

The Drovers Solar Farm

Application Cover Letter

Prepared by: DWD

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APFP Regulation Reg 5(2)(q)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009



Louise Harraway
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National Infrastructure Planning
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Bristol
BS1 6PN

19 November 2025

Dear Ms Louise Harraway,

Planning Act 2008 – Application for a Development Consent Order for The Drovers Solar Farm

Application Reference: EN0110013

Introduction

On behalf of The Drovers Solar Farm Limited ('the Applicant'), I am pleased to enclose an application for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') ('the Application') pursuant to section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 ('PA 2008') in relation to The Drovers Solar Farm ('the Scheme').

Subject of the DCO Application

The Applicant is seeking a DCO for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating station and Associated Development including a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), a Customer Substation and Grid Connection Infrastructure, including a new National Grid Substation.

The Application is required because the Scheme is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) pursuant to sections 14(1)(a) and 15(1) and (2) of the PA 2008, as an onshore generating station in England with a capacity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW). In accordance with section 103 of the PA 2008, the decision as to whether to grant the DCO will be made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero ('the Secretary').

The Scheme is located within the Order limits, also referred to as 'the Site'. The Order limits contain all elements of the Scheme comprising the Solar PV Site, the Customer Substation, the National Grid Substation, the BESS, Grid Connection Infrastructure, Mitigation and Enhancement Areas, and the Highway Works (shown in **ES Figure 3.1: Scheme Location [APP/6.3]** and described further in **ES Chapter 3: Order limits and Context [APP/6.1]**).

The total area extent of the Order limits is 838.77 hectares (ha) of land located within the administrative boundaries of Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council, who are the host authorities.

Application Free and Documentation Enclosed

A fee of £8,946.00 has been paid by the Applicant by BACS transfer to the account of the Planning Inspectorate on 13 November 2025. The Planning Inspectorate acknowledged that the payment was received on 13 November 2025.

The DCO Application is submitted via a SharePoint system, which has been set up for the file transfer of the DCO Application documents. This was agreed with the Planning Inspectorate in the pre-submission meeting on 2 October 2025.

In accordance with the Planning Inspectorate's Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on the Preparation and Submission of Application Documents, a GIS shapefile showing the Order limits for the Scheme and the draft Electronic Application Index were issued to the Planning Inspectorate via email on 5 November 2025 and 11 November 2025 respectively. The final version of the **Electronic Application Index [APP/1.4]** is submitted alongside the DCO Application.

A completed **Section 55 Checklist [APP/1.5]** is included within the DCO Application to assist with the Planning Inspectorate's compliance check of the DCO Application.

Application Formalities

This DCO Application is made in the form required by section 37(3)(b) of the PA 2008 and the application documents comply with the requirements in section 37 of the PA 2008 and those set out in:

- The Infrastructure Planning (Applications, Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 ('the APFP Regulations')
- The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations')
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Guidance 'Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects Guidance on the pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' (April 2024)
- [REDACTED] Planning Act 2008: Nationally significant infrastructure projects – guidance' (June 2013); and
- [REDACTED] Inspectorate's 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on the Preparation and Submission of Application Documents' (August 2024).

The Scheme is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and therefore the DCO Application is supported by an **Environmental Statement (ES) [APP/6.1 - 6.5]** in accordance with EIA regulations.

The DCO Application will be published (with any necessary redactions and minus any confidential documents) on the Planning Inspectorate's webpage from the point of acceptance. The confidential documents are to include:

- **6.4 ES Appendix 7.4 Confidential Annex [APP/6.4].**

Scheme Description

A non-technical description of the Scheme is included as a **Non-Technical Summary [APP/6.5]**. A more detailed technical description of the Scheme is included within **ES Chapter 5: The Scheme [APP/6.1]**.

Need for the Scheme

The Scheme provides up to 500MW of clean energy at a time when the need for renewable energy has never been clearer. The DCO Application is accompanied by a **Statement of Need [APP/5.4]** which provides further detail on the need for the Scheme in the context of rising energy bills, energy security concerns and the urgency of action necessary to achieve Net Zero by 2050. The **Statement of Need [APP/5.4]** concludes:

"The meaningful and timely contributions offered by the Scheme to UK decarbonisation and security of supply, while helping lower bills for consumers throughout its operational life, will be critical on the path to net zero beyond delivery of the government's mission to maintain a clean power system beyond 2030.

Without the Scheme, a significant and vital opportunity to develop a large-scale low carbon generation scheme will have been passed over, increasing materially the risk that future Carbon Budgets and the net zero 2050 target will not be achieved."

Consent Flexibility

As the technology associated with the Scheme is rapidly evolving, the **draft Development Consent Order (draft DCO) [APP/3.1]** and **Works Plan [APP/2.3]** propose a degree of flexibility to allow the latest technology to be used at the time of construction.

