



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Meridian Solar Farm
Hearing:	Transcript of Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) – Part 1
Date:	9 September 2026

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

It is not a verbatim text of what was said at the above hearing. 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 hearing.

1

00:00:04,940 --> 00:00:06,240

Good morning, everyone.

2

00:00:07,620 --> 00:00:11,600

It's 10:00 o'clock and time for us to open this issue-specific

3

00:00:11,610 --> 00:00:15,360

hearing into strategic matters for the Meridian Solar Farm project.

4

00:00:16,040 --> 00:00:18,360

Can I check that everybody can hear me properly?

5

00:00:21,040 --> 00:00:24,210

Can I also confirm with the case team that the live streaming and recording of this

6

00:00:24,240 --> 00:00:25,290

event is working?

7

00:00:26,140 --> 00:00:29,850

Thank you. My name is Beth Davis. I'm a

8

00:00:29,880 --> 00:00:33,260

chartered geologist, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a

9

00:00:33,320 --> 00:00:36,370

member of the panel to examine this application.

10

00:00:36,940 --> 00:00:40,260

I'm now going to ask the other panel members to introduce themselves.

11

00:00:41,440 --> 00:00:43,340

Good morning. My name's Helen Cassini.

12

00:00:43,420 --> 00:00:46,680

I'm a chartered town planner, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to

13

00:00:46,720 --> 00:00:49,310

be the lead member of the panel to examine this application.

14

00:00:51,020 --> 00:00:52,720

And good morning. My name is Samantha Murphy.

15

00:00:52,780 --> 00:00:56,589

I'm a chartered town planner and chartered environmentalist, and I've also been

16

00:00:56,680 --> 00:01:00,220

appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member on the panel of inspectors to

17

00:01:00,240 --> 00:01:01,920

examine this application.

18

00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:06,300

Together, we constitute the examining authority or the EA.

19

00:01:07,080 --> 00:01:10,270

I can confirm that there are no known conflicts that prevent us from

20

00:01:10,320 --> 00:01:14,240

examining the application. Also present

21

00:01:14,260 --> 00:01:16,840

today are members of the case team.

22

00:01:16,850 --> 00:01:20,450

The case manager is Ms. Margoom. She's supported at the

23

00:01:20,520 --> 00:01:23,680

venue by Mr. Stevens and by colleagues online.

24

00:01:24,400 --> 00:01:28,380

If you have any questions or concerns about today's event, please can

25

00:01:28,420 --> 00:01:29,860

you contact one of these people.

26

00:01:31,450 --> 00:01:35,340

In addition, there are technicians from TM Services with us

27

00:01:35,380 --> 00:01:39,120

today. They're here to manage the recording and the live streaming of the

28

00:01:39,160 --> 00:01:39,620

event.

29

00:01:41,560 --> 00:01:43,920

A few housekeeping matters for the people in the room.

30

00:01:44,440 --> 00:01:47,720

Please, can everyone set their devices to silent so that we're not disturbed?

31

00:01:48,550 --> 00:01:51,100

There are no fire alarms planned for today.

32

00:01:51,640 --> 00:01:55,220

If the alarm sounds, please exit the building out of the front

33

00:01:55,280 --> 00:01:58,940

entrance and assemble at the Chris Turner statue outside the football

34

00:01:59,020 --> 00:02:02,120

club, which is located on the approach to the venue.

35

00:02:02,900 --> 00:02:06,000

And the toilets are located along the corridor behind us.

36

00:02:07,280 --> 00:02:11,260

For those of you attending virtually, we can see you on the large screen in front

37

00:02:11,300 --> 00:02:15,220

of us. Please, can you switch on your camera if you wish to speak, and use the

38

00:02:15,280 --> 00:02:18,690

raise hand function if you want to get our attention.

39

00:02:18,720 --> 00:02:22,680

To avoid distractions, please can you keep your cameras and microphones off

40

00:02:22,720 --> 00:02:24,410

unless we invite you to speak.

41

00:02:27,640 --> 00:02:31,540

No requests have been made for any special measures or arrangements to

42

00:02:31,560 --> 00:02:35,540

enable participation. But if you do need assistance, please speak

43

00:02:35,600 --> 00:02:36,500

to the case team.

44

00:02:38,200 --> 00:02:41,480

In terms of timings, we'll aim to adjourn for a short break at about

45

00:02:41,540 --> 00:02:44,700

11:30, and lunch will be at about 1:00 o'clock.

46

00:02:45,480 --> 00:02:49,440

If needed, we'll also have a short break this afternoon.

47

00:02:49,480 --> 00:02:52,560

If you need additional breaks or any other support during the hearing, again,

48

00:02:52,620 --> 00:02:54,160

please alert the case team.

49

00:02:56,120 --> 00:02:59,390

Just so everyone is aware, the hearing is being live streamed and

50

00:02:59,420 --> 00:03:00,180

recorded.

51

00:03:01,030 --> 00:03:04,980

The recording will be made available on the Meridian Solar Farm section

52

00:03:05,020 --> 00:03:07,530

of the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as

53

00:03:07,560 --> 00:03:11,160

possible. As explained in our letter of

54

00:03:11,360 --> 00:03:14,750

23rd of July 26, the General Data Protection

55

00:03:14,820 --> 00:03:18,740

Regulation or GDPR applies because

56

00:03:18,780 --> 00:03:22,060

the Planning Inspectorate are retaining and publishing a digital recording as a

57

00:03:22,140 --> 00:03:25,660

public record for a period of five years from the Secretary of State's decision.

58

00:03:26,370 --> 00:03:29,930

This means that if you participate in the meeting, you need to understand that

59

00:03:29,960 --> 00:03:33,940

you're being recorded and that you consent to the retention and publication of

60

00:03:33,980 --> 00:03:35,060

the digital recording.

61

00:03:37,760 --> 00:03:40,820

We'll only ever ask for information to be placed on the public record that is

62

00:03:40,860 --> 00:03:44,560

important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision.

63

00:03:44,620 --> 00:03:48,450

To avoid the need to edit the recordings, we ask that you do not refer to private

64

00:03:48,450 --> 00:03:51,860

or confidential information in your submissions today, such as address

65

00:03:51,940 --> 00:03:55,660

details, financial circumstances, medical conditions, and so on.

66

00:03:56,700 --> 00:04:00,510

If you do feel the need to refer to something that's private or confidential,

67

00:04:00,580 --> 00:04:04,049

please can you discuss this with someone from the case team to explore whether this

68

00:04:04,080 --> 00:04:06,840

could be submitted in writing and then redacted.

69

00:04:08,080 --> 00:04:10,740

Does anyone else intend to film today's hearing?

70

00:04:15,000 --> 00:04:18,810

For those people watching the live stream, we have to stop the recording during

71

00:04:18,810 --> 00:04:20,860

adjournments to give us clear files.

72

00:04:21,360 --> 00:04:24,920

This means that when we restart the meeting and the live stream, you'll need to

73

00:04:24,960 --> 00:04:26,580

refresh your browser page.

74

00:04:27,860 --> 00:04:31,230

Does anyone have any questions about the technology or the housekeeping?

75

00:04:35,360 --> 00:04:39,320

One administrative point before we do move on to agenda item two.

76

00:04:39,490 --> 00:04:43,240

The Environment Agency have informed us that they're only available this morning,

77

00:04:43,700 --> 00:04:46,580

so we've rearranged the agenda to hear from them

78

00:04:47,480 --> 00:04:51,400

before lunch. We're therefore bringing item seven, which

79

00:04:51,440 --> 00:04:54,640

deals with flood risk, water quality, and resources forward.

80

00:04:55,420 --> 00:04:58,700

We now intend to hear water issues after item

81

00:04:58,880 --> 00:05:02,060

five, which is the discussion of alternatives, and before

82

00:05:02,100 --> 00:05:04,410

interrelationships with other projects.

83

00:05:04,920 --> 00:05:08,800

So we're effectively swapping six and seven around, and we will keep an eye

84

00:05:08,880 --> 00:05:12,820

on that as we go along this morning and may need to revise it again, but we'll keep

85

00:05:12,860 --> 00:05:15,950

you informed of our decision. Does anyone have any questions about

86

00:05:16,060 --> 00:05:17,660

that?

87

00:05:20,560 --> 00:05:24,420

Before I hand over to Mrs. Murphy for agenda item two, so

88

00:05:24,460 --> 00:05:27,080

John, I can see that you've got your screen on.

89

00:05:27,160 --> 00:05:30,960

If you don't mind, we'll come to you at agenda

90

00:05:31,000 --> 00:05:34,740

item three when my colleague will then run through everyone's here,

91

00:05:34,820 --> 00:05:38,160

and you can respond with your comments at that point.

92

00:05:38,440 --> 00:05:38,940

Thank you.

93

00:05:39,880 --> 00:05:42,580

Okay. I'll hand over to Mrs. Murphy for agenda item two.

94

00:05:43,600 --> 00:05:44,060

Thank you.

95

00:05:45,320 --> 00:05:46,860

So this is regarding the purpose

96

00:05:48,300 --> 00:05:52,260

of this hearing. The primary purpose of issue-specific hearings

97

00:05:52,280 --> 00:05:55,820

are to ensure the examining authority has all the material required to reach a

98

00:05:55,860 --> 00:05:58,719

conclusion on particular issues.

99

00:05:58,760 --> 00:06:02,360

Today's issue-specific hearing is on strategic matters and is being

100

00:06:02,480 --> 00:06:06,400

held as we wish to explore and discuss a number of matters relating

101

00:06:06,460 --> 00:06:10,220

to the scope of the development, alternatives, other infrastructure

102

00:06:10,240 --> 00:06:14,060

projects in the region, and some specific topic areas.

103

00:06:14,100 --> 00:06:17,580

It is also to ensure that we have this information at an early stage in the

104

00:06:17,600 --> 00:06:18,300

examination

105

00:06:19,656 --> 00:06:23,616

This hearing will cover some high level and more general issues rather than

106

00:06:23,656 --> 00:06:27,016

site-specific matters. We are only at the start of the

107

00:06:27,076 --> 00:06:30,646

examination, and there will be later hearings in the timetable,

108

00:06:31,176 --> 00:06:34,696

which will allow us to get into further detail relating to environmental matters,

109

00:06:35,176 --> 00:06:38,756

the development consent order, compulsory acquisition, and more

110

00:06:38,766 --> 00:06:39,756

specific matters.

111

00:06:41,666 --> 00:06:45,176

The agenda is broadly the same as that published on the 27th of August

112

00:06:45,276 --> 00:06:49,156

2026, and that can be found in the examination library

113

00:06:49,236 --> 00:06:51,635

at reference EV3001.

114

00:06:52,476 --> 00:06:55,676

And it would be helpful if you had this in front of you, as the agenda may not

115

00:06:55,696 --> 00:06:56,716

always be on the screen.

116

00:06:58,016 --> 00:07:01,776

The agenda is for guidance only, and we may add other issues as we

117

00:07:01,816 --> 00:07:02,276

progress.

118

00:07:03,216 --> 00:07:07,196

Should the answers to some of our questions take longer than anticipated, it may

119

00:07:07,256 --> 00:07:10,816

be necessary to prioritize some of them, and defer other matters to written

120

00:07:10,856 --> 00:07:11,436

questions.

121

00:07:12,996 --> 00:07:16,656

Please remember that the examination is predominantly a written process.

122

00:07:17,156 --> 00:07:20,976

If you cannot answer the questions being asked right now or require some

123

00:07:20,996 --> 00:07:24,776

more time, we would ask that you rather tell us that you

124

00:07:24,796 --> 00:07:28,496

will need to respond in writing than give an incomplete or incorrect

125

00:07:28,596 --> 00:07:32,176

answer. We can then defer the response to an action point to be

126

00:07:32,236 --> 00:07:36,216

submitted at deadline one on the 22nd of September, or

127

00:07:36,296 --> 00:07:38,476

to a later written question or another hearing.

128

00:07:40,136 --> 00:07:44,016

I would like to reassure you that while we may not ask a question or follow up on

129

00:07:44,056 --> 00:07:44,896

something that has been

130

00:07:45,716 --> 00:07:49,556

said at the hearing, it doesn't necessarily mean that we believe this matter

131

00:07:49,596 --> 00:07:53,376

has been fully addressed. It could be that we'll be examining it at a

132

00:07:53,416 --> 00:07:55,636

later hearing or through written questions.

133

00:07:56,816 --> 00:08:00,696

This is a public examination, so interested parties present will be given an

134

00:08:00,756 --> 00:08:04,676

opportunity to make comments on what the applicant has said at the end of

135

00:08:04,736 --> 00:08:08,476

each item or discussion. However, whilst we will

136

00:08:08,556 --> 00:08:12,236

give all parties the opportunity to comment at the appropriate points,

137

00:08:13,076 --> 00:08:16,976

these should be focused and should not repeat previous points

already made at

138

00:08:17,016 --> 00:08:19,876

the open floor hearing or already made in writing.

139

00:08:21,196 --> 00:08:25,136

If we do not have time to hear from everyone who wants to contribute, we would ask

140

00:08:25,156 --> 00:08:28,896

that you submit your comments in writing at deadline one on the 22nd of

141

00:08:28,916 --> 00:08:30,376

September 2026.

142

00:08:31,296 --> 00:08:32,816

So thank you, and I will now hand over to Ms.

143

00:08:32,876 --> 00:08:34,836

Casini, who will take us through the introductions.

144

00:08:35,956 --> 00:08:39,736

Thank you. I'm now going to ask those of you who are participating in today's

145

00:08:39,817 --> 00:08:41,456

meeting to introduce yourselves.

146

00:08:41,836 --> 00:08:45,716

Please can you ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone, stating your

147

00:08:45,776 --> 00:08:49,216

name and who you are representing each time before you speak, if

148

00:08:49,256 --> 00:08:53,176

relevant. If you're not seated at the main table and wish

149

00:08:53,276 --> 00:08:57,036

to speak, there will be a roving microphone, so just please wait for this to come

150

00:08:57,096 --> 00:09:00,836

to you. So we've been provided with a list of representatives for the

151

00:09:00,896 --> 00:09:04,736

applicant and interested parties who have expressed a wish to be

152

00:09:04,776 --> 00:09:08,576

heard at today's meeting. So turning to the applicant, can I ask

153

00:09:08,916 --> 00:09:12,636

you to introduce the members of your team who will be speaking today, whether in

154

00:09:12,676 --> 00:09:15,136

person or online, please?

155

00:09:15,196 --> 00:09:17,456

Yes, sure thing. My name is Taylor Power.

156

00:09:17,576 --> 00:09:21,436

I'm a managing senior associate at Pinsent Masons, and I'll be the primary point

157

00:09:21,556 --> 00:09:21,785

of

158

00:09:22,716 --> 00:09:24,706

contact for the applicant team today.

159

00:09:25,636 --> 00:09:29,196

Do you want me to run through the entire list now, or would it help if I introduce

160

00:09:29,216 --> 00:09:30,036

people as we go?

161

00:09:30,216 --> 00:09:30,876

I think if-

162

00:09:30,916 --> 00:09:31,256
The whole list?

163
00:09:31,266 --> 00:09:32,796
Just when... Yeah. No, just when-

164
00:09:32,876 --> 00:09:33,276
As we go

165
00:09:33,336 --> 00:09:33,586
... people speak, I think.

166
00:09:33,616 --> 00:09:36,166
Yeah, exactly. I don't want to read you 15 names and-

167
00:09:36,496 --> 00:09:36,506
Yeah.

168
00:09:36,506 --> 00:09:36,556
Yeah.

169
00:09:36,616 --> 00:09:37,116
That's fine.

170
00:09:37,156 --> 00:09:37,306
Yeah.

171
00:09:37,316 --> 00:09:40,016
But if you'd just introduce as and when relevant, please.

172
00:09:40,056 --> 00:09:40,576
Yes, of course.

173
00:09:40,776 --> 00:09:41,216
Thank you.

174
00:09:41,296 --> 00:09:41,345
Thanks.

175
00:09:42,356 --> 00:09:44,636
Can I turn to Lincolnshire County Council, please?

176

00:09:47,576 --> 00:09:51,516

Good morning, madam. My name's Joel Semakula, barrister acting for

177

00:09:51,756 --> 00:09:55,736

Lincolnshire County Council. I also have a team here with me, but we may follow the

178

00:09:55,796 --> 00:09:59,736

same approach as the applicant. I will just introduce people as and when they

179

00:09:59,776 --> 00:10:00,756

come forward to contribute.

180

00:10:00,956 --> 00:10:04,656

That's fine. Thank you very much. Do we have Anglian Water

181

00:10:04,736 --> 00:10:05,636

Services?

182

00:10:07,356 --> 00:10:10,396

Good morning, madam. Andrea Dollard from Anglian Water Services.

183

00:10:13,616 --> 00:10:16,256

And Carrie Murphy, also from Anglian Water Services.

184

00:10:17,176 --> 00:10:21,136

Thank you very much. Is there anybody else in the room today who wishes

185

00:10:21,196 --> 00:10:21,716

to speak?

186

00:10:25,156 --> 00:10:29,125

No, but if anybody does change their mind, please just put their hand up and

187

00:10:29,176 --> 00:10:30,476

a microphone will come to you.

188

00:10:31,816 --> 00:10:34,756
So we'll now move on to our virtual attendees.

189
00:10:35,436 --> 00:10:38,626
As my colleague said previously, if you're with us

190
00:10:38,636 --> 00:10:42,336
today using Teams, when required, can you please

191
00:10:42,576 --> 00:10:46,456
raise a virtual hand? And again, if you can introduce yourself and let us

192
00:10:46,516 --> 00:10:48,996
know which agenda item you wish to speak on.

193
00:10:49,036 --> 00:10:51,216
So do we have South Holland District Council?

194
00:10:54,976 --> 00:10:57,896
Yes. Good morning, madam. My name's Sam Dewar.

195
00:10:58,156 --> 00:11:02,086
I am a planning consultant and appointed by South Holland

196
00:11:02,176 --> 00:11:02,716
Council

197
00:11:03,676 --> 00:11:07,016
today. And I'm also joined by Tom Rawlings, who is our landscape

198
00:11:07,116 --> 00:11:07,836
consultant.

199
00:11:08,936 --> 00:11:12,196
We may wish, depending on what's discussed,

200
00:11:12,856 --> 00:11:14,996
we may wish to comment on item five

201
00:11:16,496 --> 00:11:20,436

and possibly item nine, but certainly item five at this

202

00:11:20,496 --> 00:11:21,216
stage. Thank you.

203

00:11:21,396 --> 00:11:22,656
Excellent. Thank you very much.

204

00:11:23,536 --> 00:11:27,206
Do we have Kat Makinson on behalf of Lincolnshire Against Needless

205

00:11:27,276 --> 00:11:27,816
Destruction?

206

00:11:28,996 --> 00:11:32,485
Hello. Yes. We're looking at speaking at

207

00:11:32,656 --> 00:11:35,516
agenda item six, cumulative impact.

208

00:11:36,416 --> 00:11:40,226
Thank you. Do we have representatives of the Environment Agency

209

00:11:40,316 --> 00:11:40,676
present?

210

00:11:43,476 --> 00:11:47,156
Hello. Yes. My name's Liz Locke. I'm a planning specialist in the

211

00:11:47,176 --> 00:11:49,976
Environment Agency's infrastructure team.

212

00:11:50,996 --> 00:11:54,946
I've got my colleagues with me here today, and I can introduce them

213

00:11:55,016 --> 00:11:56,676
as and when relevant. Thank you.

214

00:11:56,736 --> 00:11:57,876
Great. Thank you very much.

215

00:11:58,856 --> 00:12:00,916

Defense Infrastructure Organization?

216

00:12:13,536 --> 00:12:14,776

Anybody from the Defense

217

00:12:15,576 --> 00:12:17,016

Infrastructure Organization?

218

00:12:18,456 --> 00:12:19,356

I was on mute, sorry.

219

00:12:20,236 --> 00:12:23,556

Yes, we'll be looking to speak in regards to aviation safety.

220

00:12:23,796 --> 00:12:24,676

Thank you very much

221

00:12:26,360 --> 00:12:29,100

National Grid Electricity Transmission PLC.

222

00:12:33,360 --> 00:12:36,160

Good morning, madam. My name is Howard Basford,

223

00:12:36,680 --> 00:12:40,520

and I appear on behalf of National Grid

224

00:12:40,540 --> 00:12:44,400

Electricity Transmission PLC. I am a

225

00:12:44,420 --> 00:12:48,180

solicitor and partner at the law firm DLA Piper UK LLP.

