLT solicitors on behalf of the applicant, actually my colleague, Mr. Hack, picked up the point I was about to raise. He just the main concern that we have is getting enough notice from your good self so that we can arrange for newspaper notices, etc, to be prepared, arranged, established, published, etc, etc. So that's that was the key driver. Really, we understand the difference between the two deadlines you've mentioned. It's just as you know we are there are requirements on the applicant to publicize hearings. So the more notice we get, the more we can comply with those requirements. So I just ask you to bear that in mind. So I'm sure you, I'm sure you would.

48:03

Thank you. Okay, thank you Mr. Till that again, that's most helpful.

48:09

Okay, sorry. So I've had a canter through there, and apologies for losing my place on the on the timetable. I did manage to locate it on the screen. So apologies it wasn't done in a particularly coherent manner. But does anybody have any comments to make on the draft timetable? Anything they'd like to tell me? Because effectively, what will happen after this meeting is, I will issue a final version of the timetable, and it may be based, will be based largely on the draft timetable. So if there are any concerns at this stage about timings or anything in there, then, please, please, do raise it now.

48:49

Okay, thank you.

48:55

So item six, I'm just going to cover some other procedural other procedural matters, and this is in relation to further submissions that have been made to myself

49:12

after the relevant reps period or in response to various deadlines. So in short, I've accepted submissions made by Cumberland Council relating to heritage, landscape, highways and flood risk. Now they are listed quite clearly on the website and in the examination library. I'm going to ask, or I intend to ask, the applicant to respond to these various documents by deadline two,

49:41

and that would be reflected in my rule eight letter. But before I make that decision, does the applicant have any comments to make on the submission of Cumberland Council? Firstly, I assume you've seen those submissions.

49:55

And secondly, are you in a position to respond to them by deadline to do.

50:01

Uh, Mr. Hack, if you can start with you, please. Rahul hack, on behalf of the applicant, thank you, sir. I think that sounds fine to us. We were treating those submissions as relevant representations because there wasn't a separate relevant representation from Cumberland, so we've been treating them as though they are the relevant representations. Okay, well, it's all intents and purposes for your purposes. I suppose they are, because I'm asking for the same deadline response anyway, so that's helpful. Thank you.

50:34

In addition, I have now accepted a number of amended documents which were made in response to the planning inspectorates, original section 51 advice, which was issued straight after all following the acceptance of the application. So these documents are were submitted by the applicant, and they're fully documented on the website, and they are in the examination library. I don't intend to go through them in detail, because some of them are effectively amended documents, amended plans

51:06

relating to minor type of typographical issues or to correct various things that have been raised at a very early stage. But if anyone does have any comments to make on those documents, or any has any concerns, then please raise that now, in essence, you do have an opportunity to make any comments on those documents

51:28

as part of the examination timetable, because I'm accepting written representations on any documentation that has been submitted. Are

51:39

there any other documents I need to be aware of that I may not have seen and I should have seen that have been submitted. And this is effectively documents that have come after the relevant reps period.

51:51

And for whatever reason, I've not mentioned them or had sight of them, I don't think there are.

52:01

Thank you so Raha Haq, on behalf of the applicant, I think it's just worth mentioning. We did submit some updated documents in response to Section 51 advice. And they are on the they're the examination library with reference number as dash 006,

52:19

all the way to as dash 017,

52:24

and at deadline one, we will update the application guide, which will include a reference to all of these updated documents. Thank you, Mr. Hag, that's that's most helpful. Yes, I'm not going to read not I'm not going to read them. All the documents are but what I will do is, in the rule eight letter, I'm going to specifically

52:42

relate, refer to those documents in the rule eight letter so everybody understands the additional submissions that have been made, and then that's that's documented. But thank you for for that summary.

52:55

So just moving on now to Well, is there anything else before I move on?

53:02

Okay? Item seven other matters. So I'm going to start just with a brief discussion about the venues. So this is potentially going to be the venue for the hearings, which are set to take place 15th of September, and then later on in the examination, can I ask the applicant? There has been correspondence on this.

53:25

It's your intention that that be that is the most suitable venue as far as you're concerned. I think my question was going to be, have you asked the council whether indeed this is a suitable and the most suitable venue? I know that Cumberland Council are on the call today, for example,

53:44

Mr. Hack, thank you. So Rahul hack, on behalf of the advocate, my understanding is that we did carry out a search for suitable venues, and there were not a number, not a significant number, of actually suitable venues available. And so this was one of the the site that we've identified is effectively the main venue available.

