

The Droves Solar Farm – EN0110013

Droves Solar Farm Limited

Section 51 Advice Log

Version: 02 04 2025

There is a statutory duty under [section 51 \(s51\) of the Planning Act 2008](#) for the Planning Inspectorate to record the advice that it gives in relation to an application or potential application, and to make this publicly available.

This document comprises a record of the advice that has been provided by the Inspectorate to the applicant (The Droves Solar Farm) and their consultants during the pre-application stage. It will be updated by the Inspectorate after every interaction with the applicant during which s51 has been provided. The applicant will always be given the opportunity to comment on the Inspectorate's draft record of advice before it is published.

The applicant will use this Advice Log as the basis for demonstrating regard to section 51 advice within the application.

Project name s51 Advice Log - Index	
Date of meeting	Meeting overview
09 October 2024	Inception Meeting
02 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme Overview • Project and Program Update • Scoping and PIER • Environmental Update • Good Design and Design Principles • Update on Engagement with Neighbouring DCO Projects

Project name -s51 Advice Library	
Topic	Meeting date: 02 April 2025
Scheme Overview	<p>The Applicant (The Drovers Solar Farm) advised the Inspectorate it had made changes to the Site boundary since the Scoping Opinion had been issued on 18 December 2024. Following non-statutory consultation, the size of the Site boundary to the north and west has been reduced and the potential locations of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and the customer substation have been narrowed to two options which are part of the Statutory Consultation design. The Applicant stated there are ongoing discussions with National Grid as to the location of the new National Grid substation.</p> <p>The Inspectorate asked whether consent for the new National Grid substation would fall under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 route (TCPA) or whether it would form part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. The Applicant confirmed the new grid substation would form part of the DCO.</p>
draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)	<p>The Applicant advised that the draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was published on 30 March 2025. The Inspectorate queried what the level of feedback was from the Local Authorities (LAs) regarding the draft SoCC. The Applicant verified the main comment had been about extending the consultation period from six weeks to seven as it clashed with a bank holiday and school holiday.</p> <p>As a result of the feedback from LAs, the Applicant narrowed down the areas of consultation to allow for more targeted consultation to reach local communities and seldom heard groups.</p> <p>The Applicant also advised it has had regular conversations with host authorities and statutory bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency to ensure full engagement.</p>
Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM)	<p>The Inspectorate advised that the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM) statement would need to be submitted 3 months before submitting the final application, in line with government guidance. As the Applicant's chosen tier of 'basic' level does not include draft document review, it is strongly advised that the AoCM is submitted within this time scale. Further information on this can be found on the National Infrastructure website (paragraph 025).</p>

Environmental Update	<p>The Applicant provided some photographs to illustrate the Site and how the substation may impact visually on the surrounding areas. One photograph illustrated the view from the A1065 towards a field where the substation and BESS may be located.</p> <p>The Inspectorate asked whether there had been any glint and glare issues arising from its initial assessments (such as any potential effects on nearby road users and HGV vehicles) and if so, whether this had been considered as part of the development's design. The Applicant advised the Site was largely well screened by existing vegetation. The Applicant explained where further screening may be needed as part of the overall design. The Applicant was in the process of assessing any potential effects on the nearby airfield of RAF Marham, with regards to any safety issues that may arise and were in engagement with the service with regards to the proposed development and the mitigating measures that could be incorporated into the design.</p>
Good Design & Design Principles	<p>In response to the Applicant's overview of its design vision for the proposed development and how it has engaged with parties on the scheme, the Inspectorate asked whether the local community were challenging the need case for the solar scheme (in terms of contributing to the government's target of meeting net zero by 2050). The Applicant said that feedback in general had been positive about the purpose of the scheme, with comments or objections more focused on its design, site selection, environmental features and construction.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised the Applicant of the importance of explaining the design approach and design evolution in its Design Approach Document, and how the proposed development has significantly changed in response to, for example, overcoming any environmental or cultural heritage constraints or in response to consultation feedback.</p>
Cumulative effects	<p>The Applicant advised there had been regular meetings with other developers of major projects (such as the East Pye and High Grove solar projects) where information/data is being shared, including possible mitigation measures for addressing cumulative effects. For example, construction traffic routes are being considered to ensure minimal impact to the community. The Applicant has also held regular meetings with the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), who are facing some resource constraints from multiple projects being developed in the local area.</p> <p>The Inspectorate enquired as to whether there is a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) in place, as this would assist</p>

	<p>with the LPA's resourcing. The Applicant advised it is in dialogue with the LPA to have a PPA agreed before submitting its application. The Inspectorate directed the Applicant towards similar solar projects that had taken place in Lincolnshire and how the cumulative effects of these projects were addressed by the appointed Examining Authorities across the separate examinations. It was advised that the Applicant may wish to review the Rule 6 letters and the Examining Authorities recommendation reports in relation to the approach taken in examining multiple NSIPs in the same district.</p> <p>More information on previous NSIP cases can be found on the National Infrastructure website.</p>
Future Meetings	<p>The Applicant was reminded by the Inspectorate that under the basic level of service this was its second meeting of the year (with a total of 3 meetings permitted as per the new pre-application guidance).</p> <p>It was also explained that draft documents were not reviewed under the basic tier service. The Inspectorate recommended the Applicant review feedback provided on other solar projects available on the National Infrastructure website.</p> <p>The Inspectorate requested agendas be provided a week in advance of any update meeting, especially where technical advice is being sought. The Inspectorate requested that the Applicant notify of any future meetings as early as possible so these can be resourced.</p>