226

00:12:48,900 --> 00:12:52,660

I'm accompanied by Mr. David Watkins, who is an

227

00:12:52,720 --> 00:12:56,240

EPC project manager in relation to the Grimsby to

228

00:12:56,300 --> 00:12:59,180

Walpole nationally significant infrastructure project,

229

00:12:59,860 --> 00:13:02,940

and he is from National Grid itself.

230

00:13:04,220 --> 00:13:06,160

Thank you very much. And then Sir John,

231

00:13:07,660 --> 00:13:08,740

are you available now?

232

00:13:10,680 --> 00:13:14,520

Yes, I'm Sir John Hayes, member of Parliament for South Holland

233

00:13:14,560 --> 00:13:18,440

and the Deepings. I think, given the

234

00:13:19,040 --> 00:13:22,600

prior contributions yesterday, I want to speak about on item

235

00:13:22,680 --> 00:13:24,840

four and possibly five.

236

00:13:26,240 --> 00:13:27,060

Thank you very much.

237

00:13:28,520 --> 00:13:31,100

Is there anybody else virtually who wishes to speak?

238

00:13:34,820 --> 00:13:38,580

No. Well, thank you very much, and we'll now move on to the main discussion points,

239

00:13:38,920 --> 00:13:40,490

and I'll hand over to Mrs. Murphy.

240

00:13:42,380 --> 00:13:42,820

Thank you.

241

00:13:43,960 --> 00:13:47,800

So moving on to agenda item four. The agenda

242

00:13:47,860 --> 00:13:51,550

sets out the main purpose of this item is to gain an overview of the proposed

243

00:13:51,600 --> 00:13:55,240

development as a starting point for consideration of more detailed

244

00:13:55,280 --> 00:13:55,780

matters.

245

00:13:56,720 --> 00:14:00,280

In a moment, we'll be asking the applicant to provide an explanation and an

246

00:14:00,440 --> 00:14:04,350

overview of the proposed solar array, pylon transmission

247

00:14:04,400 --> 00:14:08,120

route, siting of new substations and battery storage system,

248

00:14:08,920 --> 00:14:10,420

or otherwise known as BESS,

249

00:14:11,580 --> 00:14:14,900

cable sealing end compounds, and the main construction compounds,

250

00:14:15,200 --> 00:14:19,120

alongside an overview of their approach to limits of deviation and

251

00:14:19,160 --> 00:14:22,800

an overview of the choice of mainly overhead cabling versus underground

252

00:14:22,920 --> 00:14:23,320

cabling,

253

00:14:24,140 --> 00:14:25,980

and the proposed methods of installation.

254

00:14:26,980 --> 00:14:30,640

We've also set out with the agenda that this will be followed by a more

255

00:14:30,680 --> 00:14:34,420

detailed discussion and questioning from us as the examining authority in

256

00:14:34,440 --> 00:14:38,000

relation to a number of matters, and then we will invite others to comment on these

257

00:14:38,040 --> 00:14:39,160

matters covered after that.

258

00:14:40,660 --> 00:14:44,600

So before we get into the main discussion, I just wish to ask the

259

00:14:44,660 --> 00:14:48,600

applicant to explain, for the benefit of those here today that may not have

260

00:14:48,620 --> 00:14:52,260

been here yesterday, how you might be displaying plans in

261

00:14:52,720 --> 00:14:54,040

terms of GIS mapping,

262

00:14:54,840 --> 00:14:56,360

and their purpose for this hearing.

263

00:14:58,380 --> 00:15:02,280

Taylor Power for the applicant. Do you mean in the setting of sharing

264

00:15:02,300 --> 00:15:03,100

them up on screen?

265

00:15:03,180 --> 00:15:03,380

Yes.

266

00:15:03,420 --> 00:15:07,260

Yes. So we've got Mr. Davies at the back of the room with a

267

00:15:07,600 --> 00:15:11,599

set of monitors. So I'll just be asking him to share up onto the

268

00:15:13,260 --> 00:15:17,240

online meeting the plan so that people both online and in the room should

269

00:15:17,280 --> 00:15:21,080

see it. Hopefully, it should come up on one of these front screens as well, if

270

00:15:21,380 --> 00:15:21,940

that works.

271

00:15:23,680 --> 00:15:24,520

Yes. Thank you. Great.

272

00:15:24,540 --> 00:15:24,720

Thanks.

273

00:15:24,780 --> 00:15:28,600

So, on that basis, I'll hand over to the applicant, to

274

00:15:28,740 --> 00:15:29,420

give their overview.

275

00:15:30,660 --> 00:15:31,400

Thank you very much.

276

00:15:32,640 --> 00:15:36,630

Taylor Power for the applicant. So I will just start with providing

277

00:15:36,630 --> 00:15:38,980

an initial overview of the scheme.

278

00:15:39,180 --> 00:15:42,860

I do have various members of the team here who are able to answer

279

00:15:42,920 --> 00:15:43,589

questions,

280

00:15:45,440 --> 00:15:48,380

should they arise, but I understand from what you just said, Ms.

281

00:15:48,440 --> 00:15:51,760

Murphy, that you'll leave your questioning to the end of the overview.

282

00:15:51,800 --> 00:15:55,160

Is that correct? Okay, great. Thank you. So, Mr.

283

00:15:55,360 --> 00:15:58,820

Davies, if you just don't mind screen sharing up ES Figure

284

00:15:59,440 --> 00:16:03,029

1-1, which is application document 071.

285

00:16:13,580 --> 00:16:17,309

Great. So this figure here shows the general location of the scheme.

286

00:16:17,540 --> 00:16:21,330

The scheme is located in southeast Lincolnshire, and it comprises a

287

00:16:21,360 --> 00:16:24,809

solar voltaic generating station located across four land

288

00:16:24,900 --> 00:16:28,480

parcels, which you should be able to see there are marked A,

289

00:16:28,660 --> 00:16:32,600

B, C, and D in the kind of pink hatch at the

290

00:16:32,640 --> 00:16:33,660

bottom of the figure.

291

00:16:34,860 --> 00:16:38,280

There are two 132 kV inter-array connections.

292

00:16:39,100 --> 00:16:43,059

The underground inter-array connection connects between A and B

293

00:16:43,540 --> 00:16:45,879

on the left-hand side of the solar

294

00:16:46,680 --> 00:16:50,320

array, yes, where the cursor is now, and the

295

00:16:50,420 --> 00:16:54,389

overhead inter-array connection connects between parcels C and D,
and

296

00:16:54,440 --> 00:16:57,180

that's delivered on double H-frame wooden poles.

297

00:16:58,490 --> 00:17:01,980

The grid connection route, which extends between the on-site

298

00:17:02,260 --> 00:17:06,240

400 kV substation at the north of Parcel B, at the kind of

299

00:17:06,300 --> 00:17:09,901

peninsular part of Parcel B at the top, extends up

300

00:17:09,960 --> 00:17:13,901

towards a siting area near Weston Marsh, which is that kind

301

00:17:13,921 --> 00:17:17,450

of doughnut large area at the top of the grid connection route,

302

00:17:18,240 --> 00:17:22,100

which coincides with the indicative siting area for a future
substation to

303

00:17:22,141 --> 00:17:24,550

be delivered by National Grid Electricity Transmission.

304

00:17:25,401 --> 00:17:28,920

So this will predominantly be delivered by overhead line using steel
lattice

305

00:17:28,940 --> 00:17:32,460

pylons, and there's a short section in the middle to be

undergrounded beneath

306

00:17:32,520 --> 00:17:34,680

existing electricity network infrastructure.

307

00:17:36,280 --> 00:17:39,960

And then just a note, I suppose, for parties, I'll flick back and forward

308

00:17:40,020 --> 00:17:40,500

between

309

00:17:41,840 --> 00:17:45,720

the next figure, which is ES Figure 2-2, Indicative Solar

310

00:17:45,780 --> 00:17:48,740

Development Area, which is application document

311

00:17:49,260 --> 00:17:50,040

074,

312

00:17:51,120 --> 00:17:54,220

and then the ES Chapter 2, The Scheme,

313

00:17:55,320 --> 00:17:58,540

Rev1, which is AS017.

314

00:18:00,480 --> 00:18:02,360

And that's just to work through

315

00:18:03,260 --> 00:18:07,250

images of the technology alongside where that

316

00:18:07,250 --> 00:18:09,940

technology is located within the scheme boundary.

317

00:18:11,860 --> 00:18:13,800

So starting with the solar development area,

318

00:18:14,360 --> 00:18:18,240

the solar PV arrays, which you

319

00:18:18,260 --> 00:18:21,980

could see on that figure that was briefly shared up from Chapter 2,

320

00:18:23,320 --> 00:18:26,740

would comprise rows of south-facing panels mounted on steel support

321

00:18:26,820 --> 00:18:30,420

structures, with the final layout subject to detailed design within the

322

00:18:30,440 --> 00:18:34,400

parameters secured by the DCO. The maximum height of the solar PV

323

00:18:34,460 --> 00:18:38,390

arrays would be 4.3 meters above the ground level, with lower panel edges

324

00:18:38,480 --> 00:18:42,210

typically a minimum of 0.8 meters above ground level and

325

00:18:42,280 --> 00:18:44,580

raised where necessary to respond to flood risk.

326

00:18:46,830 --> 00:18:48,590

Mr. Davies, if you just flick to the

327

00:18:49,550 --> 00:18:50,550

indicative figure.

328

00:18:52,130 --> 00:18:55,330

So you'll see this indicative figure shows

329

00:18:56,010 --> 00:18:59,870

an example of the layouts within the site of the

330

00:18:59,890 --> 00:19:03,770

rows of solar panels. But I would note it remains indicative,

331

00:19:03,870 --> 00:19:07,610

so this is subject to change within the broad areas

332

00:19:07,650 --> 00:19:08,930
captured within the works plan.

333

00:19:11,030 --> 00:19:11,350
So

334

00:19:12,390 --> 00:19:16,210
the solar development area also includes one on-site 400 kV

335

00:19:16,230 --> 00:19:19,750
substation and battery energy storage system, as well as three

336

00:19:19,890 --> 00:19:23,610
132 kV substations. So the 132 kV

337

00:19:23,650 --> 00:19:27,450
substations are located in Parcel A, so that's on page one of

338

00:19:27,610 --> 00:19:29,450
this figure.

339

00:19:34,050 --> 00:19:35,670
Oh, sorry. Yeah, the sheet one.

340

00:19:38,130 --> 00:19:38,710
Yeah, there we go.

341

00:19:40,290 --> 00:19:44,250
On the edge of Parcel A, and that connects Parcel A

342

00:19:44,310 --> 00:19:46,110
to the underground inter-array connection.

343

00:19:46,930 --> 00:19:50,610
Parcel C, which connects parcels B and C to the overhead

344

00:19:50,709 --> 00:19:54,630
inter-array connection, which is on sheet four, which might be PDF

345

00:19:54,730 --> 00:19:55,550
page five.

346
00:19:59,690 --> 00:20:01,310
If you can see that blue square there.

347
00:20:02,930 --> 00:20:06,890
And then the third 132 kV is in Parcel D, which connects Parcel D

348
00:20:06,970 --> 00:20:10,950
to the overhead inter-array connection, which is on PDF

349
00:20:10,990 --> 00:20:11,790
page eight.

350
00:20:12,990 --> 00:20:15,370
If you can see the blue square up there.

351
00:20:17,710 --> 00:20:21,590
So the 132 kV substations would collect

352
00:20:21,710 --> 00:20:25,350
electricity generated across the solar development area and transfer
it to the

353
00:20:25,410 --> 00:20:28,590
on-site 400 kV substation via underground cabling.

354
00:20:30,170 --> 00:20:33,230
The 400 kV and BESS substation is shown on

355
00:20:34,070 --> 00:20:37,370
PDF page four of that indicative

356
00:20:37,450 --> 00:20:38,350
figure.

357
00:20:40,330 --> 00:20:44,010
The substation is proposed to be air insulated as opposed to gas.

358
00:20:46,390 --> 00:20:49,950

So if you can see, that's the blue square at the top of Parcel B there.

359

00:20:50,480 --> 00:20:52,950

And then if you move, Mr. Davies, back to chapter two,

360

00:20:54,089 --> 00:20:55,529

page 37.

361

00:21:00,650 --> 00:21:04,150

The 400 kV substation will

362

00:21:04,250 --> 00:21:07,010

include both the substation and BESS units.

363

00:21:07,410 --> 00:21:10,590

So this is an indicative figure of what the BESS units will look like.

364

00:21:10,690 --> 00:21:11,170

There'll be

365

00:21:12,210 --> 00:21:14,810

several of these through the BESS compound,

366

00:21:15,490 --> 00:21:17,410

and on page 41

367

00:21:18,850 --> 00:21:22,490

shows an example of what the

368

00:21:22,510 --> 00:21:25,810

substation will look like being air insulated rather, as opposed to gas.

369

00:21:25,900 --> 00:21:28,430

It's not enclosed within a broader building.

370

00:21:29,770 --> 00:21:33,740

The 400 kV substation would then facilitate export of

371

00:21:33,810 --> 00:21:37,470
electricity to the national grid transmission network, as described
in

372
00:21:37,530 --> 00:21:38,110
chapter two.

373
00:21:39,010 --> 00:21:42,390
The location of the 400 kV substation in this section of the site

374
00:21:43,290 --> 00:21:46,910
at the top of Parcel B was driven by the routing process for the
grid

375
00:21:46,950 --> 00:21:50,659
connection route, with the outcome of that process being that the
route into Parcel

376
00:21:50,790 --> 00:21:53,990
B was preferred over Parcel D. We can speak to that

377
00:21:54,030 --> 00:21:56,150
further if there were any questions.

378
00:21:57,220 --> 00:22:01,110
The BESS compound would be co-located with the 400 kV substation and

379
00:22:01,170 --> 00:22:04,910
has been assessed on the basis of a BESS compound up to 350

380
00:22:04,950 --> 00:22:07,390
megawatts with up to two hours storage

381
00:22:07,410 --> 00:22:11,170
duration. The BESS would provide operational flexibility

382
00:22:11,180 --> 00:22:14,430
through energy storage and grid balancing functions.

383
00:22:14,450 --> 00:22:18,210
Both the substation and BESS have been positioned in accordance with
the Horlock

384

00:22:18,250 --> 00:22:21,790

rules to respond to technical requirements, flood risk constraints,

385

00:22:22,090 --> 00:22:25,870

environmental considerations, and connection requirements associated with the wider

386

00:22:25,890 --> 00:22:26,270

scheme.

387

00:22:27,090 --> 00:22:30,890

Flood protection measures, including bunding and flood defense walls where

388

00:22:30,930 --> 00:22:33,050

necessary, form part of the embedded design.

389

00:22:34,790 --> 00:22:38,390

Otherwise, the solar development area includes substantial areas of retained and

390

00:22:38,430 --> 00:22:42,410

enhanced green infrastructure, including over 170 hectares of

391

00:22:42,510 --> 00:22:45,310

habitat management areas, landscape corridors,

392

00:22:46,210 --> 00:22:49,850

129 hectares of species-rich grassland, in addition to other

393

00:22:49,870 --> 00:22:50,360

planting.

394

00:22:53,010 --> 00:22:56,710

When it comes to the construction compounds within the solar development

395

00:22:56,770 --> 00:23:00,610

area, the illustrative construction strategy has assumed

396

00:23:00,670 --> 00:23:03,970

construction compounds within each of the land parcels.

397

00:23:05,190 --> 00:23:09,070

For assessment purposes, those compounds have been assumed to occupy up to a

398

00:23:09,110 --> 00:23:12,910

maximum of 200 meters by 100 meters footprint.

399

00:23:13,890 --> 00:23:17,030

However, it's noted that the final layout and location of the construction

400

00:23:17,090 --> 00:23:20,110

compounds within the solar development area has remained

401

00:23:20,130 --> 00:23:23,980

flexible and will ultimately depend on the final detailed design and

402

00:23:24,030 --> 00:23:27,790

layout of the panels. So construction compounds within the

403

00:23:27,810 --> 00:23:31,720

solar development area are provided for as one of the ancillary works enabled

404

00:23:31,770 --> 00:23:35,730

under work number five, and so can be located anywhere within

405

00:23:35,770 --> 00:23:38,970

the solar development area that the work number five hatching is shown,

406

00:23:39,790 --> 00:23:43,750

subject to parameters and the design parameters that might restrict

407

00:23:43,790 --> 00:23:45,020

where they may be located.

408

00:23:47,780 --> 00:23:51,630

I'll now briefly describe the two inter-array connections which

409

00:23:51,690 --> 00:23:53,910

connect the parcels of the solar development area.

410

00:23:54,950 --> 00:23:58,710

So the underground inter-array connection between parcels A and B

411

00:23:59,670 --> 00:24:03,130

is an underground cable and extends from the 132 kV station

412

00:24:04,230 --> 00:24:08,010

in Parcel A to both the 132 kV substation and Parcel

413

00:24:08,110 --> 00:24:12,010

B and up to the 400 kV substation

414

00:24:12,050 --> 00:24:13,250

at the top of Parcel B.

415

00:24:14,690 --> 00:24:18,630

Its total length is approximately 1.1 kilometers, and

416

00:24:18,670 --> 00:24:22,590

it will be buried at a maximum of two meters depth, and at least

417

00:24:22,830 --> 00:24:26,330

0.9 meters depth. This is with the exception of trench-less

418

00:24:26,390 --> 00:24:30,370

crossings beneath drainage or water courses, where the maximum depth

419

00:24:30,410 --> 00:24:32,280

is seven meters and minimum depth is three.

420

00:24:33,590 --> 00:24:34,270

And then the second

421

00:24:35,730 --> 00:24:39,190

inter-array connection is the overhead line, which is, Mr.

422

00:24:39,390 --> 00:24:42,690
Davies, if you don't mind sharing up ES chapter two

423
00:24:42,790 --> 00:24:45,490
again at page 44.

424
00:24:47,550 --> 00:24:51,290
We can provide an illustration there of what the wood

425
00:24:51,990 --> 00:24:52,710
H poles

426
00:24:54,570 --> 00:24:57,370
delivery of that overhead line will look like.

427
00:24:58,130 --> 00:25:01,730
Because its total length is 3.1 kilometers, it

428
00:25:01,830 --> 00:25:05,660
also qualifies as a nationally significant infrastructure

429
00:25:05,750 --> 00:25:08,450
project via the definition within the Planning Act.

430
00:25:09,370 --> 00:25:09,830
And so

431
00:25:10,630 --> 00:25:14,450
EN5 applies, and it's been treated as such within the

432
00:25:14,470 --> 00:25:18,170
description of the development at Schedule 1 of the DC0.

433
00:25:18,270 --> 00:25:22,010
So that overhead line might be up to 15 meters in height with a
minimum

434
00:25:22,050 --> 00:25:24,210
ground clearance of 6.7 meters.

435
00:25:26,710 --> 00:25:30,410

And then finally, I'll briefly describe the grid connection route,

436

00:25:30,810 --> 00:25:34,290

which would connect the on-site 400 kV substation

437

00:25:34,650 --> 00:25:38,620

up to the National Grid Electricity Transmission's proposed

438

00:25:38,670 --> 00:25:41,590

Weston Marsh B substation near Weston Marsh.

439

00:25:43,230 --> 00:25:46,810

So the grid connection route extends for up to approximately 13

440

00:25:46,830 --> 00:25:50,810

kilometers and would comprise predominantly a single circuit 400

441

00:25:50,850 --> 00:25:54,410

kV overhead line supported by steel lattice pylons.

442

00:25:54,950 --> 00:25:55,610

So if you,

443

00:25:56,410 --> 00:26:00,310

Mr. Davies, sorry, if you go to ES chapter 2

444

00:26:00,350 --> 00:26:01,670

at page 45,

445

00:26:03,450 --> 00:26:07,010

there should be

446

00:26:07,150 --> 00:26:11,070

an illustration of what those pylons

447

00:26:11,130 --> 00:26:14,370

look like, so more the typical pylons people might

448

00:26:14,410 --> 00:26:16,270

associate with a overhead line.

449

00:26:18,190 --> 00:26:21,590

Pylons will generally be spaced at approximately 350-meter

450

00:26:21,670 --> 00:26:25,130

intervals, although span lengths can depend on detailed

451

00:26:25,190 --> 00:26:26,310

design.