In terms of design, a number of the design features and aspects of the Scheme cannot be confirmed at this stage. The parameters within which the Scheme is proposed to be constructed and operated are provided in the **Design Principles, Parameters and Constraints [APP/5.8]** document.

Further to **ES Chapter 2: EIA Process and Methodology [APP/6.1]**, the 'Rochdale Envelope' approach has been applied within the Environmental Statement to ensure a robust assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Scheme, in accordance with the Planning Inspectorate's 'Advice Note Nine: Using the Rochdale Envelope'. Therefore, as is relevant for each technical discipline, the maximum (and where relevant, minimum) parameters for the elements where flexibility needs to be retained have been assessed using the Rochdale Envelope approach. The approach also recognises that the worst-case parameter for one technical assessment may differ from another, ensuring that worst case overall impacts are predicted. The design parameters are secured by the **draft DCO [APP/3.1]**.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The DCO Application includes a **Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment [APP/7.3]** which considers whether the Scheme is likely to have an effect on areas that have been internationally designated for nature conservation purposes and has been carried out having regard to Regulation 5(2)(g) of the APFP Regulations.

The **Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment [APP/7.3]** concludes that, following assessment:

“no potential likely significant effects have been identified on any such designations as a result of the Scheme, either alone or in combination with other identified plans or projects. Accordingly, no further assessment is required in relation to Regulation 63 of the Regulations.”

Compulsory Acquisition

The land over which the Applicant is seeking powers of compulsory acquisition of land, rights and interests and powers of temporary possession in the **draft DCO [APP/3.1]** is listed in the **Book of Reference [APP/4.3]**. The **Statement of Reasons [APP/4.1]** also provides details of powers sought and the **Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker [APP/4.4]** provides details of the negotiations with affected persons to date.

The **Book of Reference [APP/4.3]** has been submitted in compliance with Regulation 5(2)(d) of the APFP Regulations, and in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government guidance ‘Planning Act 2008: Guidance related to procedures for compulsory acquisition of land’ (September 2013).

Details of the adequacy of the funding for compensation are set out in the **Funding Statement [APP/4.2]**. The **Statement of Reasons [APP/4.1]** and **Funding Statement [APP/4.2]** have been submitted in compliance with Regulation 5(2)(h) of the APFP Regulations.

Other Consents and Licenses

A summary of other consents and licences likely to be required in addition to those being requested as part of the **draft DCO [APP/3.1]** is included in the **Consents and Agreements Position Statement [APP/7.5]**.

Pre-Application Consultation

Th [REDACTED] due regard to the pre-application consultation requirements of the PA 2008, the guidance on pre-application consultation issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and its pre-application discussions held with the Planning Inspectorate as required by section 50(3) of the PA 2008.

In accordance with section 37(3)(c) of the PA 2008, the DCO Application is accompanied by a **Consultation Report [APP/5.1]** and supporting **Consultation Report Appendices**

[APP/5.2], which provide details of compliance with Sections 42, 46, 47, 48 and 49 of the PA 2008, the APFP Regulations, the EIA Regulations, and the relevant guidance.

The **Consultation Report [APP/5.1]** sets out the responses to non-statutory, statutory and targeted consultations and sets out how the Applicant has had careful regard to the relevant responses received through the design iteration and evolution of the Scheme in accordance with section 49 of the PA 2008.

Artificial Intelligence

The Applicant confirms that Artificial Intelligence has not been used to create or alter the application documents, information or data submitted with the DCO Application.

Other Matters

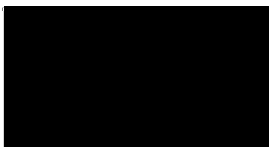
As required under Regulation 5(3) of the APFP Regulations, all plans, drawings or sections provided under Regulation 5(2) are no larger than A0 size, are drawn to an identified scale (not smaller than 1:2500) and, in the case of plans, show the direction of north. The exception to this is that some figures that accompany the **ES [APP/6.1 - 6.5]** vary in scale due to the large size of the Scheme. Context would be lost for the plans provided in the Environmental Statement if they were to conform to the scale requirements required under Regulation 5(2).

In accordance with Regulation 5(5) of the APFP Regulations, the Applicant retains all responses to the consultation carried out under Part 5 of the PA 2008 and can make the responses available to the Planning Inspectorate and/or the Secretary of State upon request.

The Applicant will keep all DCO Application documents under review and will endeavour to provide updates where it is considered necessary during the examination of the DCO Application. These updates will consider any questions and comments received from the Examining Authority and Interested Parties.

We look forward to hearing from you in relation to a formal acceptance of the DCO Application. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us using the details provided below.

Yours sincerely,



Harman Sond

Project Development Manager

On behalf of The Drovers Solar Farm Limited