



Planning Inspectorate

Preliminary meeting note

Application: Green Hill Solar

Reference: EN010170

Time and date: 10:00, 21 October 2025

Venue: Mercure Hotel, Northampton, Silver St, Northampton, NN1 2TA and virtually via Microsoft Teams

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the preliminary meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Mark Harrison welcomed those present and introduced himself as the lead member of the panel of the Examining Authority (ExA) and Catherine Beeby and Rebecca Norman as panel members to examine the Green Hill Solar Farm application.

Mr Harrison explained the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 11 August 2025.

Mr Harrison explained that the ExA would be examining the application made by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited ('the applicant') before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will decide whether an order granting development consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

Mr Harrison explained the purpose of the preliminary meeting (PM) and noted that the Examination will commence after the PM closes.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

2. Audio recording

The video recording of this PM is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#)

3. General Data Protection Regulation

The ExA explained the Planning Inspectorate's duties under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Further info relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's ['Privacy Note'](#).

4. Examination process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). Further information can be found:

- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event'](#)
- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Registering to speak at, or attend, an event'](#)

5. Initial assessment of principal issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the initial assessment of principal issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in annex B of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 23 September 2025 and asked for any observations on them.

██████████, representing Grendon Parish Council, raised concerns regarding the absence of a cumulative impact assessment. She noted that multiple large-scale solar and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) developments are being proposed in the vicinity and referenced other Development Consent Order (DCO) applications where cumulative impacts have been identified as principal issues. She requested that cumulative impacts be included in the list of principal issues for this examination.

The Examining Authority (ExA) acknowledged the representation and confirmed that all relevant matters, including those arising during construction, operation, and decommissioning phases and their cumulative effects, will be considered during the examination.

██████████, on behalf of Bozeat Parish Council, highlighted the need for special consideration regarding the duration of the permissions being sought. The ExA thanked ██████████ for his contribution and assured him that the matter will be taken forward for consideration.

██████████, speaking on behalf of the Applicant's team, responded that the issue concerning the duration of permission and decommissioning may fall within the scope of project design, as it relates to the defined parameters of the proposed development. She also reiterated the importance of assessing cumulative impacts.

6. Examination Timetable

The ExA welcomed comments from the parties in attendance in relation to the draft examination timetable contained in annex C of [Rule 6 letter](#)

The ExA discussed timetabling matters with the applicant, Milton Keynes City Council, Stop Green Hill Solar, North Northamptonshire Council, and Grendon Parish Council, including submissions made at procedural deadline A.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the examination timetable in the forthcoming Rule 8 letter, which will be published as soon as possible after the PM.

7. Hearings and site inspections

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue specific hearings
- Compulsory acquisition hearings
- Open floor hearings
- Accompanied site inspections
- Unaccompanied site inspections

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events. These were duly noted and considered by the ExA.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found:

- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event'](#)
- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Registering to speak at, or attend, an event'](#)

8. Procedural decisions

The ExA clarified the procedural decisions made under section 89(3) of the PA2008 and asked for any observations.

Procedural decisions can be found in [annex F](#) of the Rule 6 letter.

██████████, representing the applicant, informed the ExA that draft Statements of Common Ground are currently being prepared. She clarified that, in cases involving statutory undertakers such as National Grid and Anglian Water, where Protective Provisions are agreed and in an acceptable form, a separate Statement of Common Ground may not be necessary. ██████████ confirmed that this approach will be kept under review throughout the examination process.

The ExA noted the potential need to undertake a site inspection of the proposed Grendon BESS sites. The ExA invited the applicant to provide comments on whether such an inspection should be conducted on an accompanied basis or whether it could be carried out unaccompanied.

██████████ confirmed that arrangements can be made with the landowner to enable access to the site of the proposed Grendon BESS. She noted that, in previous projects, unaccompanied site inspections have been undertaken with the landowner's permission and indicated that the applicant would be happy to facilitate a similar approach.

In response to the request for a draft site inspection itinerary, ██████████ sought clarification that this would apply only to locations situated on private land where landowner permission would be required. She observed that the majority of locations suggested by interested parties are publicly accessible and stated that the applicant does not propose to include these in the draft itinerary, on the basis that the ExA may visit such locations as part

of an unaccompanied site inspection.

The ExA confirmed that it would be content for the draft site inspection itinerary to address only those locations where access to private land would be required.

██████████, representing the Wellingborough Walks Action Group, requested that an accompanied site inspection be undertaken to land adjacent to the proposed Grendon BESS site. She noted that the field in question is privately owned and suggested that, given the proximity of both sites, the proposed BESS site could also potentially be an accompanied inspection.

The ExA thanked ██████████ for her representation and confirmed that the request would be taken into account.

██████████, representing Stop Green Hill Solar, queried whether other interested parties would be permitted to attend the accompanied site inspection if it is arranged by the applicant.

The ExA confirmed that interested parties may attend accompanied site inspections. The ExA reiterated that such inspections are solely for the purpose of observing the physical characteristics of the land and that no discussions regarding the merits of the application will take place during these visits.

Any other matters

The ExA noted that the Stop Green Hill Solar Action Group had raised concerns regarding the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (document reference APP-045), which comprises approximately 986 pages but does not appear to include an index. The ExA confirmed that this matter would be considered further and may be addressed in the written questions or during the Issue Specific Hearing scheduled for the following day.

██████████, a member of Stop Green Hill Solar, referred to the applicant's previous request to fast-track the application and asked whether this had been actioned.

The applicant confirmed that the application is not being progressed under a fast-track process.

Councillor ██████████, representing North Northamptonshire Council, queried whether additional site locations suggested by interested parties between now and the site inspection could be passed to the applicant for consideration.

The ExA confirmed that such suggestions may be submitted. The ExA explained that the site inspection itinerary would not be finalised until at least five working days prior to the accompanied site inspections, and that multiple submission deadlines exist before then during which such requests may be raised.

Close

The ExA briefly set out the next stages of the process and then closed the PM at 11:34am.