452

00:26:27,470 --> 00:26:31,070

The preliminary design indicates heights of between 45 and

453

00:26:31,110 --> 00:26:34,790

58 meters, but the maximum height secured in the design

454

00:26:34,810 --> 00:26:37,140

parameters is 66 meters above ground level.

455

00:26:38,330 --> 00:26:41,580

The overhead line has been designed with flexibility to coordinate with National

456

00:26:41,650 --> 00:26:45,610

Grid's Grimsby to Walpole project and other existing and proposed

457

00:26:45,650 --> 00:26:49,390

transmission infrastructure in the area, and we'll discuss this further at

458

00:26:49,410 --> 00:26:50,650

item six of the agenda.

459

00:26:52,340 --> 00:26:55,910

The route has also been developed having had regard to the Holford Rules,

460

00:26:56,290 --> 00:27:00,130

seeking where practicable to minimize changes in direction, respond to

461

00:27:00,150 --> 00:27:03,719

local constraints, and maximize separation from sensitive receptors,

462

00:27:04,250 --> 00:27:07,760

as described in ES chapter 3, Alternatives and Design

463

00:27:07,850 --> 00:27:10,750

Evolution, and also the Design Approach document.

464

00:27:12,850 --> 00:27:16,749

Within the grid connection corridor, there is a section where the grid

465

00:27:16,790 --> 00:27:20,290

connection has been undergrounded, and that's to cross an

466

00:27:20,330 --> 00:27:23,730

existing 132 kV overhead line.

467

00:27:24,530 --> 00:27:28,030

So where it undergrounds beneath that line, you require

468

00:27:28,430 --> 00:27:32,250

infrastructure called cable sealing end compounds, or CSEC, as

469

00:27:32,310 --> 00:27:34,490

we'll refer to them the rest of today.

470

00:27:36,290 --> 00:27:39,790

So Mr. Davies, if you don't mind sharing up chapter 2 again at page

471

00:27:39,830 --> 00:27:43,810

47, just for an illustration of what a CSEC looks like.

472

00:27:45,990 --> 00:27:46,350

This

473

00:27:48,070 --> 00:27:51,920

image actually makes it look slightly worse than it will in the context of

474

00:27:51,970 --> 00:27:55,260

this scheme, in that we would only require half of that

475

00:27:55,270 --> 00:27:58,510
capacity for the 400 kV overhead line.

476

00:27:58,550 --> 00:28:02,470
So imagine that image coming in, but just for half

477

00:28:02,510 --> 00:28:05,490
of one of those pieces of infrastructure.

478

00:28:06,170 --> 00:28:09,600
So the CSEC include infrastructure such as terminal pylons,

479

00:28:09,670 --> 00:28:13,140
gantries, cable sealing ends, surge arresters, earthing systems, and

480

00:28:13,190 --> 00:28:15,930
associated electrical equipment.

481

00:28:15,939 --> 00:28:19,690
The compounds have been assessed on the basis of a maximum footprint
of 46

482

00:28:19,730 --> 00:28:23,530
meters by 46 meters, and the southern compound would also

483

00:28:23,570 --> 00:28:25,510
incorporate flood protection measures.

484

00:28:29,570 --> 00:28:32,810
I do also note that within, and

485

00:28:34,190 --> 00:28:37,930
Mr. Davies, if you don't mind going back to the first figure we
shared up, which I

486

00:28:37,990 --> 00:28:39,030
think was

487

00:28:40,110 --> 00:28:41,450

ES figure 1.1,

488

00:28:45,570 --> 00:28:47,690

just to show the total overview of the site.

489

00:28:47,730 --> 00:28:51,050

So in that flexible siting area right at the top of the

490

00:28:51,670 --> 00:28:55,470

grid connection route, and we'll talk about this in further detail

491

00:28:55,510 --> 00:28:55,900

later,

492

00:28:57,090 --> 00:29:00,910

so that doughnut right at the top of the grid connection route,
there

493

00:29:00,930 --> 00:29:04,770

could be additional CSEC located within that siting area.

494

00:29:04,799 --> 00:29:08,090

And that's because at this stage, the applicant has sought

495

00:29:08,170 --> 00:29:12,010

flexibility to enable overhead lines or underground

496

00:29:12,070 --> 00:29:13,970

sections within that siting area.

497

00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:17,690

And that's in order to manage the interaction of the

498

00:29:17,730 --> 00:29:21,710

scheme with National Grid's Grimsby to Walpole and Weston

499

00:29:21,770 --> 00:29:25,430

Marsh to East Leicestershire projects, which are

500

00:29:25,530 --> 00:29:29,450

also routing into that area. Because the design of those

501

00:29:29,470 --> 00:29:33,110

projects isn't yet final, we can't commit to the exact

502

00:29:33,150 --> 00:29:36,970

locations of the CSEC or in fact the areas of undergrounding that

503

00:29:37,050 --> 00:29:40,310

might be required in those areas, if required at all.

504

00:29:41,020 --> 00:29:44,820

But that flexibility has been retained and assessed within the environmental

505

00:29:44,930 --> 00:29:45,430

statement.

506

00:29:47,710 --> 00:29:50,910

I would just note that the grid connection route would be supported by three

507

00:29:50,970 --> 00:29:54,390

principal construction compounds, and those have been

508

00:29:54,470 --> 00:29:57,690

secured in specific locations within the works plans,

509

00:29:58,150 --> 00:30:01,720

which I will describe in the next section

510

00:30:01,830 --> 00:30:05,770

of this initial overview, which runs through the applicant's approach to

511

00:30:05,830 --> 00:30:06,859

limits of deviation.

512

00:30:09,650 --> 00:30:12,870

I suppose I can just pause there if there were any initial questions on that brief

513

00:30:12,990 --> 00:30:16,240
overview. Or otherwise, I can continue straight into the limits of

514
00:30:16,290 --> 00:30:17,010
deviation.

515
00:30:20,230 --> 00:30:21,110
We'll just carry on.

516
00:30:21,350 --> 00:30:21,359
Okay.

517
00:30:21,370 --> 00:30:22,150
That's fine. Thank you.

518
00:30:24,410 --> 00:30:28,369
So the applicant has applied limits of deviation in the Rochdale
envelope

519
00:30:28,450 --> 00:30:32,410
consistent with Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 9 to

520
00:30:32,430 --> 00:30:35,690
provide an appropriate degree of flexibility with the detailed
design,

521
00:30:36,070 --> 00:30:39,550
construction, and delivery of the scheme, whilst ensuring that
environmental

522
00:30:39,630 --> 00:30:43,300
effects assessed within the environmental statement represent a
realistic worst

523
00:30:43,410 --> 00:30:43,770
case.

524
00:30:44,850 --> 00:30:48,549
Limits of deviation, as I'm sure the Inspectorate will be aware, are
a

525
00:30:48,650 --> 00:30:51,790

standard feature of nationally significant infrastructure projects and are

526

00:30:51,830 --> 00:30:55,330

routinely used to accommodate detailed design progression while

527

00:30:55,370 --> 00:30:57,070

maintaining the assessed environmental

528

00:30:58,070 --> 00:30:58,540

envelope.

529

00:30:59,814 --> 00:31:00,614

The typology

530

00:31:01,594 --> 00:31:05,494

of limits of deviation which the applicant has applied has been aligned with those

531

00:31:05,554 --> 00:31:09,214

adopted on previous solar development DCOs and also previous

532

00:31:09,254 --> 00:31:10,594

overhead line schemes.

533

00:31:12,974 --> 00:31:16,294

So, as explained in ES chapter two,

534

00:31:17,074 --> 00:31:21,054

the approach is secured through a combination of the order limit shown on the works

535

00:31:21,134 --> 00:31:24,834

plans, the limits of deviation secured through Article 6 of the draft

536

00:31:24,894 --> 00:31:28,734

DCO, and the design parameters document, which together define the scheme's

537

00:31:28,794 --> 00:31:29,734

consent envelope.

538

00:31:31,034 --> 00:31:35,014

So I might just briefly flag the key DC0

539

00:31:35,174 --> 00:31:38,954

articles which manage limits of deviation, and then

540

00:31:39,014 --> 00:31:42,674

I'll share up a few sheets from the works plans to show how those are

541

00:31:42,734 --> 00:31:43,414

implemented.

542

00:31:44,994 --> 00:31:48,844

So, the limits of deviation are controlled by two key articles and

543

00:31:48,874 --> 00:31:50,954

one key requirement within the DC0.

544

00:31:52,014 --> 00:31:55,914

Would the examining authority like us to share up a copy of the

545

00:31:55,934 --> 00:31:59,894

DC0? Or otherwise, would that be helpful?

546

00:32:00,634 --> 00:32:01,474

Yes, please. Thank you.

547

00:32:01,564 --> 00:32:05,294

Okay, great. Thank you. And Mr. Davies, if you could please share the draft DC0,

548

00:32:05,354 --> 00:32:09,054

which is AS-011 in the

549

00:32:09,094 --> 00:32:10,194

examination library.

550

00:32:16,054 --> 00:32:16,414

Great.

551

00:32:17,694 --> 00:32:21,314

So I'll start with article three, which is on PDF page 10.

552

00:32:21,734 --> 00:32:25,394

Oh, perfect. It's right there. This is the primary article which enables

553

00:32:25,474 --> 00:32:29,334

development under the order. It sets the ultimate

554

00:32:29,394 --> 00:32:32,234

limits of deviation for the scheme, i.e., the order limits.

555

00:32:32,794 --> 00:32:36,594

It also provides that all of the numbered works which make up the authorized

556

00:32:36,614 --> 00:32:40,574

development in Schedule 1 must be situated within the marked areas shown

557

00:32:40,614 --> 00:32:44,594

on the works plan. So this is the standard approach within

558

00:32:44,654 --> 00:32:48,624

made DCOs, and these provide the effective limits of deviation within

559

00:32:48,654 --> 00:32:50,374

which each work must occur.

560

00:32:51,434 --> 00:32:54,554

And then Article 6, which is on the next page, page 11,

561

00:32:55,974 --> 00:32:59,874

addresses the lateral or horizontal deviation

562

00:32:59,934 --> 00:33:03,754

of the overhead electric line situated in the grid connection route and in the

563

00:33:03,854 --> 00:33:05,474
overhead inter-array connection.

564

00:33:06,254 --> 00:33:09,954
So this provides that any horizontal deviation can only be within
the

565

00:33:09,994 --> 00:33:13,834
limits of deviation as shown on the works plans, and it clarifies
that the

566

00:33:13,894 --> 00:33:16,734
limits of vertical deviation, which is

567

00:33:17,594 --> 00:33:21,354
in effect the maximum or minimum height limits, are instead

568

00:33:21,394 --> 00:33:23,214
controlled by the design parameters.

569

00:33:24,994 --> 00:33:28,454
The application of those two articles are clarified in Article

570

00:33:28,694 --> 00:33:32,274
1, subparagraphs five, six, and seven, which is on page 10

571

00:33:33,614 --> 00:33:34,334
of the

572

00:33:35,194 --> 00:33:38,754
DCO there. So subparagraph five

573

00:33:38,794 --> 00:33:42,574
explains that the pylon identification numbers on the

574

00:33:42,634 --> 00:33:46,154
works plans, and their spacing and locations are indicative

575

00:33:46,314 --> 00:33:50,174
only. So this is because those pylon locations can

576

00:33:50,194 --> 00:33:54,114

be varied within the limits of deviation on the works plans and as per the

577

00:33:54,134 --> 00:33:55,234

design parameters.

578

00:33:56,194 --> 00:33:59,834

Subparagraph six specifies that heights and depths are

579

00:33:59,994 --> 00:34:03,714

measured from the proposed final ground level, and maximum parameters are governed

580

00:34:03,734 --> 00:34:05,094

by the design parameters.

581

00:34:06,054 --> 00:34:09,824

And subparagraph seven confirms the interactions between the work numbers

582

00:34:09,894 --> 00:34:12,714

comprising the authorized development and the works plans.

583

00:34:14,194 --> 00:34:18,054

Finally, I would just direct you to Requirement 5 in Schedule 2, which is at

584

00:34:18,094 --> 00:34:21,995

page 46 of the DC0 document,

585

00:34:22,714 --> 00:34:26,634

which provides that details submitted for final detailed design approval by

586

00:34:26,674 --> 00:34:30,394

the relevant planning authority must accord with the design parameters.

587

00:34:32,814 --> 00:34:35,634

Now, Mr. Davies, if you could bring up the works plans

588

00:34:36,614 --> 00:34:40,495

for the solar development area, which is application document

589

00:34:40,694 --> 00:34:43,314

APP-009.

590

00:34:46,515 --> 00:34:49,814

I will just speak for the solar development area to sheet five,

591

00:34:50,754 --> 00:34:54,214

as I suggest that this provides a good illustration of the works plans' limits of

592

00:34:54,274 --> 00:34:56,734

deviations for the solar development area.

593

00:34:58,154 --> 00:35:01,834

So if you see the blue areas on the sheet, those

594

00:35:01,854 --> 00:35:05,714

represent work number one, which are the areas in which the panels can

595

00:35:05,754 --> 00:35:09,634

locate. So the final exact layout of panels remains subject

596

00:35:09,674 --> 00:35:13,614

to detailed design. It will depend ultimately on the size and nature of

597

00:35:13,654 --> 00:35:17,304

the PV technology at the time of procurement,

598

00:35:18,354 --> 00:35:20,894

and it will still need to be within the design parameters.

599

00:35:20,994 --> 00:35:22,544

So the maximum heights and

600

00:35:23,854 --> 00:35:26,614

other layout requirements within those design parameters.

601

00:35:27,574 --> 00:35:31,524

I would also just note that the kind of uneven elements in

602

00:35:31,534 --> 00:35:35,274

the middle of some of those blue areas, those reflect

603

00:35:35,334 --> 00:35:36,284

where the work number

604

00:35:37,674 --> 00:35:41,514

one sections have been pulled back from flood zone 3B

605

00:35:41,554 --> 00:35:45,254

within the site to ensure that panels aren't located within flood zone

606

00:35:45,454 --> 00:35:45,734

3B.

607

00:35:48,814 --> 00:35:51,994

So then work number 3B, which is the red square,

608

00:35:52,734 --> 00:35:55,794

that reflects one of the 132 kV substations.

609

00:35:56,214 --> 00:35:57,394

So as previously mentioned,

610

00:35:58,314 --> 00:36:02,234

there are separate maximum footprint requirements

611

00:36:02,274 --> 00:36:06,134

for the substation, which doesn't align with the

612

00:36:06,154 --> 00:36:10,134

box shown on the works plans. It just shows that that footprint could be

613

00:36:10,174 --> 00:36:12,354

located somewhere within that broader box.

614

00:36:12,414 --> 00:36:16,284

So the substation won't be of the entire red square

615

00:36:17,314 --> 00:36:19,334

as shown on the works plans.

616

00:36:20,994 --> 00:36:22,244

And then work number four,

617

00:36:23,094 --> 00:36:26,774

if you can tell the color on the screens, is the blue

618

00:36:26,914 --> 00:36:30,614

dashed line that extends up to the north from that red

619

00:36:30,714 --> 00:36:34,634

substation. So those are the limits of deviation for the underground

620

00:36:34,714 --> 00:36:38,114

inter-array connection. So this connects into the 132 kV

621

00:36:38,154 --> 00:36:41,774

substation in parcel C here and also in

622

00:36:41,814 --> 00:36:45,354

parcel A, and then also connects up into the 400 kV

623

00:36:45,394 --> 00:36:49,314

substation. There isn't a center line shown for the underground

624

00:36:49,414 --> 00:36:53,094

cable. It can just be laid anywhere within that blue dashed line.

625

00:36:55,154 --> 00:36:59,034

And that will ultimately depend on the final routing at the point of

626

00:36:59,094 --> 00:36:59,954

detailed design.

627

00:37:01,390 --> 00:37:05,370

Work number five is the hash that you see kind of overlaying

628

00:37:05,390 --> 00:37:09,360

over most of this area through over

629

00:37:09,410 --> 00:37:12,810

the blue, over the substation, over the limits of

630

00:37:12,850 --> 00:37:16,600

deviation. So that work number five captures ancillary

631

00:37:16,690 --> 00:37:20,550

infrastructure and works related to the solar development area, and that, like I

632

00:37:20,570 --> 00:37:24,110

said, washes over most of the SDA. It captures works like the

633

00:37:24,170 --> 00:37:28,110

cabling between panels, solar stations, access tracks,

634

00:37:28,210 --> 00:37:31,250

landscaping, drainage works, construction compounds.

635

00:37:31,700 --> 00:37:35,130

So that ultimately just provides flexibility for all of that ancillary

636

00:37:35,170 --> 00:37:38,710

infrastructure to locate in the right place around the detailed design of the

637

00:37:38,750 --> 00:37:39,220

panels.

638

00:37:41,390 --> 00:37:45,290

And I would note though, that despite those components being

639

00:37:45,330 --> 00:37:49,190

broadly enabled under work number five, the design parameters and other

640

00:37:49,210 --> 00:37:52,800

control documents like the OCEMP, the Outline Construction

641

00:37:52,850 --> 00:37:54,279

Environmental Management Plan,

642

00:37:55,470 --> 00:37:59,380

place constraints on the design and location of components like construction

643

00:37:59,450 --> 00:38:00,070

compounds.

644

00:38:00,990 --> 00:38:04,730

And for example, the design parameters provide that construction compounds,

645

00:38:05,530 --> 00:38:09,230

apologies, solar stations must be greater than

646

00:38:09,330 --> 00:38:11,810

250 meters from residential properties.

647

00:38:12,190 --> 00:38:14,210

So while the broad

648

00:38:15,130 --> 00:38:18,910

layout is enabled by work number five here, you wouldn't be able to

649

00:38:18,950 --> 00:38:21,070

locate a solar station right up next to a

650

00:38:22,430 --> 00:38:25,260

residential property. It would be controlled

651

00:38:25,270 --> 00:38:29,190

by that more detailed constraint within

652

00:38:29,250 --> 00:38:30,350

the design parameters.

653

00:38:32,650 --> 00:38:34,610

And then finally, oh no, not finally.

654

00:38:34,730 --> 00:38:38,230

So work number seven on the sheet are the green areas that you

655

00:38:38,270 --> 00:38:41,710

see, and large parts of these areas don't have that work number

656

00:38:41,750 --> 00:38:44,490

five hatched over them, and that's to

657

00:38:44,530 --> 00:38:48,130

protect these areas of habitat management

658

00:38:48,170 --> 00:38:51,040

from infrastructure being laid within them.

659

00:38:51,610 --> 00:38:55,460

So the function of each of the habitat management areas within the broader solar

660

00:38:55,510 --> 00:38:59,120

development area is described in that outline landscape and

661

00:38:59,250 --> 00:39:03,030

ecological management plan. But on this sheet, the work number

662

00:39:03,110 --> 00:39:06,730

seven areas include areas where the on-site scheduled monuments are

663

00:39:06,770 --> 00:39:07,400

located.

664

00:39:08,270 --> 00:39:11,889

And so arable use of those areas will be maintained, but they'll also be subject to

665

00:39:11,930 --> 00:39:12,830

management measures,

666

00:39:13,950 --> 00:39:17,770

including the incorporation of skylark plots to enhance their

667

00:39:17,910 --> 00:39:19,550

use by ground-nesting birds.

668

00:39:22,010 --> 00:39:25,870

This section on the green on the right as well also includes the

669

00:39:25,970 --> 00:39:28,090

area of the site where the permissive path

670

00:39:28,950 --> 00:39:31,050

proposed by the scheme will be located.

671

00:39:32,750 --> 00:39:36,430

And then finally, work number eight, which is the purple dashed

672

00:39:36,510 --> 00:39:39,910

line that extends from the red 132 kV

673

00:39:39,970 --> 00:39:41,230

substation

674

00:39:42,110 --> 00:39:46,010

across to the edge of this sheet. That is the limits

675

00:39:46,050 --> 00:39:48,630

of deviation for the overhead inter-array connection.

676

00:39:49,470 --> 00:39:52,730

You'll see, compared to the underground cable, this does have an indicative

677

00:39:52,830 --> 00:39:55,970

centerline and indicative wood pole locations.

678

00:39:57,730 --> 00:40:01,459

But obviously, the centerline can move within the LOD and

679

00:40:01,510 --> 00:40:02,010

so can the

680

00:40:03,350 --> 00:40:07,280

wood pole locations. So a 15-meter working width has been

681

00:40:07,310 --> 00:40:10,880

assumed on either side of the centerline of the alignment for access and material

682

00:40:10,910 --> 00:40:14,470

laydown, which provides a 30-meter working corridor.

