

RE: Question to the ExA – Steeple Renewables Project

[Steeple Renewables Project<SteepleRenewables@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>](mailto:SteepleRenewables@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

██████████ (Energy Security)

██████████ (Energy Security);Steeple Renewables Project

Hi ██████████,

See below a response from the ExA:

“The specific design issues relating to the BESS and substation that the ExA considers warrant review by an independent design body

The ExA’s considerations regarding the need for an independent design review process are detailed in paragraphs 3.3.31 to 3.3.43, 3.3.47 and 3.3.50 of the recommendation report.

The ExA recognised the comments by Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) [REP2-063] and [REP4-001] and Sturton le Steeple Parish Council (SSPC) [REP4-003] in its consideration of the need for an independent design review at the post consent stage. Paragraph 3.3.33 of the recommendation report notes NCC’s response [REP2-063] to the ExA’s first written question (ExQ1) Q4.0.4, which sought comments from NCC and Bassetlaw District Council on the need for independent design review, stating “components including large above-ground elements such as substations, construction compounds and temporary works and landscape mitigation measures could benefit from additional design scrutiny”. Furthermore, NCC’s response to ExQ1 Q4.0.4 states, amongst other things, in relation to large above-ground built elements that “scale, massing, form, materials and colour treatment will have a strong influence on landscape and visual effects”.

The ExA took those comments into account and recognised that the proposed BESS (Work No.2) and substation (Work No. 3) would be the main large above-ground, and most visually prominent, elements that would be present during the operational period.

The ExA recognises that there are design elements to the BESS and substation that would be predominantly led by engineering constraints, technical standards and safety regulation. However, there are more flexible elements to both of these components where an independent design review could add significant positive value, to ensure they would be positively integrated into the surrounded environment. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The final landscaping design associated with those elements to ensure it would respond positively to and complement existing landscape character, including landscaping layout, planting choice and earthworks.
- The design of associated proposed buildings, for example substation control buildings, on matters including scale, massing, form, materials and colour.
- The final design for the proposed perimeter fencing around both the BESS and substation compounds, recognising that the Outline Design Principles [REP2-031] provides for two potential options.
- Drainage Design, notably the associated drainage basins.

Furthermore, with regard to the BESS, and as reported in paragraph 3.6.49 of the recommendation report, Historic England raised concerns regarding the relationship between the Medieval Settlement and Open Field System Immediately South East of Low Farm Scheduled

Monument (NHLE ref. 1017741) and the Grade II* listed Church of St Peter and St Paul (NHLE ref. 1275773). Whilst paragraph 3.6.56 of the recommendation report acknowledges that the ExA had not been presented with substantive evidence to demonstrate how any harm affecting the relationship between the two designated heritage assets would be reduced through re-siting the proposed BESS, an independent design review process could also positively influence the matters referred to above to help minimise any impacts.

The ExA was also mindful in its recommendation that requiring an independent design review of the final design of these components would add an additional layer of independent design scrutiny, notably recognising the concerns raised by SSPC [REP4-003] around future public consultation on design matters.

How those issues are considered to fall short of, or conflict with, policy requirements

As noted in paragraph 3.3.38 of the recommendation report, the ExA found through its questioning to the applicant during the examination that it had not engaged, and was not proposing to engage, in an independent design review process. This is considered at odds to the requirements of NPS EN-1 (2024) paragraphs 4.7.5 and 4.7.8, in addition to the Planning Inspectorate's Advice on Good Design, which encourages applicants to consider taking independent professional advice on the design aspects of a proposal and use representative design panels to maximise the value provided by infrastructure.

Paragraphs 3.3.43 and 3.3.50 of the recommendation report explains the policy requirements relating to the design review process and why the proposed development is considered to fall short of NPS EN-1 (2024) paragraphs 4.7.5 or 4.7.8, also recognising the requirements of NPS EN-1 (2024) paragraphs 4.7.10 and 4.7.11.

Fundamentally, the requirement for independent design review relating to the BESS and substation, in addition to landscaping mitigation across the site, is to ensure that their final design and appearance, with all required components taken together including the elements referred to above, would achieve the highest quality design and good aesthetics as far as is possible, in accordance with NPS EN-1 (2024)."

Kind regards



The Planning
Inspectorate

████████████████████ | **Case Manager - National Infrastructure
(Environment)**

The Planning Inspectorate

Directline: ██████████

Helpline: 0303 444 5000

Email: ██████████ [@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:██████████@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)



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From: [REDACTED] (Energy Security) <[REDACTED]@energysecurity.gov.uk>

Sent: 04 August 2026 16:13

To: Steeple Renewables Project <SteepleRenewables@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED] (Energy Security) <[REDACTED]@energysecurity.gov.uk>

Subject: Question to the ExA – Steeple Renewables Project

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Hi [REDACTED],

I hope you are well.

Please would you be able to pass the question below to the ExA and let us know their response?

It is noted that in the report, the ExA suggested an amendment of Requirement 3 to include independent design review at the post consent stage. Please could the ExA provide clarification on the following matters:

- *The specific design issues relating to the BESS and substation that the ExA considers warrant review by an independent design body.*
- *How those issues are considered to fall short of, or conflict with, policy requirements.*

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero



██████████
Planning Case Manager

Tel: ██████████

██████████ [@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:██████████@energysecurity.gov.uk)

3-8 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A
2AW

www.gov.uk/desn2

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