



Meridian Solar Farm

EN010169

Volume 8: Post-Submission
Application Documents

8.27 Written Summary of Oral
Submissions at OFH1

APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at OFH1	4
2.1. Overview	4
2.2. Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land	4
2.3. Engagement with Landowners	5
3. Summary of Key Themes Raised by IPs at OFH1	6

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. The Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) for the Scheme was held at 14:30 on Tuesday 8 September 2026 as a blended event at Allia Future Business Centre Peterborough, Peterborough Conference Room, Peterborough United Football Club, London Road, Peterborough, PE2 8AN and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams. The hearing provided an opportunity for registered Interested Parties (IPs) and other local people to make oral representations about the application for the Scheme. Each IP making an oral submission was requested to provide a written summary note to the Examining Authority (ExA) for Deadline 1.
- 1.1.2. Oral submissions were made by various IPs covering a range of topics. The running order included at Annex A of **Agenda for Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1)** [EV2-001] for OFH1 sets out those who had notified the Examining Authority of an intention to speak, although the Applicant notes that there were some alterations on the day of OFH1. A full recording and transcript for OFH1 can be found at [EV2-002 and EV2-003] in the Examination Library.
- 1.1.3. Taylor Power, Managing Senior Associate at Pinsent Masons LLP, appearing on behalf of the Applicant, provided a response to the matters raised at OFH1 and it is her oral submission that is summarised in this document in Section 2.
- 1.1.4. Further key themes raised by multiple IPs, as set out briefly at Section 3, are not the focus of this submission. Those matters are captured within either the Applicant's **Relevant Representations Report** (Doc Ref. 8.5) or are intended to be captured in future Issue Specific Hearings or Compulsory Acquisition Hearings, to be set down by the Examining Authority for later in the Examination.

2. Written Summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at OFH1

2.1. Overview

- 2.1.1. Ms Power, on behalf of the Applicant, thanked those who made oral submissions. Ms Power then stated that many of the issues raised have been raised already in Relevant Representations to which the Applicant is providing a comprehensive response at Deadline 1. Ms Power also reassured participants that many of the topics raised by the Interested Parties would be explored in more detail at the Issue Specific Hearings.

Post-hearing submission: the Applicant has submitted the **Relevant Representations Report** (Doc Ref 8.5) to respond to the Relevant Representations it received.

- 2.1.2. Ms Power acknowledged that given the large-scale nature of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), some adverse effects will be unavoidable, despite the Applicant's best efforts to avoid, minimise or mitigate them. These remaining effects must be weighed by the decision maker against the urgent need for renewable generation and its benefits for energy security and climate change, along with the other significant benefits the Scheme will deliver, including in respect of construction employment, habitat creation and enhancement to achieve biodiversity net gain, and benefits to existing farms through the diversifying of farm activities and the recovery of soil resources.
- 2.1.3. Ms Power addressed the following key thematic points raised by IPs at OFH1.

2.2. Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land

- 2.2.1. In response to concerns raised by Sir John Hayes, Ms Jennifer Pennington, Ms Jane Thompson and Councillor Sheard regarding the siting of the Scheme on agricultural land Ms Power explained that in line with planning policy, the Applicant has ensured the siting and design of the Scheme infrastructure has avoided BMV land wherever practicable while taking into account other planning and environmental considerations. Further, Ms. Power emphasised that the impacts on the large majority of Scheme would be temporary, either as short-term temporary effects in terms of the Grid Connection Route where farming would be able to continue once the overhead line is constructed, or long-term temporary, whereby the land within the Solar Development Area would be

predominantly returned to landowners following the decommissioning of the Scheme.

- 2.2.2. In response to concerns raised in respect of the cumulative impact of the Scheme with other solar schemes coming forward in the region on the availability of BMV land, Ms Power acknowledged that a number of projects had been brought forward in the region. However, Ms Power referred to the analysis set out in **ES Chapter 5: Agriculture and Soils** (Doc Ref. 6.1 Rev 1) that cumulatively, solar projects in Lincolnshire will account for approximately 3% of all agricultural land in Lincolnshire. Cumulatively, an estimated 1.1% of BMV land would be temporarily used and 0.02% of BMV land would be permanently used across all of the identified solar projects in Lincolnshire. Ms Power suggested that these statistics supported the position that, while it might appear that solar schemes are having a large impact on the proportion of agricultural and BMV land available in Lincolnshire, that the cumulative impact is in fact relatively small.

Traffic

- 2.2.3. Noting the traffic concerns raised by Sir Hayes, Ms Pennington, Ms Thompson and Councillor Sheard, especially in respect of the state of existing local roads and whether they are appropriate for the nature of the Scheme, Ms Power responded that the effects of traffic had been carefully assessed by the Applicant in **ES Chapter 15: Traffic and Access** [APP-066].
- 2.2.4. The Applicant has committed to undertake precondition surveys before construction commencing and to undertake certain identified street works to ensure that roads are up to standard for the types of vehicles and access required which are secured in **Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan – Part 1** [APP-278]. Ms Power also confirmed that any damage to roads identified to be as a result of the Scheme would be remediated at the end of construction.

2.3. Engagement with Landowners

- 2.3.1. In response to concerns raised by Ms Pennington, regarding the progress of engagement by the Applicant with landowners, Ms Power confirmed that the Applicant was happy to speak with her directly to address any concerns about ongoing engagement, and would subsequently follow up with its land negotiation team.
- 2.3.2. Ms Power noted matters of design and concern about the effects of the Scheme are best addressed through the planning process, including hearings like this and the written submissions to be made through Examination, and encouraged landowners like Ms Pennington to use this forum for such matters.

3. Summary of Key Themes Raised by IPs at OFH1

3.1.1. Finally, Ms Power acknowledged that there were other issues raised at OFH1 which could not be responded to in full due to the time available. These other concerns related to the following topics:

- planning policy;
- biodiversity and ecology;
- landscape and visual;
- interrelationship between the Scheme and other projects;
- socio-economics;
- grid connection;
- climate change; and
- safety concerns related to the battery energy storage system.

3.1.2. Ms Power explained that these concerns would be addressed by the Applicant's specialists at the subsequent hearings scheduled for the Scheme's Examination and through the Applicant's further written submissions, including the Applicant's **Relevant Representations Report** (Doc Ref. 8.5).

3.1.3. The OFH1 closed at 15:08.