683

00:40:14,490 --> 00:40:18,350

And then these work plans, the dashed line provide a 50-meter

684

00:40:18,390 --> 00:40:21,030

limit of deviation on either side of the working width.

685

00:40:23,510 --> 00:40:27,250

I would just note if there's interest that the reason why that overhead

686

00:40:27,350 --> 00:40:31,190

line doesn't stay entirely within the center of the limits of deviation going

687

00:40:31,230 --> 00:40:35,060

into the substation there is just to maintain distance from

688

00:40:35,110 --> 00:40:39,030

that property in the middle of the scheme and also to avoid

689

00:40:39,090 --> 00:40:40,910

intrusion into that field where

690

00:40:42,030 --> 00:40:45,610

no major infrastructure is proposed other than perhaps minor

691

00:40:45,670 --> 00:40:47,770

cabling or access tracks.

692

00:40:50,590 --> 00:40:52,130

So that's the description,

693

00:40:53,050 --> 00:40:54,190

or an example of the

694

00:40:55,250 --> 00:40:59,070

limits of deviation in the context of the solar development plans.

695

00:40:59,110 --> 00:41:02,770

For the grid connection route, which is the separate

696

00:41:02,870 --> 00:41:05,700

section of works plans, which is

697

00:41:06,770 --> 00:41:07,570

application document

698

00:41:07,690 --> 00:41:10,790

APP-010.

699

00:41:13,690 --> 00:41:17,550

I will just quickly run through a few of the sheets, because

700

00:41:17,570 --> 00:41:20,839

they show different types of features and therefore different limits of

701

00:41:20,910 --> 00:41:21,630

deviation.

702

00:41:23,510 --> 00:41:25,610

So starting with sheet one.

703

00:41:27,550 --> 00:41:27,830

If you

704

00:41:29,230 --> 00:41:32,850

start at the bottom there, this is where the grid

705

00:41:32,890 --> 00:41:36,550
connection route ties into the 400 kV

706

00:41:36,590 --> 00:41:37,930
substation on the site.

707

00:41:38,890 --> 00:41:40,570
And so then you can see

708

00:41:41,490 --> 00:41:45,210
that dashed line at the bottom represents the

709

00:41:45,250 --> 00:41:48,930
BESS and 400 kV work number nine.

710

00:41:50,970 --> 00:41:54,670
No, represents the BESS and 400 kV, and then work number nine, which
is the

711

00:41:54,830 --> 00:41:55,330
orange,

712

00:41:56,610 --> 00:41:56,849
that

713

00:41:58,130 --> 00:42:02,110
represents the overhead line, which connects from the 400

714

00:42:02,150 --> 00:42:05,690
kV up to the southern cable sealing end compound.

715

00:42:06,470 --> 00:42:10,220
So the orange shows the broader areas within which construction and

716

00:42:10,220 --> 00:42:13,250
ancillary works for the overhead line can occur.

717

00:42:13,810 --> 00:42:17,690
And Mr. Davies, if you don't mind using the cursor to point out, for

718

00:42:17,750 --> 00:42:19,490
example, one of the stringing location

719
00:42:21,050 --> 00:42:21,990
turning points.

720
00:42:23,110 --> 00:42:26,390
You have these kind of broader areas that are required with the stringing of the

721
00:42:26,430 --> 00:42:30,090
pylons, and so that extent would only be needed during

722
00:42:30,930 --> 00:42:34,170
the construction of the pylons. But actually, the

723
00:42:35,330 --> 00:42:38,870
location within the broader order limits where the pylons can be

724
00:42:38,910 --> 00:42:42,770
located is this yellow dashed line, if you

725
00:42:42,830 --> 00:42:46,550
can see where it cuts through some of those areas.

726
00:42:46,610 --> 00:42:50,500
So that's the limits of deviations within which the pylons and

727
00:42:50,590 --> 00:42:53,560
the overhead line itself can be located in the final design.

728
00:42:54,870 --> 00:42:57,730
And then the purple is the indicative pylon route,

729
00:42:58,770 --> 00:43:01,970
with the indicative pylon locations and numbers.

730
00:43:02,050 --> 00:43:05,690
But as mentioned earlier in respect to the DCO, those can all shift

731
00:43:05,830 --> 00:43:08,850

depending on the final detailed design layout.

732

00:43:10,226 --> 00:43:13,246

And then otherwise, I would just note the blue hatching

733

00:43:13,286 --> 00:43:15,226

represents access,

734

00:43:16,386 --> 00:43:16,926

and the

735

00:43:18,026 --> 00:43:21,806

green dotted hatching represents one of the construction compounds

736

00:43:21,826 --> 00:43:23,146

within the grid connection route.

737

00:43:26,106 --> 00:43:28,306

And then if we just scroll to sheet two,

738

00:43:29,266 --> 00:43:30,526

this shows the

739

00:43:33,246 --> 00:43:36,726

cable sealing-in compound south, which is work number 10,

740

00:43:38,386 --> 00:43:39,286

and north,

741

00:43:40,146 --> 00:43:42,126

which is work number

742

00:43:42,946 --> 00:43:46,466

12. And then it shows

743

00:43:46,546 --> 00:43:49,626

the underground cable. If we just zoom in slightly,

744

00:43:50,846 --> 00:43:53,786

which is the turquoise area within that.

745

00:43:54,316 --> 00:43:55,036

So again, the

746

00:43:56,366 --> 00:43:58,426

work number 10 and the work number 12

747

00:43:59,626 --> 00:44:03,486

operate similar to the work numbers within the solar development area and say

748

00:44:03,546 --> 00:44:06,876

for the substations, where they show the broader area within which the final

749

00:44:06,966 --> 00:44:10,366

footprint of the cable sealing-in compounds can be located.

750

00:44:10,406 --> 00:44:13,406

But then those are constrained further by the

751

00:44:14,006 --> 00:44:17,906

maximum footprints and the design parameters, and just enable that footprint to sit

752

00:44:17,986 --> 00:44:21,366

somewhere within those squares. And then

753

00:44:21,426 --> 00:44:25,366

similarly, the work number 11 for the

754

00:44:25,406 --> 00:44:29,246

underground cable just shows that that cable can take

755

00:44:29,286 --> 00:44:31,836

whatever route is necessary between the two

756

00:44:33,146 --> 00:44:37,046

cable sealing-in compounds, although it's presumed it will be straightforward

757

00:44:37,086 --> 00:44:39,776

given how short that section of underground cabling is.

758

00:44:40,986 --> 00:44:44,886

And then again, you can see the construction compound surrounding that area.

759

00:44:48,586 --> 00:44:52,546

And then once you get to the other side of the

760

00:44:52,586 --> 00:44:54,256

cable sealing-in compound north,

761

00:44:55,376 --> 00:44:59,026

the work number 13 then describes the

762

00:44:59,086 --> 00:45:03,046

overhead line section from that cable sealing-in compound north up

763

00:45:03,186 --> 00:45:06,646

to the final siting and flexibility area near Weston Marsh.

764

00:45:07,306 --> 00:45:11,286

So that purple extends up to the area near Weston Marsh,

765

00:45:11,366 --> 00:45:15,326

but it operates in the same way as work number nine did on sheet

766

00:45:15,386 --> 00:45:16,976

number one that we just discussed.

767

00:45:19,086 --> 00:45:22,036

And then we can skip through sheet three, and if we go to sheet four,

768

00:45:24,386 --> 00:45:24,766

which

769

00:45:26,906 --> 00:45:28,666

shows then the connection of

770

00:45:28,726 --> 00:45:32,246

that work

771

00:45:32,326 --> 00:45:36,015

number 13, which is the purple up into the final

772

00:45:36,126 --> 00:45:36,946

siting area

773

00:45:38,006 --> 00:45:40,286

into Weston Marsh for the overhead line route.

774

00:45:41,046 --> 00:45:44,896

So this area of flexibility has been retained at the

775

00:45:44,896 --> 00:45:48,295

northern end of the grid connection route within work number 14, which is the

776

00:45:48,366 --> 00:45:52,246

yellow. And this reflects the fact that the final location of National Grid's

777

00:45:52,286 --> 00:45:56,066

proposed Weston Marsh B substation, together with the detailed design of

778

00:45:56,106 --> 00:45:59,466

National Grid's Grimsby to Walpole and Weston Marsh to East Leicestershire

779

00:45:59,606 --> 00:46:03,446

projects, remains subject to further development and the final submission of

780

00:46:03,506 --> 00:46:05,746

those project applications.

781

00:46:06,646 --> 00:46:10,386

The intention is to discuss the full interrelationship with those projects at item

782

00:46:10,406 --> 00:46:14,116

six of this agenda, but I can briefly talk about how this works from the

783

00:46:14,186 --> 00:46:15,686
context of the works plans.

784

00:46:16,966 --> 00:46:20,886
So flexibility has been retained in this final section to allow either

785

00:46:20,986 --> 00:46:24,606
overhead or underground connection solutions and alternative routing

786

00:46:24,646 --> 00:46:27,886
options where necessary to coordinate with that emerging

787

00:46:27,926 --> 00:46:31,726
infrastructure. So the final overhead alignment in this

788

00:46:31,806 --> 00:46:35,786
area can't go out of that yellow dashed limits of deviation, which

789

00:46:35,866 --> 00:46:38,326
you can see within the edges of the

790

00:46:39,546 --> 00:46:43,446
yellow wash. But the yellow wash generally ties to the field

791

00:46:43,546 --> 00:46:45,976
boundaries to enable access and

792

00:46:48,066 --> 00:46:51,126
laydown areas and similar construction requirements,

793

00:46:52,266 --> 00:46:53,726
including stringing or the like.

794

00:46:54,746 --> 00:46:58,566
There's also the flexibility to locate cable sealing-in compounds within this

795

00:46:58,626 --> 00:47:01,645

area, should the overhead line need to be brought underground.

796

00:47:03,646 --> 00:47:07,566

You can see through here the purple alignment of the overhead line shows

797

00:47:07,606 --> 00:47:11,556

the applicant's preferred alignment, and this is based on

798

00:47:11,586 --> 00:47:15,126

engagement that the applicant had with National Grid in

799

00:47:15,266 --> 00:47:18,946

2025, where the applicant sought to

800

00:47:19,946 --> 00:47:23,186

provide a design that would enable twin-track alignment

801

00:47:23,566 --> 00:47:27,506

through by the two projects. Again, we'll speak

802

00:47:27,546 --> 00:47:29,846

to that later at item six of the agenda.

803

00:47:31,106 --> 00:47:34,726

But I suppose just for clarity, the applicant would only construct one

804

00:47:34,826 --> 00:47:38,706

final alignment and only exercise powers over land required for the selected

805

00:47:38,786 --> 00:47:42,706

solution. So there's no circumstance at final design where the

806

00:47:42,766 --> 00:47:46,506

applicant would be taking this entire yellow washed donut of land.

807

00:47:46,546 --> 00:47:47,786

It would only be the final

808

00:47:48,946 --> 00:47:49,986
route through here.

809

00:47:50,886 --> 00:47:54,526
But the issue is the applicant can't commit to what those

810

00:47:54,546 --> 00:47:58,526
routing options might be at this stage because it ultimately depends
on the

811

00:47:58,566 --> 00:48:01,226
design and engagement with National Grid.

812

00:48:01,706 --> 00:48:05,386
And that engagement hasn't been forthcoming at this time to

813

00:48:05,406 --> 00:48:08,726
provide certainty for the applicant that it could, for example,

814

00:48:08,906 --> 00:48:12,586
exclude that western area of the siting

815

00:48:12,596 --> 00:48:16,346
area, or that it could commit only to overhead or only to

816

00:48:16,426 --> 00:48:18,006
underground connection.

817

00:48:19,986 --> 00:48:23,446
I don't propose to go into any more detail than this, also noting
the examining

818

00:48:23,466 --> 00:48:27,446
authorities requested further clarification on the design in this
area in its July

819

00:48:27,486 --> 00:48:31,186
procedural decision. So the applicant is also preparing a written

820

00:48:31,226 --> 00:48:32,746
response to that for deadline one.

821

00:48:35,806 --> 00:48:39,746

And then finally, I would just note again, the design parameters provide that

822

00:48:39,786 --> 00:48:43,516

further control. I've been speaking to that through this, so I don't

823

00:48:43,526 --> 00:48:46,306

propose to share up the design parameters document.

824

00:48:46,326 --> 00:48:49,976

But if parties look at that document, you'll see

825

00:48:50,006 --> 00:48:53,346

that the design parameters align to each of the work

826

00:48:53,386 --> 00:48:57,306

numbers to make it very clear what controls apply to which work

827

00:48:57,346 --> 00:48:57,656

number.

828

00:48:58,786 --> 00:48:59,676

And then the position,

829

00:49:02,166 --> 00:49:03,946

for example, maximum heights for

830

00:49:05,186 --> 00:49:08,886

overhead lines or footprints for substation and BESS or footprints for overhead

831

00:49:08,906 --> 00:49:11,176

line pylons and cable sealing-in compounds

832

00:49:13,586 --> 00:49:16,546

So that concludes my description of the limits of deviation.

833

00:49:17,046 --> 00:49:20,836

The position of the applicant is that the limits of deviation and

the associated

834

00:49:20,926 --> 00:49:24,386

design flexibility are both necessary and proportionate.

835

00:49:24,426 --> 00:49:28,306

They provide sufficient flexibility to enable detailed design, respond

836

00:49:28,346 --> 00:49:31,866

to site-specific constraints, and accommodate interactions with third-party

837

00:49:31,876 --> 00:49:35,626

infrastructure, while ensuring that the scheme remains within the environmental

838

00:49:35,666 --> 00:49:39,186

envelope assessed as part of the DCO application.

839

00:49:39,246 --> 00:49:42,966

That detailed design is also subsequently controlled through the approval by the

840

00:49:43,006 --> 00:49:46,986

relevant planning authority, by requirement five of Schedule

841

00:49:47,146 --> 00:49:48,186

2 to the draft DCO.

842

00:49:51,466 --> 00:49:54,666

So that concludes the general overview section.

843

00:49:55,386 --> 00:49:58,226

I note there was also a request for

844

00:49:59,506 --> 00:50:03,066

the applicant to provide an overview of the choice of mainly adopting

845

00:50:03,126 --> 00:50:07,106

overhead lines versus underground cabling when

846

00:50:07,126 --> 00:50:10,626

it came to the inter-array connections and the grid connection route.

847

00:50:11,226 --> 00:50:14,776

I would pass to Ms. Carly Vince to my

848

00:50:14,866 --> 00:50:18,566

right, who is a senior director at Quad and

849

00:50:18,766 --> 00:50:22,526

planning consultant for the project, to provide an overview of

850

00:50:22,586 --> 00:50:26,366

that. But again, if there were any immediate questions on that general site

851

00:50:26,446 --> 00:50:29,726

overview, the applicant team would be happy to address those now.

852

00:50:35,306 --> 00:50:37,406

Sorry, if we can just have a moment, please.

853

00:50:40,686 --> 00:50:57,726

Yes,

854

00:50:57,786 --> 00:51:01,346

we will continue hearing from the applicant, but I just wanted to make

855

00:51:01,806 --> 00:51:05,406

Mr. Bassford aware that we are aware of your hand being up, and

856

00:51:05,466 --> 00:51:05,886

also

857

00:51:06,786 --> 00:51:10,586

Sir Johns as well. We'll finish hearing from the applicant, and then we'll

858

00:51:10,906 --> 00:51:13,526
come to yourselves. Okay. Thank you.

859
00:51:15,706 --> 00:51:17,566
Thank you very much. I'll pass over to Ms. Vince.

860
00:51:17,926 --> 00:51:21,496
Thank you. So I'm going to provide a distilled summary of the

861
00:51:21,566 --> 00:51:25,455
submissions that we've made in ES chapter three, the alternatives
and

862
00:51:25,506 --> 00:51:26,946
design evolution document

863
00:51:27,266 --> 00:51:30,986
APP054, and the design

864
00:51:31,046 --> 00:51:32,986
approach document at reference

865
00:51:33,066 --> 00:51:37,026
APP-268. The

866
00:51:37,066 --> 00:51:41,006
starting position for the applicant has been to follow

867
00:51:41,046 --> 00:51:44,426
the national policy statement in respect of the

868
00:51:44,466 --> 00:51:47,786
electricity network infrastructure, as set out in

869
00:51:47,866 --> 00:51:50,926
paragraph 2.9.21 of

870
00:51:51,006 --> 00:51:54,786
NPSEN5. This states that overhead

871
00:51:54,806 --> 00:51:58,726

lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity

872

00:51:58,806 --> 00:52:01,246
network developments in general.

873

00:52:01,326 --> 00:52:05,166
That presumption is reversed where proposed developments would

874

00:52:05,186 --> 00:52:08,766
pass through national parks, national landscapes or the Broads.

875

00:52:09,186 --> 00:52:12,886
There's no such designations within the scheme boundary, nor

876

00:52:12,906 --> 00:52:16,706
within the immediate vicinity. In fact, the closest would be

877

00:52:16,926 --> 00:52:20,646
more than 25 kilometers northeast of the site.

878

00:52:22,466 --> 00:52:26,306
The NPS also provides that if it is considered

879

00:52:26,316 --> 00:52:30,186
there is high potential for widespread and significant adverse

880

00:52:30,246 --> 00:52:31,796
landscape or visual impacts,

881

00:52:32,686 --> 00:52:36,346
the Secretary of State must weigh the feasibility, cost, and

882

00:52:36,426 --> 00:52:40,086
harm of undergrounding against adverse implications of an

883

00:52:40,146 --> 00:52:40,896
overhead line.

884

00:52:42,646 --> 00:52:46,106
The applicant and its team has undertaken an iterative

885

00:52:46,166 --> 00:52:50,146

comparison of overhead lines and underground cable solutions throughout the

886

00:52:50,186 --> 00:52:51,756

design evolution process.

887

00:52:52,926 --> 00:52:55,606

In doing so, as an example,

888

00:52:57,686 --> 00:53:01,486

the overhead versus underground was considered at the

889

00:53:01,526 --> 00:53:05,186

inter-array connection of parcel C and D,

890

00:53:05,706 --> 00:53:09,026

but the environmental assessment demonstrated that neither

891

00:53:09,086 --> 00:53:12,686

option would result in significant residual effects from an

892

00:53:12,746 --> 00:53:16,366

overhead, from a landscape and visual perspective, and therefore on the

893

00:53:16,386 --> 00:53:20,326

basis, the overhead line option was selected.

894

00:53:20,366 --> 00:53:23,876

The team has been cognizant of both national policy, environmental

895

00:53:23,946 --> 00:53:27,906

effects, engineering feasibility, constructability,

896

00:53:28,386 --> 00:53:32,266

safety, and consultation feedback throughout the process, and

897

00:53:32,326 --> 00:53:35,706

this is set out clearly in chapter three of the ES.

898

00:53:39,566 --> 00:53:43,406

There's no guidance within EN5 as to what may be

899

00:53:43,446 --> 00:53:45,566

deemed particularly significant.

900

00:53:46,276 --> 00:53:50,186

The applicant and its team has interpreted this to be where
landscape and

901

00:53:50,226 --> 00:53:54,206

visual effects are significantly adverse.

902

00:53:55,006 --> 00:53:58,816

While there are some significant adverse landscape impacts that

903

00:53:58,846 --> 00:54:02,626

arise by virtue of the overhead line design, for the grid

904

00:54:02,726 --> 00:54:06,386

connection route and the overhead inter-array connections, these are

905

00:54:06,446 --> 00:54:10,086

typical of overhead line projects more broadly.

906

00:54:10,106 --> 00:54:11,006

For context,

907

00:54:11,926 --> 00:54:15,686

the maximum height of the overhead lines is 15 meters

908

00:54:15,726 --> 00:54:18,186

above ground for the 132 kV.

909

00:54:19,626 --> 00:54:20,506

This is typical

910

00:54:21,406 --> 00:54:25,046

of other projects, and similarly, the effects from a

911

00:54:25,106 --> 00:54:28,526
landscape and visual are as seen on

912
00:54:28,586 --> 00:54:32,506
other significant projects. In our view, they do not

913
00:54:32,626 --> 00:54:36,266
trigger the requirement to demonstrate due consideration of the

914
00:54:36,346 --> 00:54:39,846
costs and benefits of feasibility of alternatives to the overhead

915
00:54:39,886 --> 00:54:40,366
lines.