54:05

I may need to just confer briefly with some of my colleagues to work out if it has been discussed with Cumberland Council. I mean, I just before Mr. Till comes in, I'm not suggesting that it's not acceptable at all. It may well be a perfectly acceptable venue, and I think we've made representations on that. There's been some communication on this point, but just while the council are in the room, effectively, it

might be an idea just to say, because I understand there has been some issues finding a suitable venue while the council are on the call after the meeting, it might be helpful just to have a chat with them. And if there are better venues, for example, they could come forward. But I'm not suggesting that this, the venue you've chosen, is not suitable. Mr. Tail or Mr. Legg, any advance on this?

54:50

Well, I'm Jonathan Legg, on behalf of the applicant, I can confirm that we haven't discussed this particular venue that we're favoring with the.

55:00

Else. Sorry.

55:02

Sorry to interrupt. Mr. Hayhurst is about to come in, but Mr. Like, could you just tell us what the venue is that might help Mr. Hayhurst as well? Washington Central, yes, okay, thanks.

55:15

It's, it's the, unfortunately, it's the only there are other venues which we were favoring

55:21

above that venue, but that's the only one that's available with the ticks, all the requirements,

55:29

the dates that we want or leave you've indicated are being favored for the examination. So yeah,

55:36

Mr. Hayhurst, you've got your hand up as well.

55:40

It's Nick Hayhurst on behalf of Cumberland Council. Thank you, sir. I was just raising my hand just to ask for clarity on what the venue was, because I wasn't aware of it. So that questions being answered now, so that's fine, okay? Thank you. I'll leave you to have that discussion if you wish. As I say, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not suggesting that the venue isn't suitable. It was just I understood there was an issue trying to find, find suitable venue. And while the council are on the call, it's helpful to use their knowledge of a local area

56:14

and just again, well, moving on, actually, just to talk about something that does involve the council further is the local impact reports. So as I've set out in the timetable, they are due by the 26th of August, at deadline two, and I haven't gone into any detail when we've been discussing the timetable.

56:32

Comments on the local impact reports are due by the 30th of September.



56:39

Now, Cumberland Council are in the room today, and I don't underestimate that there is resource needed to produce these documents, and I'm hoping that you're familiar and understand what's required of you. There is obviously guidance out there, which I will make sure is included in the rule a letter. But Mr. Hayhurst, could I have an update on local impact reports

57:00

in terms of you understand what they are and what your involvement is in the process.

57:06

Yes. Nick Hayhurst on behalf of Common Council, thank you, sir. Yes, we are currently busy, busily working away on the local impact report. We do understand the format they need to take and the issues that need to be covered. So I think we're comfortable with that, and we are working towards the 26th of August deadline, as set out in the letter. Okay, that's That's reassuring. Thank you. And as I say, I will, I'm sure you've got a copy of the guidance, but I will put a guide, a copy to the link to the guidance in the rule eight letter after this meeting when published. Thank you.

57:52

Are there any other matters or points anyone would wish to raise? Now I am going to raise something before we close, but before I do, has anyone else got anything they wish to add?

58:07

Okay, and this is just to say that I appreciate Miss

58:11

Carling and Mr. Fulton are on the call today, and you've not raised any particular concerns, and I think you understand the process that the examination will commence after this meeting.

58:25

But just to say I understand that you have made relevant representations on the application, and I appreciate that you have raised particular concerns. They will be addressed when the examination starts, in terms of, you know, there'll be further examination and consideration of those matters, but it's just to reassure you that you know your comments and concerns will be considered moving forwards,

58:52

and that applies for any other relevant representation,

58:56

not just Mr. Fulton and Miss Carling. Okay, I

59:01

think I've covered everything I need to cover today.

59:06

Quickly go through my checklist.

59:15

Okay, so all that remains, really, is for me to close today's meeting. And before I do, I'm an upload of today, sorry, an upload of today's meeting and a transcript of it and a summary note will be published shortly. My rule eight letter, which will include the examination timetable, will also be published shortly, as will my first set of written questions.

59:41

And just to say thank you to everybody for your patience today and for engaging in the preliminary meeting, and I hope to see many of you at a future event

59:51

and through ongoing correspondence, through the examination process. So I'm about to close the preliminary meeting, and the examination will commence as soon as I close this meeting.

1:00:00

Meeting. So thank you everybody, and have a have a good day. Thank you. You.