



# Planning Inspectorate

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All interested parties, statutory parties and any other person invited to the preliminary meeting

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN0110013

Date: 8 April 2026

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Dear Sir/ Madam

**Planning Act 2008 – section 88 and 89 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rules 4, 6, 9 and 13**

**Application by the Drovers Solar Farm Limited for an order granting development consent for the Drovers Solar Farm**

**Appointment of the Examining Authority and invitation to the preliminary meeting and notification of hearings**

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an examination of the above application I am writing to introduce myself. My name is Anthony Johnson. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed under the [document tab](#) on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website.

I would like to thank those of you who submitted relevant representations. These representations have assisted me when considering how I will examine this application.

**Invitation to the preliminary meeting**

As a recipient of this letter you are invited to the preliminary meeting to discuss **the procedure** for the examination of the above application.

Date	Start time	Venue and joining details
6 May 2026	<b>Registration and seating available at venue from:</b> <b>09.15</b> <b>Virtual registration process from:</b> <b>09.30</b> <b>Preliminary meeting starts:</b> <b>10.00</b>	The Duke's Head Hotel Tuesday Market Place Kings Lynn PE30 1JS and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
<b>IMPORTANT:</b> The preliminary meeting should be completed before 1.00pm on 6 May 2026.		

**You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 22 April 2026 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).**

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting, then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **22 April 2026** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **22 April 2026**.

### **Purpose of the preliminary meeting**

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to enable views to be put to me about how the application should be examined. The ExA will therefore limit the scope of the preliminary meeting to consideration of **how the application will be examined**. See **annex B** to this letter and The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the](#)

[public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

The preliminary meeting is **not** an opportunity for you to give your views about what you like or don't like about the application. The merits or disadvantages of the application will only be considered once the examination starts, which is after the preliminary meeting has closed. All relevant and important matters will be taken into account when I make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will take the final decision in this case.

The agenda for the meeting is at **annex A** to this letter. This has been set following my initial assessment of principal issues arising from my reading of the application documents and the relevant representations received. The initial assessment of principal issues is set out in **annex D** to this letter.

### Written submissions about how the application should be examined

The Planning Act 2008 establishes a principally written process for the examination of applications for development consent orders and **representations made in writing carry equal weight to oral representations at all stages of the process.**

I am now requesting written submissions from recipients of this letter about how the application should be examined. I particularly wish to hear from you if either:

1. consider changes need to be made to the draft examination timetable set out at **annex E** to this letter
2. wish to comment about the arrangements for future examination hearings, including the use of virtual methods

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application is to be examined by **procedural deadline A** ( 22 April 2026) (see **annex E** to this letter).

I request that all submissions are made using the '[Have your say](#)' on the project webpage on or before **procedural deadline A**. **Annex J** to this letter provides further information about using the '[Have your say](#)' page. **Annex J** to this letter provides further information about using the '[Have your say](#)' page.

### Requests to participate at the preliminary meeting

Please note that **you are not required to attend, or make written submissions to, the preliminary meeting in order to participate in the examination.** If you are an interested party, you can make a written representation and comment on the written representations made by other interested parties during the examination. You will also be able to participate in any hearings that are arranged

If you wish to participate at the preliminary meeting, you are required to notify the ExA in writing on or before **22 April 2026** (see **procedural deadline A**).

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting **must include** the following information:

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- The agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A**.

**Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support or assistance to attend the preliminary meeting, either virtually or in person.**

### **Format of examination events – preliminary meeting and hearings**

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. See The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

Both blended (part in-person and part virtual) and fully virtual events form part of The Planning Inspectorate's operating model. I remain flexible and will confirm the format of any hearings to be held during the examination stage when I provide formal notification of each hearing in advance of it taking place.

I am providing formal notification that the **preliminary meeting will be a blended event and that the OFH and ISH referred to in annex G to this letter will also be blended events.**

### **After the preliminary meeting**

After the preliminary meeting I will issue a letter (known as the Rule 8 Letter) setting out the finalised examination timetable. A note of the meeting will also be published on the [project webpage](#).

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



## Notification of initial hearings

I have made a procedural decision to hold the following initial hearings:

- Open floor hearing (OFH1) on the afternoon of 6 May 2026 (Blended event)
- Issue specific hearing (ISH1) on 7 May 2026 (Blended event)

Important information about these hearings is contained in **annex G** to this letter, including what details need to be provided with a request to be heard at a hearing and the procedure that will be followed.

## Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

I have made some further procedural decisions which are set out in detail at **annex H** to this letter. They are summarised as follows:

- Procedural decision following issue of acceptance decision
- Statements of common ground
- Local impact reports
- Closing summary statement
- Request for suggested locations for an accompanied site inspection
- Acceptance of additional submissions into the examination
- Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects (NSIPs)

## Changes to land interests

When the applicant becomes aware that there has been a change in ownership, or a new interest, in relevant land the applicant is requested to make the relevant person aware that they can make a request to the ExA to become an interested party under section 102A of the PA2008. They should inform them that information about how to do this can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's advice for members of the public: [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process](#). The examination timetable includes various deadlines for the submission of an updated book of reference and schedule of changes to the book of reference, which should include confirmation that relevant persons have been informed of their rights under section 102A.

## Managing examination correspondence

Given the volume and frequency of letters the Planning Inspectorate needs to send to interested parties during an examination, we aim to communicate with people by email as electronic communication is more environmentally friendly and cost effective for the taxpayer.

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



If you have received a letter but are able to receive communications by email, please inform the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter as soon as possible.

As the examination process makes substantial use of electronic documents, it will be useful for you to become familiar with the [project webpage](#).

A '[Have your say](#)' page is available on the website which provides a portal through which parties should make written submissions at relevant deadlines during the examination. Further information about the '[Have your say](#)' page is provided at **annex J** to this letter.

You can also use the 'Get updates' button on the project webpage to register to receive automatic e-mail updates at key stages during the examination.

### **Your status in the examination**

You have received this letter because you are a person or organisation who is involved in the NSIP process. See The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: National Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process](#) for further details.

If, having read the advice, you are still unsure about how you are involved in the process please contact the Case Team using the details at the top of this letter.

### **Awards of costs**

All parties will normally be expected to meet their own costs. Costs can be awarded against a party who has acted unreasonably and has caused the party applying for the award of costs to incur unnecessary or wasted expense during the examination. You should be aware of the relevant costs guidance [Awards of costs: examinations of applications for development consent orders](#).

### **Management of information**

Information, including representations, submitted in respect of this examination (if accepted by the ExA) and a record of any advice which has been provided by the Planning Inspectorate is published on the [project webpage](#).

Please note that in the interest of facilitating an effective and fair examination, it is necessary to publish some personal information. To find out how we handle your personal information please view our [Privacy Notice](#).

I look forward to working with all parties in the examination of this application.

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



Yours faithfully

*Anthony Johnson*

**The Examining Authority**

**Annexes**

- A** Agenda for the preliminary meeting
- B** Introduction to the preliminary meeting
- C** Interrelationships with other NSIPs
- D** Initial assessment of principal issues
- E** Draft examination timetable
- F** The applicant's updates
- G** Notification of initial hearings
- H** Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
- I** Examination documents
- J** Information about the 'Have your say' page

This communication does not constitute legal advice.  
Please view our [Privacy Notice](#) before sending information to The Planning Inspectorate.

## Agenda for the preliminary meeting

**You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 22 April 2026 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).**

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **22 April 2026** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **22 April 2026**.

Please note that by attending the event either in person or online you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#). A limited number of seats will be available for observers who wish not to be filmed at the venue. Please contact the Case Team to notify them if you prefer not to be filmed at the event. A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

**Date:** 06 May 2026  
**Start time:** 10:00am  
**Blended event at Venue:** The Duke's Head Hotel  
Tuesday Market Place  
Kings Lynn  
PE30 1JS

**Virtual event by using Microsoft Teams.** Full instructions on how to join online or by phone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

**Attendees: Invited parties who have pre-registered**

<b>Agenda for the preliminary meeting</b>	
<b>9.15am</b>	In-person registration and seating available at venue for in person attendees
<b>9.30am</b>	<p><b>Virtual registration process</b></p> <p>Please arrive at 9.30am to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the virtual meeting by the Case Team, greeted and given further instructions.</p> <p>The registration process will commence at 9.30am. This will be hosted by the Case Team and cover the housekeeping arrangements for the preliminary meeting and allow for any questions to be asked about how to take part.</p>
<b>10.00am</b>	<p><b>Preliminary meeting</b></p> <p><b>Item 1</b></p> <p>The preliminary meeting will formally open at <b>10.00am</b>. The Examining Authority will join, welcome participants and lead introductions.</p>
<b>Item 2</b>	The Examining Authority's remarks about the examination process
<b>Item 3</b>	Initial assessment of principal issues – <b>annex D</b> to Rule 6 Letter
<b>Item 4</b>	<p>Draft examination timetable – <b>annex E</b> to Rule 6 Letter</p> <p>To include potential implications of local elections</p>
<b>Item 5</b>	Procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority – annex H to Rule 6 letter
<b>Item 6</b>	Any other matters
<b>Close of the preliminary meeting</b>	

If you are participating using Microsoft Teams please join the virtual lobby promptly using the instructions that will be sent to you. The event will start at **10.00am** irrespective of any late arrivals, for whom access may not be possible.