916
00:54:41,816 --> 00:54:45,286
The grid connection route has therefore been designed as an overhead
line,

917
00:54:45,686 --> 00:54:49,576
routed, refined in accordance with the Holford rules and

918
00:54:49,606 --> 00:54:53,366
informed by the environmental constraints, consultation feedback,

919
00:54:53,706 --> 00:54:57,426
and coordination, as been described earlier with National Grid

920
00:54:57,906 --> 00:55:00,326
in terms of their Walpole to Grimsby project.

921
00:55:02,336 --> 00:55:05,426
The applicant has, however, incorporated targeted

922
00:55:05,466 --> 00:55:09,236
underground where it's considered justified on site-specific

923
00:55:09,246 --> 00:55:12,766
circumstances. Specifically, a short

924
00:55:12,866 --> 00:55:16,566

underground section where the route crosses an existing 132

925

00:55:16,626 --> 00:55:20,006

kV overhead line and where oversailing of that

926

00:55:20,066 --> 00:55:23,526

infrastructure was determined to be technically unfeasible.

927

00:55:24,166 --> 00:55:27,946

Cable ceiling and compounds are proposed to facilitate that

928

00:55:27,986 --> 00:55:28,565

transition.

929

00:55:29,910 --> 00:55:33,350

In addition, underground inter-array connection

930

00:55:33,810 --> 00:55:35,390

has been provided

931

00:55:36,530 --> 00:55:40,470

in the vicinity of the Crowland Airfield and Peterborough Spalding

932

00:55:40,750 --> 00:55:44,300

Gliding Club, specifically in response to consultation

933

00:55:44,750 --> 00:55:47,470

feedback and in relation to safety

934

00:55:47,510 --> 00:55:51,310

considerations. Both of those are set out clearly in the

935

00:55:51,330 --> 00:55:52,780

documents I referenced earlier.

936

00:55:53,750 --> 00:55:57,650

So in summary, the applicant's approach has been to use overhead lines as the

937

00:55:57,690 --> 00:56:01,260

primary connection point, consistent with national policy,

938

00:56:01,650 --> 00:56:05,510

engineering requirements, and adopting cabling

939

00:56:05,570 --> 00:56:09,090

on specific sections of the route where this

940

00:56:09,110 --> 00:56:12,209

departure has been necessary. Thank you.

941

00:56:17,130 --> 00:56:20,690

Thank you. Just before we turn to questions, I would also

942

00:56:20,750 --> 00:56:24,170

note that the applicant has been asked to provide an overview of the choice of

943

00:56:24,210 --> 00:56:27,350

proposed methods of installation, so I have Ms.

944

00:56:27,430 --> 00:56:31,250

Jackie Critchley, who is the DCO lead at Downing, who is

945

00:56:31,270 --> 00:56:35,130

able to speak to a short summary of those installation methods if that would assist

946

00:56:35,170 --> 00:56:36,410

the examining authority.

947

00:56:37,430 --> 00:56:41,190

But if you would prefer to turn to questions and we pick up installation

948

00:56:41,250 --> 00:56:42,370

methods separately or

949

00:56:44,090 --> 00:56:45,210

in writing, we can do that.

950

00:56:45,270 --> 00:56:49,090

I think we'll move on to questions that we have at present, and then if need be,

951

00:56:49,130 --> 00:56:51,190

we'll come back to installation, if that's okay.

952

00:56:51,290 --> 00:56:51,730

Yeah, perfect.

953

00:56:51,770 --> 00:56:51,840

Yeah.

954

00:56:51,850 --> 00:56:52,110

Thank you.

955

00:56:52,790 --> 00:56:56,090

So, if I turn to

956

00:56:57,530 --> 00:57:01,370

Mr. Basford online. You have your hand raised.

957

00:57:05,590 --> 00:57:09,540

Thank you, Madam. Howard Basford, on behalf of National

958

00:57:09,610 --> 00:57:11,030

Grid Electricity Transmission.

959

00:57:13,210 --> 00:57:16,950

Very much want to emphasize at this stage that although the

960

00:57:17,050 --> 00:57:20,830

applicant, and entirely understandably, has sought to

961

00:57:20,890 --> 00:57:24,790

provide an impression that it has worked with and accommodated National

962

00:57:24,870 --> 00:57:28,610

Grid, you should not assume that National Grid is in any way

963

00:57:28,630 --> 00:57:31,670

satisfied that the two projects can be

964

00:57:31,690 --> 00:57:34,990
accommodated in the same location or the same

965

00:57:35,050 --> 00:57:35,870
environment.

966

00:57:37,130 --> 00:57:40,790
You should be aware that there is no

967

00:57:40,850 --> 00:57:44,370
connection offer at any location,

968

00:57:45,110 --> 00:57:49,060
whether it be Western Marsh A, Western Marsh B, or any

969

00:57:49,170 --> 00:57:52,360
other substation as matters stand, and

970

00:57:52,410 --> 00:57:53,170
therefore,

971

00:57:54,210 --> 00:57:58,120
and this is made clear on NESO, it's not National Grid, it's NESO's
website,

972

00:57:59,370 --> 00:58:02,910
this is a matter where the applicant is

973

00:58:02,930 --> 00:58:04,730
proceeding on risk. So,

974

00:58:06,050 --> 00:58:10,010
that has to be borne in mind. In particular, when we think about

975

00:58:10,050 --> 00:58:11,830
physical works and

976

00:58:13,330 --> 00:58:16,550
interaction, leaving aside the overall principle, and we'll come

back to this

977

00:58:16,610 --> 00:58:18,750

later, no doubt, the overall principle,

978

00:58:19,650 --> 00:58:20,350

there is

979

00:58:21,590 --> 00:58:24,510

no satisfaction that, for instance, the

980

00:58:25,790 --> 00:58:29,250

infrastructure proposed by the applicant can be accommodated

981

00:58:29,630 --> 00:58:32,350

close to National Grid's proposed infrastructure.

982

00:58:32,910 --> 00:58:36,890

So, where there is a potential for paralleling of

983

00:58:36,930 --> 00:58:40,870

National Grid's line, National Grid is not satisfied that that

984

00:58:40,910 --> 00:58:44,190

can be accommodated in the same location as National Grid's

985

00:58:44,250 --> 00:58:44,970

infrastructure.

986

00:58:46,050 --> 00:58:48,030

That's where things stand for now.

987

00:58:48,430 --> 00:58:51,830

It reflects the connection offer status of the applicant, but

988

00:58:52,630 --> 00:58:56,350

when the impression has been given that it

989

00:58:56,430 --> 00:59:00,150

is aimed to accommodate both projects, National Grid cannot confirm that that

990

00:59:00,210 --> 00:59:01,750
is in any way acceptable.

991

00:59:03,170 --> 00:59:04,190
Thank you for that.

992

00:59:05,130 --> 00:59:08,350
You will be aware that we have item six as well, which is to discuss
the

993

00:59:08,390 --> 00:59:12,270
interrelationship with other projects, so it might be that we

994

00:59:12,310 --> 00:59:14,770
can pick some of this up at that point with item

995

00:59:15,570 --> 00:59:19,050
six. But I will go back to the applicant in a moment on what you've
raised.

996

00:59:19,310 --> 00:59:22,330
Yes. I understand that, Madam. My intention is to just

997

00:59:23,010 --> 00:59:26,490
dispel any impression that the two projects are

998

00:59:26,590 --> 00:59:28,770
accommodated in the same location.

999

00:59:29,090 --> 00:59:29,570
Thank you.

1000

00:59:30,650 --> 00:59:32,610
Sir John, you also have your hand raised.

1001

00:59:33,550 --> 00:59:37,130
Thank you, and I'm grateful for the opportunity of speaking again on
the general

1002

00:59:37,210 --> 00:59:39,770

scope of the project. In essence,

1003

00:59:40,570 --> 00:59:42,630

dealing with these general matters, I dealt with the

1004

00:59:44,150 --> 00:59:48,030

matter of the incompatibility of this application

1005

00:59:48,070 --> 00:59:51,830

with both the local plan and national planning policy, but I'm sure,

1006

00:59:52,490 --> 00:59:55,730

Madam, that you will look at those matters closely, and I've made a written

1007

00:59:55,790 --> 00:59:59,570

submission accordingly. However, there are particular

1008

00:59:59,590 --> 01:00:02,670

broad scope matters that I wanted to raise now in addition to

1009

01:00:02,730 --> 01:00:06,320

that. In essence, this application is

1010

01:00:06,350 --> 01:00:09,860

imprecise and inadequate. The level of

1011

01:00:09,870 --> 01:00:13,650

deviation, for example, reflects the comments that have just been made

1012

01:00:13,830 --> 01:00:17,530

by National Grid, that there's no certainty about the

1013

01:00:17,590 --> 01:00:21,310

connection between this project and the other projects which are

1014

01:00:21,330 --> 01:00:22,830

happening simultaneously.

1015

01:00:23,810 --> 01:00:25,130

The inadequacy also

1016

01:00:26,070 --> 01:00:29,910

includes the way that Meridian have gone about

1017

01:00:29,950 --> 01:00:33,430

their business, and there is a comparison to be made with National Grid.

1018

01:00:33,950 --> 01:00:37,690

I don't actually support some of what National Grid are proposing, to

1019

01:00:37,730 --> 01:00:40,380

make that clear, and they know that very well.

1020

01:00:40,390 --> 01:00:44,030

But there's been regular engagement with National Grid, with the community, with

1021

01:00:44,090 --> 01:00:46,790

local stakeholders, with local representatives.

1022

01:00:46,850 --> 01:00:50,650

I met National Grid yesterday, and had a positive meeting with them, although, as I

1023

01:00:50,690 --> 01:00:54,470

say, they know that I have profound doubts about some of their proposals.

1024

01:00:55,090 --> 01:00:57,310

Meridian, by contrast, have had no such

1025

01:00:58,490 --> 01:00:59,170

wholesale

1026

01:01:00,550 --> 01:01:03,850

engagement. It's been patchy at best, it's been

1027

01:01:04,010 --> 01:01:07,770

inadequate, and I've barely had any

1028

01:01:07,830 --> 01:01:09,430

meaningful communication with them.

1029

01:01:09,490 --> 01:01:13,250

So there are real issues around this application being premature

1030

01:01:13,690 --> 01:01:16,290

given that lack of engagement.

1031

01:01:17,110 --> 01:01:20,590

In terms of the imprecision, there are real

1032

01:01:20,630 --> 01:01:23,830

contradictions between what we've heard today and we heard yesterday

1033

01:01:24,350 --> 01:01:28,130

and some of the facts of the preliminary environmental

1034

01:01:28,230 --> 01:01:31,900

impact report, for example, makes clear, and I quote, "The

1035

01:01:31,990 --> 01:01:35,610

presence of pylons and overhead cabling and the grid connection corridor

1036

01:01:35,990 --> 01:01:39,650

and inter-array areas may pose a collision risk to bird species

1037

01:01:39,998 --> 01:01:42,878

Associated with the wash and the Nene Washers.

1038

01:01:43,398 --> 01:01:47,018

You will know, madam, that this

1039

01:01:47,038 --> 01:01:50,218

proposal is close to a Site of Special Scientific

1040

01:01:50,758 --> 01:01:51,318

Interest,

1041

01:01:52,218 --> 01:01:55,978

and the pylons may indeed, it says in that report, pose a

1042

01:01:56,017 --> 01:01:59,428

collision risk to birds, including whooper swans flying across the area,

1043

01:02:00,038 --> 01:02:03,738

given the nearby salt marsh. There is very

1044

01:02:04,078 --> 01:02:07,978

little evidence that Meridian have considered the environmental

1045

01:02:08,038 --> 01:02:10,268

impact in respect to both habitat loss-

1046

01:02:10,398 --> 01:02:10,918

Sir John

1047

01:02:10,938 --> 01:02:11,118

Yeah.

1048

01:02:11,958 --> 01:02:15,418

Sir John, sorry. We will be coming onto biodiversity later on in the

1049

01:02:15,678 --> 01:02:16,358

agenda.

1050

01:02:16,788 --> 01:02:16,808

Oh, exactly.

1051

01:02:16,818 --> 01:02:20,778

This aspect is about the general scope of the proposal, if you have

1052

01:02:20,798 --> 01:02:21,898

any specifics.

1053

01:02:22,238 --> 01:02:25,978

Well, yeah. Let me talk then in general scope about...

1054

01:02:26,538 --> 01:02:29,958

I appreciate that you're beginning with that, but it is important to

1055

01:02:29,978 --> 01:02:33,598

highlight it in my general comments about scope.

1056

01:02:33,658 --> 01:02:34,278

Because, as I say,

1057

01:02:35,958 --> 01:02:39,658

in my view, my considered view, and I've dealt with a lot of planning

1058

01:02:39,678 --> 01:02:43,118

applications over 30 years as the MP, this is one of the poorest

1059

01:02:43,598 --> 01:02:46,058

in respect to the terms I've described.

1060

01:02:46,798 --> 01:02:50,298

I wanted also to raise, as we've just heard from the applicant,

1061

01:02:51,098 --> 01:02:54,578

matters about roadways and traffic and highways.

1062

01:02:55,818 --> 01:02:59,518

We heard from the applicant that they intend, and

1063

01:02:59,718 --> 01:03:02,498

I quote, "to

1064

01:03:03,298 --> 01:03:07,238

conduct pre-construction surveys." But I'm sure the County Council will

1065

01:03:07,278 --> 01:03:11,078

confirm in their evidence to your considerations, there have been

1066

01:03:11,138 --> 01:03:15,018

no detailed site meetings with local engineers,

1067

01:03:15,268 --> 01:03:18,278
no high-level meetings with traffic managers.

1068
01:03:18,358 --> 01:03:21,998
No communication, certainly with me, in respect

1069
01:03:22,018 --> 01:03:25,698
of local roads, and I think that applies to other local
representatives as

1070
01:03:25,778 --> 01:03:27,118
well. So when-

1071
01:03:27,738 --> 01:03:28,418
Sorry, Sir John.

1072
01:03:28,558 --> 01:03:28,748
Yeah, no, no.

1073
01:03:30,938 --> 01:03:34,898
You're straying into matters that we're doing very high level at the
moment, and I

1074
01:03:34,958 --> 01:03:38,638
do appreciate your concerns about traffic, but we'll be-

1075
01:03:38,718 --> 01:03:38,818
Yeah

1076
01:03:39,358 --> 01:03:42,818
... more likely having later issue specific hearings on those more

1077
01:03:42,858 --> 01:03:45,238
detailed matters further down the line.

1078
01:03:45,258 --> 01:03:48,178
So this is a very high-level discussion at the moment.

1079
01:03:49,178 --> 01:03:52,978
Yeah, I'm not going to go into details about particular roads or

1080

01:03:53,018 --> 01:03:54,998
particular construction issues.

1081
01:03:55,438 --> 01:03:59,178
I am speaking frankly, forgive me for saying so, at a

1082
01:03:59,258 --> 01:04:02,538
general or generic level. There's been no broad

1083
01:04:02,618 --> 01:04:06,398
discussion, no consideration about the relationship between the

1084
01:04:06,578 --> 01:04:10,498
scope of this project and the highways authority.

1085
01:04:11,218 --> 01:04:15,138
So this is not about the specifics of the roads, it's about the
broad approach of

1086
01:04:15,178 --> 01:04:18,798
Meridian in respect to the consideration of the scope of their

1087
01:04:18,838 --> 01:04:22,118
projects and the effect on those strategic decisions

1088
01:04:22,538 --> 01:04:23,098
around

1089
01:04:24,118 --> 01:04:24,458
road

1090
01:04:25,278 --> 01:04:29,158
networks. So, I think my summary would be

1091
01:04:30,138 --> 01:04:34,018
that the scope of this project, leaving aside the use of
agricultural

1092
01:04:34,098 --> 01:04:37,958
land, the failure of Meridian to consider alternatives, which
they're specifically

1093

01:04:38,098 --> 01:04:39,098
missioned to do,

1094

01:04:40,018 --> 01:04:43,928
in respect of high-grade land, as you all know from both national
planning

1095

01:04:43,998 --> 01:04:45,038
policy and

1096

01:04:45,858 --> 01:04:49,278
the local plan. No evidence that they considered those alternatives.

1097

01:04:49,778 --> 01:04:53,518
No real sense that they've consulted with the local community

1098

01:04:53,938 --> 01:04:57,698
or engaged with stakeholders in the way that National Grid clearly
have, and that

1099

01:04:57,738 --> 01:05:01,478
comparison is palpable and obvious for local

1100

01:05:01,558 --> 01:05:03,718
people to be able to see and compare.

1101

01:05:04,218 --> 01:05:08,058
And no consideration of the broad issues around

1102

01:05:09,738 --> 01:05:13,698
strategy in respect of roads and the environment, which I know
you'll be

1103

01:05:13,738 --> 01:05:17,458
looking at in more detail. There is also the issue of water, but I
know you're

1104

01:05:17,498 --> 01:05:21,347
dealing with that, and the Environment Agency and others will want
to comment on

1105

01:05:21,418 --> 01:05:24,988
it. So I believe this application is premature,

1106
01:05:25,538 --> 01:05:27,728
it's imprecise because of the level of deviation.

1107
01:05:28,138 --> 01:05:31,718
It's inadequate in terms of the way that Meridian have engaged.

1108
01:05:32,318 --> 01:05:35,148
And frankly, all of that, and I hesitate to

1109
01:05:36,358 --> 01:05:40,298
say so, but I feel I'm obliged to do so, suggests a level of incompetence.

1110
01:05:41,018 --> 01:05:43,758
And on that basis alone, I think the

1111
01:05:44,618 --> 01:05:45,298
matter should be

1112
01:05:46,418 --> 01:05:47,158
considered

1113
01:05:50,898 --> 01:05:52,198
in this hearing and later

1114
01:05:53,818 --> 01:05:55,998
to be not fit for purpose and therefore rejected.

1115
01:05:56,898 --> 01:05:59,138
Thank you for listening to me. Thank you.

1116
01:05:59,238 --> 01:06:03,098
Thank you very much. So before I return to the applicant, is there anybody else?

1117
01:06:03,218 --> 01:06:04,258
Yes, Mr. Semakula.

1118

01:06:06,118 --> 01:06:08,478
Joel Semakula for Lincolnshire County Council.

1119
01:06:09,698 --> 01:06:12,058
Madam, I wish to make two brief points.

1120
01:06:12,358 --> 01:06:15,918
First is in relation to the grid connection uncertainty.

1121
01:06:17,158 --> 01:06:20,378
I want to flag at the outset there is a fundamental concern for us

1122
01:06:20,578 --> 01:06:22,978
regarding the deliverability of this scheme.

1123
01:06:23,018 --> 01:06:24,458
I'm not going to repeat the comments

1124
01:06:25,298 --> 01:06:29,078
made by Mr. Basford on behalf of National Grid, but we would echo

1125
01:06:29,318 --> 01:06:30,338
many of those points, and

1126
01:06:31,218 --> 01:06:35,098
of course you'll see the NGET objection

1127
01:06:35,158 --> 01:06:35,538
app,

1128
01:06:36,358 --> 01:06:40,018
APP 045, and many of the points there would be ones on

1129
01:06:40,058 --> 01:06:42,398
which we seek to rely.

1130
01:06:43,518 --> 01:06:44,478
To close out this point, really,

1131
01:06:45,298 --> 01:06:46,998
we think it's important to say that

1132

01:06:47,838 --> 01:06:51,738

should the examining authority be minded to recommend approval, we will

1133

01:06:51,778 --> 01:06:54,018

be seeking a requirement within the DCO,

1134

01:06:55,018 --> 01:06:56,148

a requirement imposing,

1135

01:06:57,218 --> 01:07:00,638

really restricting commencement of the development, including the preliminary

1136

01:07:00,758 --> 01:07:04,038

works, until consent's been secured for some kind of connection.

1137

01:07:05,298 --> 01:07:08,678

There's obviously going to be an actual DCO

1138

01:07:08,958 --> 01:07:12,618

ISH, so I won't go into that in any more detail, but just wanted to set that out.

1139

01:07:12,658 --> 01:07:13,658

That's the first point.

1140

01:07:14,658 --> 01:07:17,448

The second point, I do want to just touch on the LVIA.

1141

01:07:17,578 --> 01:07:20,698

I understand this is not a landscape hearing, so I'm not going to get into detail,

1142

01:07:20,758 --> 01:07:24,358

but of course the applicant has shared

1143

01:07:25,138 --> 01:07:26,118

its approach to

1144

01:07:28,358 --> 01:07:30,818
justifying its decisions on overhead versus

1145
01:07:30,878 --> 01:07:34,738
undergrounding, and we just want to flag

1146
01:07:34,778 --> 01:07:37,678
that we have some fundamental issues with the LVIA.

1147
01:07:38,338 --> 01:07:40,968
We've secured our own consultants to look at that.

1148
01:07:41,198 --> 01:07:44,898
One of those issues will be relating to the decisions on those
overhead

1149
01:07:44,918 --> 01:07:46,898
lines and undergrounding, but we'll

1150
01:07:47,798 --> 01:07:49,998
set those out as well in our written submissions.

1151
01:07:50,058 --> 01:07:52,418
But we just want to put the applicant on notice that we'll be
raising some issues

1152
01:07:52,478 --> 01:07:52,998
with that

1153
01:07:54,458 --> 01:07:58,008
Thank you very much. Is there anybody else in the room that wishes
to comment at

1154
01:07:58,038 --> 01:07:58,778
this stage?

1155
01:08:00,438 --> 01:08:04,138
If not, I will pass back to the applicant to comment, but I did also
have a

1156
01:08:04,178 --> 01:08:07,478
question about could you provide an update on your Gate 2 offer as

well?

1157

01:08:07,658 --> 01:08:11,037

So I think it would be quite an opportune moment to do that. So thank you.

1158

01:08:12,198 --> 01:08:14,578

Thank you very much, Taylor Power for the applicant.

1159

01:08:14,838 --> 01:08:18,678

And sure, I do agree that these matters will be addressed more

1160

01:08:18,718 --> 01:08:22,619

fully at item six. So the applicant will return to that there.

1161

01:08:23,279 --> 01:08:27,119

And at item six, the applicant proposes to give a more extensive

1162

01:08:27,199 --> 01:08:29,138

overview of the engagement with National Grid.

1163

01:08:30,338 --> 01:08:33,878

But I will just briefly respond to some of the comments raised by the interested

1164

01:08:33,958 --> 01:08:37,619

parties now. So as the examining authority is

1165

01:08:37,638 --> 01:08:41,498

aware, the development of this project has been iterative and

1166

01:08:41,579 --> 01:08:45,548

over a period of time where there's been significant changes in the

1167

01:08:45,598 --> 01:08:49,308

National Grid connection regulatory

1168

01:08:49,378 --> 01:08:53,159

environment. So this is not unusual or specific to this project

1169

01:08:53,199 --> 01:08:56,829

alone. In fact, all of the recent solar DCOs and other

1170

01:08:56,858 --> 01:08:57,718
energy

1171

01:08:58,718 --> 01:09:02,119
DCOs over the past year have faced this uncertainty.

1172

01:09:02,638 --> 01:09:05,739
There are several solar DCOs in progress, and in fact in

1173

01:09:05,779 --> 01:09:09,678
examination, which hold Gate 1 offers like Meridian does.

1174

01:09:10,998 --> 01:09:14,918
So to clarify, Meridian Solar does still hold a Gate 1 offer, and
that Gate

1175

01:09:15,038 --> 01:09:17,438
1 offer refers to connection at Western Marsh.

1176

01:09:17,718 --> 01:09:21,369
It's on that basis and on the basis of the previous connection
agreement

1177

01:09:21,739 --> 01:09:25,398
that preceded the Gate 1 offer, under the shift with

1178

01:09:25,458 --> 01:09:29,079
the new NESO reform

1179

01:09:29,098 --> 01:09:33,008
process that Meridian has designed its grid connection.

1180

01:09:34,279 --> 01:09:38,038
Of course, as the examining authority is well aware,

1181

01:09:38,279 --> 01:09:42,018
Gate 1 offers are not a certain offer, and they do rely on the
future

1182

01:09:42,058 --> 01:09:45,038
application and award of a Gate 2 offer.

1183
01:09:45,458 --> 01:09:49,398
So the applicant is fully committed to apply for a Gate 2 offer at the next

1184
01:09:49,458 --> 01:09:53,199
available opportunity, but there has not been an application round

1185
01:09:53,858 --> 01:09:54,798
that has opened up

1186
01:09:55,658 --> 01:09:59,428
subsequent to the previous application round, which the applicant could

1187
01:09:59,458 --> 01:10:00,108
apply for.

1188
01:10:01,498 --> 01:10:04,788
So while the applicant understands it's the position of National Grid Electricity

1189
01:10:04,858 --> 01:10:08,558
Transmission to not engage with applicants with Gate 1 offers at this stage,

1190
01:10:09,778 --> 01:10:12,098
the applicant does not agree that

1191
01:10:12,158 --> 01:10:14,098
that

1192
01:10:14,918 --> 01:10:18,458
position must be taken by the

1193
01:10:18,498 --> 01:10:22,238
applicant or that there's direction within the national policy statements for

1194
01:10:22,298 --> 01:10:26,038

applicants to pause applications until they hold a Gate 2

1195

01:10:26,098 --> 01:10:29,878

offer. In fact, the national policy statement for energy

1196

01:10:30,358 --> 01:10:34,278

says the opposite and says that it is at the applicant's own

1197

01:10:34,318 --> 01:10:37,078

risk to proceed without a final grid connection.

1198

01:10:38,318 --> 01:10:42,158

But that is possible for an applicant to do and to proceed to submit
a

1199

01:10:42,198 --> 01:10:44,648

DCO application without a final grid connection offer.

1200

01:10:45,508 --> 01:10:49,398

And also I would note, in fact, that the NESO Gate 2 readiness
criteria,

1201

01:10:49,458 --> 01:10:52,998

which is the criterion which applications for Gate 2 offers are

1202

01:10:53,218 --> 01:10:56,998

judged, encourage applicants to proceed with planning permissions in

1203

01:10:57,038 --> 01:10:59,498

order to obtain Gate 2 offers. So

1204

01:11:00,658 --> 01:11:01,278

the applicant

1205

01:11:02,138 --> 01:11:04,258

is stuck in a difficult position where it

1206

01:11:05,298 --> 01:11:09,178

is going to apply for a Gate 2 offer, and as such is encouraged to

1207

01:11:09,238 --> 01:11:13,058

continue with planning in order to show readiness.

1208

01:11:13,758 --> 01:11:17,527

Further to the comments from

1209

01:11:17,598 --> 01:11:21,398

Lincolnshire County Council, the applicant's willing to discuss ways to resolve

1210

01:11:21,418 --> 01:11:23,758

concerns about certainty further.

1211

01:11:23,958 --> 01:11:27,238

But the initial position would be that a requirement in the DC0

1212

01:11:27,318 --> 01:11:31,158

to stop the DC0 from commencing prior to a grid

1213

01:11:31,178 --> 01:11:35,158

connection would be, in effect, not necessary

1214

01:11:35,238 --> 01:11:39,098

because clearly, at least from a business case perspective, you wouldn't proceed

1215

01:11:39,138 --> 01:11:42,818

with the build-out of a nationally significant size solar development project

1216

01:11:42,858 --> 01:11:46,118

without certainty on where you would be delivering that energy to.

1217

01:11:46,958 --> 01:11:50,878

But by reflecting this in a requirement at this stage, we don't have certainty

1218

01:11:50,938 --> 01:11:53,958

as to whether those grid connections might change, whether the

1219

01:11:53,998 --> 01:11:57,478

Gate 2 offer that the applicant does receive might

1220
01:11:57,538 --> 01:12:01,038
change. And so a requirement could

1221
01:12:01,078 --> 01:12:03,978
place the DCO application in a

1222
01:12:04,958 --> 01:12:08,738
more restrictive control that, say, aligns to Grimsby to

1223
01:12:08,758 --> 01:12:10,837
Walpole or another project, when in

1224
01:12:11,818 --> 01:12:15,738
effect that connection might change in the future, and therefore the

1225
01:12:15,748 --> 01:12:18,238
applicant would have to seek to change its DCO.

1226
01:12:19,398 --> 01:12:20,418
So I'll leave

1227
01:12:21,318 --> 01:12:24,958
more detail on that to item six, but I suppose I did just want to
provide that

1228
01:12:24,978 --> 01:12:28,818
response. Finally, I would just respectfully disagree

1229
01:12:28,858 --> 01:12:32,578
with Sir John's comments regarding the engagement of Meridian with
surrounding

1230
01:12:32,598 --> 01:12:36,518
communities and projects. I would refer Sir John to the design

1231
01:12:36,578 --> 01:12:40,498
approach document, which sets out in detail the ways that the design
has been

1232
01:12:40,558 --> 01:12:43,718
iteratively designed to respond to feedback from the local community

and

1233

01:12:43,818 --> 01:12:47,038

stakeholders. And the applicant is certain that its

1234

01:12:47,178 --> 01:12:49,918

consultation has taken on board

1235

01:12:50,898 --> 01:12:54,658

feedback from community and stakeholders throughout the design process from

1236

01:12:55,138 --> 01:12:57,418

inception to application.

1237

01:12:59,738 --> 01:13:03,518

Thank you. I notice that Mr. Basford has his hand up again.

1238

01:13:03,928 --> 01:13:05,528

Do you wish to respond, or

1239

01:13:06,398 --> 01:13:09,598

keeping within the parameters of item four?

1240

01:13:10,618 --> 01:13:10,978

Thank you.

1241

01:13:11,098 --> 01:13:14,918

Yes. Given that the subject

1242

01:13:14,998 --> 01:13:18,498

of the Gate 1 offer is in play,

1243

01:13:19,178 --> 01:13:23,048

the understanding of National Grid is that there are strategic

1244

01:13:23,118 --> 01:13:26,558

alignment issues affecting the

1245

01:13:27,378 --> 01:13:30,778

Meridian Solar application for a grid connection,

1246

01:13:31,318 --> 01:13:35,098

and those are not cured by the provision of

1247

01:13:35,198 --> 01:13:37,998

any enhanced capacity in the area.

1248

01:13:39,398 --> 01:13:43,248

The other thing to say is that

1249

01:13:43,258 --> 01:13:46,238

NES0 is very clear about the effect

1250

01:13:46,958 --> 01:13:50,918

of a Gate 1 offer. It says that a

1251

01:13:50,938 --> 01:13:54,768

Gate 1 notification means the project can remain in the connections process, but

1252

01:13:54,838 --> 01:13:58,518

it does not reserve capacity, a place in the queue, provide

1253

01:13:58,538 --> 01:14:01,518

protected status or guarantee a connection.

1254

01:14:02,358 --> 01:14:06,098

And then it says that the relevant transmission owner, and that is National Grid

1255

01:14:06,138 --> 01:14:09,978

Electricity Transmission in this case, will stop progressing

1256

01:14:10,058 --> 01:14:13,078

any applicable transmission works where they're no longer required.

1257

01:14:13,958 --> 01:14:16,178

And that is the circumstance that we have here.

1258

01:14:17,090 --> 01:14:21,030

As such, it cannot be guaranteed that there would be a

1259
01:14:21,090 --> 01:14:24,030
connection at any particular location.

1260
01:14:24,230 --> 01:14:26,390
It could be Weston Marsh, it could be

1261
01:14:27,330 --> 01:14:28,090
anywhere else.

1262
01:14:29,090 --> 01:14:29,410
And

1263
01:14:30,410 --> 01:14:31,170
as a result,

1264
01:14:32,490 --> 01:14:36,410
if one ever were to eventuate, we just don't know where it

1265
01:14:36,450 --> 01:14:40,090
would be. So from National Grid's point of view, it's

1266
01:14:40,130 --> 01:14:43,700
premature to look at interfaces and to

1267
01:14:43,850 --> 01:14:44,970
assume a connection.

1268
01:14:49,430 --> 01:14:50,290
Thank you very much.

1269
01:14:55,290 --> 01:14:57,330
Sir John, I believe you have your hand up again.

1270
01:14:59,170 --> 01:15:02,790
Question, really. We will have a disagreement about the character of
consultation.

1271
01:15:02,870 --> 01:15:06,570
Let's not explore that in detail. I can put it into writing in terms
of connection,

1272

01:15:07,190 --> 01:15:10,830

meetings and so on, with local councilors, with myself, with others.

1273

01:15:11,190 --> 01:15:12,669

But this question is really about

1274

01:15:13,790 --> 01:15:14,830

in terms of scope.

1275

01:15:15,770 --> 01:15:19,350

And I'm happy to have this in writing if it's not appropriate to do it

1276

01:15:19,410 --> 01:15:22,910

now. What consideration in the light of the local

1277

01:15:23,010 --> 01:15:26,210

plan and national policy did

1278

01:15:26,530 --> 01:15:28,810

Meridian make of alternative sites?

1279

01:15:28,930 --> 01:15:30,790

You mentioned this at the outset, madam.

1280

01:15:31,950 --> 01:15:35,750

We've seen no evidence of an exploration of alternative sites

1281

01:15:36,230 --> 01:15:39,670

nearby that wouldn't have required the use of

1282

01:15:39,850 --> 01:15:41,140

2,700

1283

01:15:42,230 --> 01:15:46,120

acres of Grade One and Two land. National policy and local policy,

1284

01:15:46,190 --> 01:15:47,010

as you will know,

1285

01:15:48,010 --> 01:15:51,650

emphasizes the need to do just that and to avoid, wherever

1286

01:15:51,670 --> 01:15:54,990

possible, the use of such land. And yet we've had no evidence from

1287

01:15:55,470 --> 01:15:59,270

Meridian that they considered alternative sites in those terms.

1288

01:15:59,950 --> 01:16:03,730

Sir John, I think you've just stolen my next question,

1289

01:16:03,810 --> 01:16:04,130

actually.

1290

01:16:05,670 --> 01:16:05,850

Sorry.

1291

01:16:05,910 --> 01:16:09,720

So on that basis, I think we'll move on to the line of

1292

01:16:09,790 --> 01:16:12,750

questioning, if that's okay. But thank you very much.

1293

01:16:13,970 --> 01:16:17,410

So on that basis, the following question that we had

1294

01:16:18,190 --> 01:16:20,290

from the point you were making on scope was,

1295

01:16:21,250 --> 01:16:24,750

having regard to paragraph 4.3.15 of

1296

01:16:25,150 --> 01:16:26,550

National Policy Statement EN1,

1297

01:16:27,550 --> 01:16:31,220

can you please provide a high level overview of the site selection process?

1298

01:16:31,830 --> 01:16:35,599

In particular, explaining the approach taken to identifying and assessing potential

1299

01:16:35,610 --> 01:16:39,410

sites, the process that was used to discount reasonable

1300

01:16:39,490 --> 01:16:43,080

alternatives, and the principal reasons for selecting the proposed

1301

01:16:43,150 --> 01:16:43,629

site.

1302

01:16:48,630 --> 01:16:50,390

Thank you very much. Taylor Power for the applicant.

1303

01:16:50,550 --> 01:16:54,430

I might refer to my colleague, Michelle

1304

01:16:54,490 --> 01:16:58,410

Burns, who could provide a brief overview in respect to the site selection report

1305

01:16:59,970 --> 01:17:01,450

as planning consultant for the scheme.

1306

01:17:01,750 --> 01:17:02,210

I would note

1307

01:17:04,430 --> 01:17:06,439

definitely the applicant will provide a response to this.

1308

01:17:06,560 --> 01:17:07,310

I would say that

1309

01:17:08,450 --> 01:17:11,550

we might need to supplement that response in writing to make sure that we provide

1310

01:17:11,590 --> 01:17:15,060

you a full overview, but we can at least provide you an initial overview in this

1311

01:17:15,090 --> 01:17:15,750
context.

1312

01:17:17,110 --> 01:17:18,630
Good morning. My name is Michelle Burns.

1313

01:17:18,790 --> 01:17:20,110
I am an associate at Quad,

1314

01:17:20,950 --> 01:17:24,740
which is a planning and development consultancy, and I am a
chartered town planner.

1315

01:17:27,770 --> 01:17:31,410
So just principally, if I could just confirm which paragraph you
were referring to

1316

01:17:31,430 --> 01:17:33,570
in the NPS. Is that correct?

1317

01:17:34,270 --> 01:17:37,050
4.3.15 of EN1,

1318

01:17:37,850 --> 01:17:39,210
National Policy Statement EN1.

1319

01:17:39,650 --> 01:17:40,070
Thank you.

1320

01:17:41,170 --> 01:17:45,010
So site selection matters are principally covered in application

1321

01:17:45,030 --> 01:17:49,010
document 264, which is appendix D to

1322

01:17:49,050 --> 01:17:50,950
the planning statement site selection report.

1323

01:17:52,250 --> 01:17:53,320
It sets out

1324

01:17:54,350 --> 01:17:58,250

the site selection principles that the applicant has considered, including at a

1325

01:17:58,270 --> 01:18:00,530

regional level and a localized site

1326

01:18:01,550 --> 01:18:02,370

selection level.

1327

01:18:04,590 --> 01:18:06,850

At a regional level, this has principally

1328

01:18:07,750 --> 01:18:11,670

included irradiance and topography, network connection,

1329

01:18:12,050 --> 01:18:15,850

landholdings, agricultural land classification and land type, flood

1330

01:18:15,910 --> 01:18:19,130

risk, as well as planning and environmental designations.

1331

01:18:19,650 --> 01:18:23,130

And this has been considered in light of the relevant policies in

1332

01:18:23,190 --> 01:18:25,850

EN1, EN3 and EN5.

1333

01:18:31,270 --> 01:18:34,909

Sorry, I'm just trying to find the relevant paragraph in the NPS that you were

1334

01:18:34,950 --> 01:18:35,349

referring

1335

01:18:35,409 --> 01:18:42,970

to.

1336

01:18:45,230 --> 01:18:46,850

And the site selection report is also

1337

01:18:48,510 --> 01:18:52,470

supplemented by the consideration of alternatives in ES chapter three

1338

01:18:52,550 --> 01:18:53,070

as well.

1339

01:18:54,630 --> 01:18:57,010

My colleague to the right of me, Ms.

1340

01:18:57,070 --> 01:19:00,610

Titchley, will cover in a bit more detail the alternatives considered in light of

1341

01:19:00,650 --> 01:19:01,910

the environmental statement.

1342

01:19:04,250 --> 01:19:07,430

Were there any specific points within the site selection report you were interested

1343

01:19:07,630 --> 01:19:07,870

in

1344

01:19:08,770 --> 01:19:09,730

understanding further?

1345

01:19:12,210 --> 01:19:15,950

Yes. I'm going to move on to agricultural land.

1346

01:19:16,590 --> 01:19:20,430

Part of this will be covered here and then we'll deal with another part,

1347

01:19:20,510 --> 01:19:23,090

sorry it is in two separate parts, later in the agenda.

1348

01:19:23,770 --> 01:19:26,010

Just bear with me for one moment.

1349

01:19:30,430 --> 01:19:34,190

So in terms of the proposed use of agricultural land, paragraph

1350

01:19:34,550 --> 01:19:38,290

5.11.12 of NPS EN1 clearly states that

1351

01:19:38,350 --> 01:19:42,110

applicants should seek to minimize impacts on the best and most

1352

01:19:42,150 --> 01:19:46,050

versatile agricultural land and preferably use land in

1353

01:19:46,110 --> 01:19:47,770

areas of poorer quality.

1354

01:19:49,110 --> 01:19:52,550

Paragraph 5.11.34 then further states, where development of

1355

01:19:52,590 --> 01:19:56,450

agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer

1356

01:19:56,510 --> 01:19:59,230

quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

1357

01:20:01,350 --> 01:20:04,030

NPS EN3 at paragraph

1358

01:20:04,290 --> 01:20:08,050

2.10.137 also states that the Secretary of State should take

1359

01:20:08,090 --> 01:20:11,770

into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most

1360

01:20:11,810 --> 01:20:15,790

versatile agricultural land. The Secretary of State should ensure that the

1361

01:20:15,850 --> 01:20:19,450

applicant has put forward appropriate mitigation measures to minimize

1362

01:20:19,570 --> 01:20:21,990
impacts on soils or soil resources.

1363
01:20:22,410 --> 01:20:26,310
So I note the information provided in your appendices to

1364
01:20:26,320 --> 01:20:30,170
the planning statement and the site selection report and the design

1365
01:20:30,230 --> 01:20:34,050
approach document. But I'd like you to talk me through how the

1366
01:20:34,110 --> 01:20:37,730
agricultural land quality was taken into account in

1367
01:20:37,770 --> 01:20:40,360
influencing the site selection,

1368
01:20:41,330 --> 01:20:45,050
given the amount of the solar development areas which are likely to
be

1369
01:20:45,714 --> 01:20:48,844
Located in best and most versatile agricultural land,

1370
01:20:48,934 --> 01:20:49,854
please.

1371
01:20:49,934 --> 01:20:52,114
Yeah. Happy to. Thank you.

1372
01:20:54,854 --> 01:20:58,134
So the applicant originally when looking at its site,

1373
01:20:58,674 --> 01:21:01,634
the grid connection was a key component of that.

1374
01:21:01,774 --> 01:21:05,604
While we didn't have a specific location of the point of connection
at

1375

01:21:05,714 --> 01:21:09,234
that point in time, we understood that the grid connection would be
in the

1376
01:21:09,254 --> 01:21:10,814
vicinity of Westermarsh.

1377
01:21:11,974 --> 01:21:15,794
The applicant didn't adopt a rigid site selection area,

1378
01:21:16,214 --> 01:21:19,914
but it did kind of look within around 15 kilometers of what their

1379
01:21:19,974 --> 01:21:23,954
area might be. In doing so, it took into account

1380
01:21:23,963 --> 01:21:25,514
the predictive land assessment,

1381
01:21:26,814 --> 01:21:30,494
that's produced by DEFRA. There is a figure, that's shown at figure

1382
01:21:30,974 --> 01:21:32,914
4.3 of the site selection report.

1383
01:21:34,874 --> 01:21:37,614
And when you look at that figure, I'm not sure, actually, Mr.

1384
01:21:37,834 --> 01:21:39,074
Davies, if you could

1385
01:21:39,914 --> 01:21:41,963
put that on screen, it might be helpful.

1386
01:21:44,074 --> 01:21:46,474
And that's application document 264.

1387
01:21:55,454 --> 01:21:57,074
And it would be page 18.

1388
01:22:03,704 --> 01:22:06,834

Brilliant. Thank you. If you just zoom in a little bit, it might be a bit easier

1389

01:22:06,874 --> 01:22:07,494
for people to

1390

01:22:08,474 --> 01:22:08,904
review.

1391

01:22:10,924 --> 01:22:14,874
So just looking at the predictive land assessment figure, you can see

1392

01:22:14,954 --> 01:22:18,354
it's indicated by star, just the approximate location of where that grid's

1393

01:22:18,854 --> 01:22:19,794
connection would be.

1394

01:22:20,734 --> 01:22:24,554
The area surrounding is largely high likelihood of B and V land,

1395

01:22:25,334 --> 01:22:28,334
with pockets of urban and industrial land.

1396

01:22:30,674 --> 01:22:33,594
Further, there's also the predictive land assessment as well, which is just the

1397

01:22:33,674 --> 01:22:34,774
figure shown on

1398

01:22:35,954 --> 01:22:39,694
the page slightly to the below. So if you go page

1399

01:22:39,754 --> 01:22:40,984
19, there's another figure.

1400

01:22:44,734 --> 01:22:46,904
And that illustrates that the land within their area is

1401

01:22:47,934 --> 01:22:51,834

very good to excellent quality with very good quality further to the south.

1402

01:22:53,594 --> 01:22:57,214

What these two figures do show is that within a approximate

1403

01:22:57,254 --> 01:22:59,794

15-kilometer radius of the point of connection,

1404

01:23:00,594 --> 01:23:03,874

there isn't any land of sufficient scale for a 750 megawatt

1405

01:23:05,094 --> 01:23:09,024

solar farm within proximity to the point of connection that would not have a

1406

01:23:09,094 --> 01:23:12,884

high likelihood of B and V land, which makes complete avoidance of B

1407

01:23:13,114 --> 01:23:16,843

and V agricultural land impossible for the scheme when looking at that scale at a

1408

01:23:16,874 --> 01:23:18,714

regional site selection

1409

01:23:20,694 --> 01:23:21,494

point of view.

1410

01:23:25,674 --> 01:23:27,894

And if you just scroll down further to the next page, which is

1411

01:23:28,834 --> 01:23:29,454

site 20...

1412

01:23:30,314 --> 01:23:33,974

Page 20, sorry. We've got the scheme's order limits just in relation to Natural

1413

01:23:34,034 --> 01:23:35,894

England's provisional ALC mapping.

1414

01:23:37,794 --> 01:23:39,014

Once land assembly

1415

01:23:39,894 --> 01:23:43,154

in a site was identified around following discussions with the

1416

01:23:43,194 --> 01:23:46,974

landowners, the applicant then took further soil samples to understand the

1417

01:23:46,994 --> 01:23:48,654

nature of the soils at the site.

1418

01:23:49,614 --> 01:23:52,834

Our specialist who deals with agricultural land and soils

1419

01:23:52,874 --> 01:23:56,754

isn't in this hearing today to discuss those points, so I won't go

1420

01:23:56,774 --> 01:23:59,414

into too much detail of those detailed surveys.

1421

01:24:01,114 --> 01:24:05,084

Okay. Could that information be provided in writing, in your

1422

01:24:05,094 --> 01:24:05,414

written response?

1423

01:24:05,454 --> 01:24:06,234

Yes, of course. Yeah.

1424

01:24:07,234 --> 01:24:11,174

Thank you. Sorry,

1425

01:24:11,234 --> 01:24:12,314

is that the end of

1426

01:24:13,694 --> 01:24:14,464

your answer? That's fine.

1427

01:24:14,494 --> 01:24:15,514

Yes. That's okay.

1428

01:24:15,794 --> 01:24:16,194

Sorry. That's fine.

1429

01:24:16,254 --> 01:24:16,954

It's a fair point.

1430

01:24:17,914 --> 01:24:21,814

Given that you don't have your, am I correct in, you don't have your soil

1431

01:24:21,994 --> 01:24:23,134

expert with you?

1432

01:24:23,534 --> 01:24:23,614

No.

1433

01:24:24,154 --> 01:24:26,434

Can I therefore ask the question

1434

01:24:27,374 --> 01:24:31,254

I was going to ask later then? Because you will probably have to respond in writing

1435

01:24:31,294 --> 01:24:32,753

to it, so I'll ask it now.

1436

01:24:33,774 --> 01:24:34,424

Mm-hmm.

1437

01:24:34,474 --> 01:24:38,154

So in table 5.1 of ES chapter

1438

01:24:38,194 --> 01:24:42,174

five, it's stated that following decommissioning, the land will be

1439

01:24:42,254 --> 01:24:45,994

restored so far as reasonably practical to its pre-construction

1440

01:24:46,014 --> 01:24:49,554

condition, with the aim of returning it to its

1441

01:24:49,614 --> 01:24:53,024

existing ALC grade. Post-restoration

1442

01:24:53,094 --> 01:24:56,454

monitoring is secured within the outlined soil management plan,

1443

01:24:57,074 --> 01:25:00,974

and any minor variability from baseline ALC

1444

01:25:01,054 --> 01:25:04,723

grades identified at that stage would be investigated and

1445

01:25:04,774 --> 01:25:08,494

addressed to ensure that the land is capable of productive agricultural use

1446

01:25:08,894 --> 01:25:11,714

once reinstated. But at paragraph

1447

01:25:11,874 --> 01:25:15,614

5.8.2 of the same ES chapter, chapter

1448

01:25:15,654 --> 01:25:19,634

five, it's stated that part of the scheme will involve

1449

01:25:19,674 --> 01:25:22,174

the creation of hard standing for the on-site

1450

01:25:23,414 --> 01:25:25,574

substation and BESS compounds, solar

1451

01:25:26,394 --> 01:25:29,594

stations, and the CSEC

1452

01:25:29,654 --> 01:25:33,614

compounds. These structures will be removed at decommissioning, and the land

1453

01:25:33,634 --> 01:25:36,694

will be restored. But where this infrastructure is located on

1454

01:25:37,094 --> 01:25:39,954

ALC grade one or two land, there is

1455

01:25:39,994 --> 01:25:43,794

uncertainty because of the duration of the operational phase

1456

01:25:43,874 --> 01:25:47,654

over whether the land can be returned to its former grade.

1457

01:25:48,434 --> 01:25:52,094

And footnote 14 of table 5.12 in the same

1458

01:25:52,134 --> 01:25:55,954

chapter states, "Although the scheme component is temporary and

1459

01:25:55,974 --> 01:25:59,734

will be decommissioned, restoration of land grade one and two cannot be

1460

01:25:59,774 --> 01:26:03,694

guaranteed." Now, while I accept that the area in question may

1461

01:26:03,754 --> 01:26:07,674

only be a small amount, there does seem to be some ambiguity as to

1462

01:26:07,694 --> 01:26:11,354

whether the agricultural land in parts will be restored back to its original

1463

01:26:11,374 --> 01:26:11,874

grade.

1464

01:26:12,954 --> 01:26:16,614

I'm looking for you to confirm what guarantee you can provide,

1465

01:26:17,134 --> 01:26:20,314

how this will be secured, that the agricultural land will be

1466

01:26:20,354 --> 01:26:24,344

restored back to its original grade, and what the implications for

1467

01:26:24,414 --> 01:26:27,174

productivity are if this isn't possible.

1468

01:26:27,234 --> 01:26:29,794

Because currently, there doesn't seem to be a firm commitment.

1469

01:26:31,354 --> 01:26:33,494

Unless you can signpost me to this,

1470

01:26:34,634 --> 01:26:38,394

that I've missed, that there is a commitment to restore land

1471

01:26:38,434 --> 01:26:42,364

back to the same ALC grade. That I accept that may be a question that

1472

01:26:42,394 --> 01:26:43,634

you're going to have to take away.

1473

01:26:45,634 --> 01:26:49,514

But both of those two questions are very important that we get a

1474

01:26:49,554 --> 01:26:51,714

very detailed answer to, please.

1475

01:26:52,334 --> 01:26:54,494

Yes. Ms. Burns for the applicant. Yes, this has been-

1476

01:26:54,950 --> 01:26:58,530

... discussions that we've been having with Natural England and Lincolnshire over

1477

01:26:58,570 --> 01:27:02,230

the past few weeks as well, so we'll be prepared to respond in writing at deadline

1478

01:27:02,310 --> 01:27:03,450

one.

1479

01:27:04,170 --> 01:27:06,030

And Taylor Powell for the applicant.

1480

01:27:06,150 --> 01:27:08,830

I suppose I can provide a bit of context for that

1481

01:27:09,890 --> 01:27:11,490

if it would assist now. Yeah.

1482

01:27:11,570 --> 01:27:12,610

Yeah. Of course. Yeah.

1483

01:27:12,680 --> 01:27:16,220

Yeah. So my understanding from those discussions is that essentially on a

1484

01:27:16,250 --> 01:27:19,550

conservative basis for the purposes of the EIA

1485

01:27:19,610 --> 01:27:21,390

assessment, given the

1486

01:27:22,250 --> 01:27:26,130

hard standing requires you to move all the

1487

01:27:26,190 --> 01:27:30,050

soil to the side and then place down hard standing for those components of the

1488

01:27:30,070 --> 01:27:33,770

schemes, you can't guarantee when it comes to those hard standing

1489

01:27:33,850 --> 01:27:37,490

areas that you would be able to restore the soils to

1490

01:27:37,690 --> 01:27:41,390

Grade 1 or 2 quality at the end of the decommissioning of the project.

1491

01:27:41,770 --> 01:27:45,730
So on a conservative assumption, and

1492
01:27:45,750 --> 01:27:49,590
this will be reflected at deadline one and document updates will be

1493
01:27:49,630 --> 01:27:52,170
updated to reflect that essentially,

1494
01:27:53,230 --> 01:27:56,900
and this is based on the discussions with Natural England, to
reflect an assumption

1495
01:27:56,970 --> 01:28:00,420
that there would be permanent loss when it came to those

1496
01:28:00,450 --> 01:28:03,910
components. But to clarify, that's essentially an EIA

1497
01:28:03,950 --> 01:28:07,690
assumption because we can't guarantee when it comes to those hard

1498
01:28:07,730 --> 01:28:09,870
standing components that you can return it.

1499
01:28:10,230 --> 01:28:14,030
But the soil management plan, and I would suggest directing the

1500
01:28:14,090 --> 01:28:18,040
examining authority to that document in respect of the current
commitments and

1501
01:28:18,070 --> 01:28:21,700
whether the examining authority might like the applicant to
strengthen those

1502
01:28:21,710 --> 01:28:25,660
commitments further, if it considers that those commitments are not

1503
01:28:25,690 --> 01:28:29,330
currently strong enough. Those commitments still require the

1504
01:28:29,390 --> 01:28:29,950
applicant to,

1505
01:28:30,810 --> 01:28:31,150
even if

1506
01:28:32,030 --> 01:28:35,410
there's a low likelihood that it could restore the soils to the
Grade 1 and 2

1507
01:28:35,450 --> 01:28:38,550
quality, to still try its best and to still

1508
01:28:39,130 --> 01:28:41,530
restore the rest of the site to Grade 1 and 2.

1509
01:28:41,650 --> 01:28:45,560
But when it comes to those hard standing areas, reflect that that
might not

1510
01:28:45,590 --> 01:28:49,020
be physically possible, but that doesn't mean that the applicant
won't

1511
01:28:49,170 --> 01:28:52,830
be looking to restore it to the best of its ability at the

1512
01:28:52,890 --> 01:28:54,450
time of decommissioning anyway.

1513
01:28:55,250 --> 01:28:55,910
If that assists.

1514
01:28:56,690 --> 01:29:00,500
Yeah. Thank you. That is helpful. I'll just point out, without
wanting to appear

1515
01:29:00,510 --> 01:29:03,569
rude, and I'm certainly not being rude, it is not my job to

1516
01:29:04,909 --> 01:29:08,730

dictate to you whether or not your documents need strengthening.

1517

01:29:08,770 --> 01:29:09,810

That is obviously

1518

01:29:11,540 --> 01:29:14,770

your role, in effect. I think what might be useful is

1519

01:29:15,990 --> 01:29:19,919

that there's quite a lot of information about restoration in

1520

01:29:20,070 --> 01:29:23,990

different documents, and some documents say that

1521

01:29:24,010 --> 01:29:25,510

it will be fully restored, and some don't.

1522

01:29:25,870 --> 01:29:29,330

Would it be possible for you to produce a consolidated

1523

01:29:29,870 --> 01:29:30,530

document,

1524

01:29:32,530 --> 01:29:36,230

where people can look at, because you're very aware there is significant concern

1525

01:29:36,270 --> 01:29:40,139

about the loss of BMV land. I think that might be useful

1526

01:29:40,170 --> 01:29:43,830

for us and for IPs and wider people, if you could

1527

01:29:43,890 --> 01:29:47,670

maybe do an additional document which just

1528

01:29:47,750 --> 01:29:50,830

helps to understand what will

1529

01:29:50,950 --> 01:29:52,450

be restored

1530

01:29:53,350 --> 01:29:57,280

as far as you are able to, and what potentially won't be, so people get a better,

1531

01:29:57,630 --> 01:29:59,250

clearer understanding of the picture.

1532

01:30:00,210 --> 01:30:01,570

Yes. Taylor Powell for the applicant.

1533

01:30:01,910 --> 01:30:05,810

Yes, we could prepare that and either attach the written summary or provide

1534

01:30:05,850 --> 01:30:09,510

as an additional document at deadline one, if that would assist.

1535

01:30:09,660 --> 01:30:11,270

That would be really useful. Thank you.

1536

01:30:21,310 --> 01:30:21,570

I

1537

01:30:27,950 --> 01:30:30,430

am aware that we're coming up to 11:30.

1538

01:30:30,490 --> 01:30:34,210

We do have one more set of questions which would sit

1539

01:30:34,310 --> 01:30:38,070

quite nicely in this discussion. Can I just

1540

01:30:38,150 --> 01:30:41,690

ask if people are comfortable that we just continue for a short while?

1541

01:30:42,510 --> 01:30:44,610

Is there anybody in the room that that causes any

1542

01:30:45,450 --> 01:30:46,150

problems for?

1543

01:30:47,230 --> 01:30:49,310

No. Okay. Thank you.

1544

01:30:50,850 --> 01:30:54,530

So my question takes us back to the issue of site

1545

01:30:54,610 --> 01:30:55,199

selection,

1546

01:30:56,050 --> 01:30:59,919

with a particular view to the flooding sequential

1547

01:31:00,030 --> 01:31:00,570

test

1548

01:31:02,210 --> 01:31:04,070

and how that was taken into account.

1549

01:31:04,130 --> 01:31:07,970

So I've seen and I've heard today your high-level statements on how

1550

01:31:08,050 --> 01:31:09,270

you did the site selection.

1551

01:31:10,270 --> 01:31:13,970

Can you signpost me to where the detail of how you did this was set

1552

01:31:14,110 --> 01:31:14,430

out?

1553

01:31:18,410 --> 01:31:21,690

Hello. Carly Vince from Quad on behalf of the applicant.

1554

01:31:22,210 --> 01:31:26,110

So within the site selection report, Appendix D of the planning

1555

01:31:26,230 --> 01:31:26,790

statement,

1556
01:31:28,010 --> 01:31:28,830
page

1557
01:31:29,930 --> 01:31:31,490
19 to

1558
01:31:34,630 --> 01:31:38,170
21, we do provide the overview from a flood

1559
01:31:38,210 --> 01:31:42,060
risk perspective. And if someone could bring up

1560
01:31:42,130 --> 01:31:43,310
the figure

1561
01:31:44,130 --> 01:31:47,620
3.7, flood risk mapping. It's

1562
01:31:47,620 --> 01:31:50,850
similar to the BMV

1563
01:31:52,090 --> 01:31:55,970
matter we discussed, where we show the site in the context of

1564
01:31:56,030 --> 01:31:59,650
the wider area, and this demonstrates that

1565
01:31:59,750 --> 01:32:00,050
the

1566
01:32:01,170 --> 01:32:04,890
majority of land near the principal point of connection is

1567
01:32:04,930 --> 01:32:08,770
within flood zones 3A and B. I think

1568
01:32:08,810 --> 01:32:12,570
there is a matter on the agenda later where the flood risk expert
will be

1569

01:32:12,650 --> 01:32:14,550
speaking, so much better than me to speak to this.

1570
01:32:14,630 --> 01:32:14,730
But,

1571
01:32:16,330 --> 01:32:19,790
we then have applied, following the sequential test, the

1572
01:32:19,850 --> 01:32:23,490
exceptions test in relation to key components of

1573
01:32:23,770 --> 01:32:25,510
the project. So I don't know if you want to

1574
01:32:26,590 --> 01:32:29,150
do further questions now or wait until we've got the expert.

1575
01:32:30,090 --> 01:32:32,350
So there's a couple of questions that I've got, and I don't think
we're going to

1576
01:32:32,370 --> 01:32:36,350
get into the detail here. I think ultimately what we are looking for
as

1577
01:32:36,470 --> 01:32:40,300
a panel is a consolidated document that sets out very clearly

1578
01:32:40,330 --> 01:32:43,810
how you've chosen the location for the site.

1579
01:32:44,430 --> 01:32:48,010
And at the moment, I don't think we feel like we've got enough
detail on that.

1580
01:32:48,350 --> 01:32:50,930
You may well have it, but we haven't identified that.

1581
01:32:50,990 --> 01:32:54,950
So either signpost us to it or give us a bit more

1582

01:32:54,990 --> 01:32:58,530

detail on how you've done that. So as an example, I can see that you've got that

1583

01:32:58,590 --> 01:33:02,390

map that shows that it's a lot of flood zone three in the area, but why

1584

01:33:02,450 --> 01:33:05,750

there? If you've got a lot of flood zone three, what's the reason for putting it in

1585

01:33:05,790 --> 01:33:09,630

that particular location? And obviously, as part of the sequential test, I need you

1586

01:33:09,670 --> 01:33:13,170

to have demonstrated that you've taken flood zone two into account as well.

1587

01:33:14,210 --> 01:33:18,170

I can see that you're saying that a lot of it's flood zone three,

1588

01:33:18,290 --> 01:33:22,210

but actually a similar distance to the west, you've got an area

1589

01:33:22,250 --> 01:33:26,130

that doesn't appear to be in a flood zone, and I need to see some evidence for why

1590

01:33:26,210 --> 01:33:29,670

that wasn't considered, or if it was considered, why was it rejected?

1591

01:33:29,710 --> 01:33:32,050

At the moment, I can't see that I've got that before me.

1592

01:33:32,750 --> 01:33:36,310

I'd also say that with those maps, if you put that figure back up again.

1593

01:33:40,850 --> 01:33:44,790

Thank you, Mr. Davis. The reason it looks so big is because you've got the

1594

01:33:44,830 --> 01:33:48,170

grid connection on there, and when you were doing your site selection, it probably

1595

01:33:48,230 --> 01:33:51,790

should've been looking at the solar panels, and then the grid connection moves

1596

01:33:51,850 --> 01:33:54,290

around according to where it needs to go.

1597

01:33:54,330 --> 01:33:57,870

Eventually, you'll look at it holistically, but I think we probably need to see a

1598

01:33:57,890 --> 01:34:01,820

bit more granularity around how you've done that site selection so that

1599

01:34:01,830 --> 01:34:04,390

we can be satisfied that the tests and the MPS are met.

1600

01:34:06,830 --> 01:34:09,970

That's understood. Thank you for the clarification, and we'll set it out in

1601

01:34:09,990 --> 01:34:10,570

writing.

1602

01:34:10,630 --> 01:34:14,510

If we could have a single document with that site selection process in by deadline

1603

01:34:14,590 --> 01:34:17,050

one. Is that possible? Thank you.

1604

01:34:26,170 --> 01:34:29,750

So, before we move on to the next question,

1605

01:34:30,410 --> 01:34:34,090

can I ask if anybody in the room has anything to add or ask on this

1606

01:34:34,690 --> 01:34:35,230

discussion?

1607

01:34:37,970 --> 01:34:38,950

And anyone online?

1608

01:34:41,310 --> 01:34:41,790

No?

1609

01:34:43,590 --> 01:34:49,810

So,

1610

01:34:50,350 --> 01:34:54,330

I'm conscious of time and having a break, so I'll just move

1611

01:34:54,370 --> 01:34:56,610

on quick to my next set of questions.

1612

01:34:57,270 --> 01:35:00,960

So you discussed limits of deviation in your opening,

1613

01:35:02,550 --> 01:35:05,490

and the purpose of those limits of deviation.

1614

01:35:06,630 --> 01:35:10,310

One example is that the towers could be up to 66 meters in height,
for

1615

01:35:10,350 --> 01:35:10,850

example.

1616

01:35:11,790 --> 01:35:14,970

Could you describe a scenario when that would be the case?

1617

01:35:15,070 --> 01:35:17,560

Why they would then be so tall?

1618

01:35:19,270 --> 01:35:21,970

Taylor Powell for the applicant. I might actually ask

1619

01:35:22,870 --> 01:35:24,690
our consultant, Tom Fowler, who

1620

01:35:26,130 --> 01:35:28,150
can speak to the overhead line

1621

01:35:29,590 --> 01:35:32,090
design to answer that question. Thank you.

1622

01:35:34,890 --> 01:35:38,590
Tom Fowler on behalf of the applicant. Can you hear me? Yeah.

1623

01:35:39,690 --> 01:35:43,590
So the overhead line is designed based on statutory

1624

01:35:43,610 --> 01:35:47,090
ground clearances. So depending on the final

1625

01:35:47,130 --> 01:35:49,770
design and the limits of deviation that are afforded within the

1626

01:35:51,430 --> 01:35:55,370
DC0, it allows us to overcome any ground clearance

1627

01:35:55,390 --> 01:35:59,350
infringements that may arise, so overselling of DNO assets

1628

01:35:59,430 --> 01:36:00,130
or roads,

1629

01:36:01,450 --> 01:36:04,490
span lengths, et cetera. So as pylons move, the span lengths get

1630

01:36:04,550 --> 01:36:08,450
longer. The sag of the conductor can be greater, therefore the
clearance to the

1631

01:36:08,470 --> 01:36:12,350
ground needs to be met. So essentially, the heights of the

1632

01:36:12,390 --> 01:36:16,250

pylons have a plus 7.4 meter vertical limits of deviation

1633

01:36:16,670 --> 01:36:19,990

applied to them, which basically is two panel extensions for the

1634

01:36:20,050 --> 01:36:23,710

chosen pylon design, and that allows us to overcome

1635

01:36:23,910 --> 01:36:27,019

ground constraints, et cetera. So the maximum parameter is

1636

01:36:27,050 --> 01:36:30,930

essentially the heights of the design that we've built in for the DCO

1637

01:36:30,970 --> 01:36:34,760

as we see it on the screen, and then should the LOD be triggered,

1638

01:36:35,450 --> 01:36:39,150

that plus 7.4 in vertical LOD allows us to overcome ground

1639

01:36:39,230 --> 01:36:42,850

clearances. So if you add the upper pylon height that we've got at the moment, plus

1640

01:36:42,870 --> 01:36:45,990

the 7.4, you get the 66 meters. So that's the purpose of

1641

01:36:47,170 --> 01:36:47,790

that upper limit.

1642

01:36:49,890 --> 01:36:50,400

So sorry,

1643

01:36:51,690 --> 01:36:55,290

just so that I understand then. You said about span lengths being longer.

1644

01:36:55,790 --> 01:36:58,990

Does that mean if they're longer, the pylons have to be

1645

01:36:59,000 --> 01:37:00,990
taller to get the clearance?

1646

01:37:01,930 --> 01:37:04,070
It depends on what's below the span.

1647

01:37:04,390 --> 01:37:06,150
So it depends on the clearance requirements.

1648

01:37:06,230 --> 01:37:10,170
So there's different clearances to ground, to roads, to electrical
assets, et

1649

01:37:10,190 --> 01:37:14,060
cetera. So as the pylons get more spaced apart, the sag of the

1650

01:37:14,110 --> 01:37:17,430
conductor can increase, therefore you do need to raise the heights
in

1651

01:37:17,470 --> 01:37:20,130
certain circumstances to overcome that ground clearance.

1652

01:37:20,170 --> 01:37:22,550
So that's the reason for that vertical LOD.

1653

01:37:22,910 --> 01:37:26,710
It comes hand-in-hand with the longitudinal LOD and any lateral

1654

01:37:26,810 --> 01:37:28,790
LOD, as shown on the works plans.

1655

01:37:29,850 --> 01:37:32,549
So that connects in with my next question.

1656

01:37:33,070 --> 01:37:36,810
You will have seen from comments made, there were concerns raised by
the

1657

01:37:36,830 --> 01:37:40,490

Internal Drainage Board about clearance heights, oversail heights, and

1658

01:37:40,550 --> 01:37:43,850

also by farmers using the land. So

1659

01:37:44,790 --> 01:37:48,080

in those particular circumstances then, would the pylons be taller?

1660

01:37:49,650 --> 01:37:53,040

So we've designed the overhead line to meet statutory ground clearance as

1661

01:37:53,070 --> 01:37:56,990

per the industry guidance and specifications that are available.

1662

01:37:57,030 --> 01:38:01,010

So that is taking into consideration electrical clearances to ground and EMF.

1663

01:38:01,630 --> 01:38:05,550

So the ground clearance that is designed based on the specification is 8.1 meters.

1664

01:38:05,990 --> 01:38:08,310

We've actually designed in 8.5, which gives a slight

1665

01:38:09,150 --> 01:38:12,770

area of flexibility to overcome any constraints, and also when we

1666

01:38:12,850 --> 01:38:16,470

obtain more detailed LIDAR information during the detailed design phase, it gives

1667

01:38:16,510 --> 01:38:20,500

that little area of flexibility, because DSM and DTM data, which was used

1668

01:38:20,550 --> 01:38:24,240

to design the overhead line, has that discrepancy in mapping,

1669

01:38:24,290 --> 01:38:28,170

essentially. So we've actually designed more than the statutory ground clearance,

1670

01:38:28,690 --> 01:38:32,430

and that takes into consideration GS6, which is health and safety

1671

01:38:32,810 --> 01:38:36,000

below the overhead line and all of the industry standards and best practices.

1672

01:38:36,450 --> 01:38:39,240

And that's in line with all overhead lines, essentially, across the UK.

1673

01:38:41,410 --> 01:38:44,770

Taylor Powell for the applicant. I would note just further to what Mr.

1674

01:38:44,950 --> 01:38:45,890

Fowler has said, that

1675

01:38:46,710 --> 01:38:50,550

as he said, that's in line with guidance, so aligns with what

1676

01:38:50,610 --> 01:38:54,560

other existing overhead line pylons are designed

1677

01:38:54,610 --> 01:38:56,630

to, and which farmers routinely

1678

01:38:57,530 --> 01:38:59,070

can operate safely beneath.

1679

01:38:59,930 --> 01:39:03,910

I would also note that we are in direct discussions with the IDBs in respect

1680

01:39:03,950 --> 01:39:07,750

of their comments, just to give them assurances that they'll still be

1681

01:39:07,790 --> 01:39:11,590

able to operate safely beneath the overhead pylons, and we expect to

1682

01:39:11,650 --> 01:39:14,750

update on those discussions in Statements of Common Ground.

1683

01:39:19,294 --> 01:39:22,654

So would there be a situation where you could do the opposite and actually make the

1684

01:39:22,694 --> 01:39:23,254

pylons

1685

01:39:24,134 --> 01:39:24,514

shorter?

1686

01:39:25,894 --> 01:39:29,794

Yes, it's a good question. So we've got no limit on how

1687

01:39:29,814 --> 01:39:33,214

small the pylons can be, as long as they meet statutory ground clearance.

1688

01:39:33,654 --> 01:39:37,514

So it will be subject to the detailed design phase, essentially

1689

01:39:37,634 --> 01:39:41,554

to dictate those heights. But we've designed them in line with the guidance.

1690

01:39:42,094 --> 01:39:44,934

So if during the detailed design phase that can be achieved, then there's no reason

1691

01:39:45,014 --> 01:39:48,034

why it can't be, but at the moment we've designed it to meet the clearances that we

1692

01:39:48,074 --> 01:39:50,074

need for the project at this stage.

1693

01:39:53,714 --> 01:39:56,314

So I'm sorry, I just really need to make sure I understand this.

1694

01:39:56,814 --> 01:40:00,414

So it's just purely based on the lowest conductor

1695

01:40:00,474 --> 01:40:02,054

height from the ground?

1696

01:40:03,314 --> 01:40:07,254

To whatever is below the span. So that could be roads, it could be existing

1697

01:40:07,394 --> 01:40:10,994

distribution network assets. So whatever is within that span

1698

01:40:11,434 --> 01:40:13,894

dictates the clearance, which dictates the heights.

1699

01:40:14,234 --> 01:40:18,054

So it isn't a standard clearance and height across the whole area.

1700

01:40:18,114 --> 01:40:22,064

It's basically statutory minimum to ground, and then

1701

01:40:22,094 --> 01:40:25,354

whatever's within each individual span. So it's bespoke basically.

1702

01:40:25,914 --> 01:40:27,074

But we don't breach that minimum.

1703

01:40:27,774 --> 01:40:29,474

Yeah. Thank you very much. Thank you.

1704

01:40:30,754 --> 01:40:33,454

I see that Mr. Basford has his hand up.

1705

01:40:34,334 --> 01:40:35,934

I'd like to bring him in at this point.

1706

01:40:39,514 --> 01:40:40,414

Thank you, Madam.

1707

01:40:42,134 --> 01:40:45,574

The question of deviation and

1708

01:40:45,854 --> 01:40:49,834

pylon height is sensitive from the question

1709

01:40:49,874 --> 01:40:53,074

of proximity to National Grid's

1710

01:40:53,234 --> 01:40:54,274

infrastructure.

1711

01:40:55,534 --> 01:40:59,414

Where pylons are close together, it isn't just a

1712

01:40:59,494 --> 01:41:03,154

question about clearance from the ground, but also clearance from each

1713

01:41:03,254 --> 01:41:06,314

other. As I understand it,

1714

01:41:07,154 --> 01:41:10,894

when design was ongoing, and this is leaving aside the question I've

1715

01:41:10,934 --> 01:41:13,934

already raised about whether there is any

1716

01:41:14,454 --> 01:41:17,254

certainty as to a location or any

1717

01:41:18,094 --> 01:41:19,914

certainty afforded by the Gate One offer,

1718

01:41:21,394 --> 01:41:24,934

the correct clearance should

1719

01:41:25,074 --> 01:41:27,054

be, I understand,

1720

01:41:29,374 --> 01:41:29,673

much

1721

01:41:30,614 --> 01:41:33,993

substantially greater than is currently allowed for in the design.

1722

01:41:35,894 --> 01:41:39,354

The design is based upon a 55.5 meter tower

1723

01:41:39,414 --> 01:41:43,014

height, but we're now talking

1724

01:41:43,134 --> 01:41:44,134

about a

1725

01:41:45,174 --> 01:41:47,274

potential for there to be higher pylons.

1726

01:41:48,194 --> 01:41:49,134

What happens is

1727

01:41:50,014 --> 01:41:53,834

if you move pylons apart or make them higher, then the sag,

1728

01:41:54,914 --> 01:41:56,754

as Mr. Fowler described, is greater.

1729

01:41:57,754 --> 01:41:59,794

As a consequence, in wind,

1730

01:42:00,674 --> 01:42:04,314

there is a greater swing, and so lines come

1731

01:42:04,414 --> 01:42:07,674

closer together, and that has to be accounted for.

1732

01:42:07,754 --> 01:42:11,514

So the higher the pylons are, the worse the problem for

1733

01:42:11,554 --> 01:42:15,474

proximity and the harder it is to

1734

01:42:15,534 --> 01:42:18,854

comply with the technical specifications

1735

01:42:18,994 --> 01:42:21,864

which govern proximity between power lines.

1736

01:42:22,534 --> 01:42:26,344

So it is not merely a question of ground clearance, but

1737

01:42:26,434 --> 01:42:30,134

also a proximity to other infrastructure that has to be taken into

1738

01:42:30,174 --> 01:42:33,494

account here. I understand that the ideal

1739

01:42:33,854 --> 01:42:37,394

standoff for a 55.5 meter tower

1740

01:42:37,854 --> 01:42:41,374

is 92.25

1741

01:42:41,434 --> 01:42:42,014

meters,

1742

01:42:42,954 --> 01:42:46,814

but the anticipated separation is only 75 meters,

1743

01:42:46,914 --> 01:42:50,474

so substantially lower than it ought to be,

1744

01:42:50,694 --> 01:42:53,654

and that would be exacerbated by higher pylons.

1745

01:42:55,434 --> 01:42:58,554

I think we probably need to set that out in a little more detail.

1746

01:42:58,614 --> 01:43:01,514

It is covered in the relevant representation, but

1747

01:43:03,914 --> 01:43:06,314
height of pylon is important.

1748

01:43:08,834 --> 01:43:09,434
Yes, thank you.

1749

01:43:09,494 --> 01:43:13,394
I should also say if you would like further technical details

1750

01:43:13,454 --> 01:43:17,434
on that, then Mr. Watkins, who is accompanying me, will be able to explain

1751

01:43:17,494 --> 01:43:17,674
that

1752

01:43:18,834 --> 01:43:20,284
with greater eloquence than I have done.

1753

01:43:22,394 --> 01:43:22,974
Thank you.

1754

01:43:25,174 --> 01:43:28,144
I think having more information in writing would be incredibly helpful, in

1755

01:43:28,174 --> 01:43:30,094
particular in relation to your relevant rep.

1756

01:43:30,264 --> 01:43:33,814
And I note the distance between the standoff

1757

01:43:33,854 --> 01:43:37,194
distances you've just referred to, and there was a reference in the

1758

01:43:37,254 --> 01:43:39,914
representation to this being an issue.

1759

01:43:40,454 --> 01:43:44,194
It would be useful to have in writing where along the

1760
01:43:44,254 --> 01:43:45,814
route this is the issue

1761
01:43:49,034 --> 01:43:50,914
from NGET's perspective.

1762
01:43:52,034 --> 01:43:55,234
Yes. We'll be happy to provide that, Madam,

1763
01:43:55,534 --> 01:43:59,134
and to explain this. It is governed by

1764
01:43:59,194 --> 01:44:01,714
technical standard. National Grid is

1765
01:44:02,634 --> 01:44:05,584
obviously a licensed transmission system owner,

1766
01:44:06,314 --> 01:44:09,774
and accordingly, it's

1767
01:44:09,814 --> 01:44:13,734
obliged to comply with that. An important point here is that

1768
01:44:13,774 --> 01:44:17,294
the applicant is not such an owner or

1769
01:44:17,394 --> 01:44:21,134
operator. It doesn't have the same duties placed upon it or its

1770
01:44:21,154 --> 01:44:24,994
successors, so getting this right is absolutely critical.

1771
01:44:28,454 --> 01:44:29,674
Thank you very much.

1772
01:44:30,634 --> 01:44:34,554
I will go back to the applicant to respond, and then I think we

1773
01:44:34,594 --> 01:44:38,514

will move to adjourn. Yeah. Okay.

1774

01:44:40,174 --> 01:44:43,954

Thank you. Taylor Power for the applicant. Rather than passing to Mr.

1775

01:44:44,214 --> 01:44:47,894

Fowler in terms of addressing those specific details,

1776

01:44:48,414 --> 01:44:52,314

I do just want to note that when it comes to the design and the approach

1777

01:44:52,324 --> 01:44:55,884

the applicant has taken in terms of standoff between

1778

01:44:55,934 --> 01:44:59,884

its assets and National Grid assets, this was the focus of

1779

01:44:59,884 --> 01:45:03,304

design workshops in late 2025, and it's on that

1780

01:45:03,334 --> 01:45:06,314

basis that the design was progressed.

1781

01:45:06,974 --> 01:45:10,474

The details of those workshops are subject to confidentiality agreements

1782

01:45:10,514 --> 01:45:14,044

between the applicant and National Grid, which is why the applicant hasn't

1783

01:45:14,074 --> 01:45:17,294

provided further detail of those

1784

01:45:17,334 --> 01:45:19,694

workshops within its application.

1785

01:45:20,354 --> 01:45:24,214

And then National Grid hasn't engaged with the applicant, despite requests

1786

01:45:24,234 --> 01:45:27,334

from the applicant on those technical matters since late

1787

01:45:27,474 --> 01:45:31,210

2025, just- Like I said, despite the applicant requesting that.

1788

01:45:32,250 --> 01:45:36,150

So while I take Mr. Basford's position that it's

1789

01:45:36,210 --> 01:45:39,870

National Grid's current position that it's not engaging on technical matters

1790

01:45:40,930 --> 01:45:44,630

for applicants with Gate 1 offers, it does place the applicant in quite a

1791

01:45:44,670 --> 01:45:48,490

difficult position where we're unable to share publicly technical

1792

01:45:48,530 --> 01:45:51,270

information that have led to its design so far,

1793

01:45:52,150 --> 01:45:55,750

and we're also not able to engage with National Grid on

1794

01:45:55,830 --> 01:45:59,310

resolving its technical concerns, and in fact, haven't been given any of the

1795

01:45:59,350 --> 01:46:03,070

technical details to which Mr. Basford refers in terms of their further

1796

01:46:03,110 --> 01:46:05,250

work since those design workshops.

1797

01:46:05,310 --> 01:46:08,939

So the applicant would very much like to work with National Grid on those matters,

1798

01:46:09,030 --> 01:46:12,950

but can't do so further without the direct engagement of

1799

01:46:12,990 --> 01:46:14,070

National Grid.

1800

01:46:15,050 --> 01:46:18,190

So I suppose I just want to provide that context as to why we haven't been able to

1801

01:46:18,230 --> 01:46:20,190

resolve those issues for you today.

1802

01:46:21,830 --> 01:46:25,510

Thank you. I note your hand is up, Mr.

1803

01:46:25,730 --> 01:46:28,850

Basford, but I'm thinking that this might have to be something that's taken away

1804

01:46:28,860 --> 01:46:32,850

and discussed between yourselves and either within the statement of common ground

1805

01:46:32,890 --> 01:46:36,330

or in writing, and then to submit that to us

1806

01:46:37,410 --> 01:46:40,230

by deadline one, I think, if possible.

1807

01:46:41,430 --> 01:46:44,550

I think we were just trying to understand where the issue was in

1808

01:46:45,250 --> 01:46:46,370

particular along the route,

1809

01:46:47,490 --> 01:46:49,410

if that's amenable to yourself,

1810

01:46:50,810 --> 01:46:51,000

and Mr.-