It may take some time to admit participants from the virtual lobby, your patience whilst you are waiting is appreciated.

The agenda for the preliminary meeting is subject to change at the discretion of the Examining Authority, although in making changes the Examining Authority will be mindful of the need to provide opportunities for fair involvement to all invited parties.

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting **must include** the following information and be made on the [event participation form](#):

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- The agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make

## **Introduction to the preliminary meeting**

The preliminary meeting (PM) will be a blended event with some participants attending in person and some taking part virtually using Microsoft Teams

The Examining Authority (ExA) is conscious of videoconferencing fatigue and will aim to keep the proceedings focussed and as efficient as possible. This annex provides advance access to information that would usually be included in the ExA's introductory remarks. Please read this carefully. The ExA will only present a summary of the key points set out here in order to ensure that the time available for participants to speak is maximised.

## **The Examining Authority and the Case Team**

The ExA will introduce themselves at the start of the PM.

The ExA will be supported by the Planning Inspectorate Case Team. During the registration process a member of the Case Team will welcome and admit participants from the virtual lobby, and will be available to answer questions by email before and after the PM. The contact email address is:

[thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

## **The purpose of the preliminary meeting**

The PM is being held to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application for a development consent order (DCO) for the Droves Solar Farm, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and which will generally be referred to in the PM and examination as 'the proposed development'. The application has been made by The Droves Solar Farm Limited, which will be referred to as 'the applicant'.

You will find information about the application and, in due course, documents produced for the examination on the project webpage of the Find National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)). The project webpage has links to the examination timetable, relevant representations and examination documents and examination procedure.

You are encouraged to look at the [project webpage](#) if you haven't already done so, because it will be used to communicate with you and to provide access to documents throughout the examination.

The main purpose of the PM is to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application. It focuses on the process only, and it will not be looking at the substance of the proposals: Questions, discussions and representations about the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development are for the examination itself which will begin the day after the close of the PM.

The PM will be your opportunity to influence the process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached to this Rule 6 Letter at **annex A**. It is important to have the letter and the agenda in front of you and to refer to them during

the course of the PM. You may wish to print these in advance of the PM for reference.

### **Government guidance and policy**

The application is a NSIP under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) as a consequence of sections 14(1)(a) and 15(2): it includes the construction of an onshore generating station in England with a generating capacity of more than 50 megawatts. The designated National Policy Statements (NPS) EN-1: Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy, EN-3: Renewable Energy Infrastructure and EN-5: Electricity Networks Infrastructure apply to this examination and to decision-making relating to this application.

The ExA will consider the proposed development in accordance with the NPS EN-1, NPS EN-3 and NPS EN-5 and any other applicable policy or considerations the ExA deem to be important and relevant. The PA2008 makes it clear that, in making a decision, the relevant Secretary of State (SoS) “must decide the application in accordance with any relevant NPS” (s104(3)), subject to certain provisos. Essentially, the provisos are that the application must not breach legal or treaty obligations, and that any adverse impact of the proposed development would not outweigh its benefits.

The SoS is entitled to disregard any representations that relate to the merits of the designated National Policy Statement (NPS). In practice, this means that the ExA will not spend time examining representations that challenge policy set out in NPSs, or the validity of NPSs themselves. The focus will be on the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development, tested to the appropriate extent using the tests set out in relevant designated NPSs that are in force.

Other important and relevant planning policies that the ExA may consider include policies in the relevant local authorities’ development plans. However, if these conflict with policy in a NPS, then the NPS will take precedence.

In summary, the PM will establish the procedures and timetable for the examination of the Proposed Development. It will set a framework for the ExA to enable the SoS to consider and decide the application. In doing so, the ExA will have regard to:

- the positions and representations of all interested parties (IP)
- any local impact reports (LIR) prepared and provided by relevant local authorities
- other prescribed matters
- any other matters that appear to be both relevant and important to the relevant SoS’s decision

## **Preliminary meeting invitees**

The applicant is invited to the PM and is generally given the opportunity to reply to any representations made.

Everyone who has made a valid relevant representation has been registered as an IP and has been invited to the PM. All IPs are entitled to involvement in the examination.

Each person or organisation with an interest in land or rights that are affected by a compulsory acquisition request in this application is an affected person (AP) and has been invited to the PM. In addition to a general entitlement to involvement in the examination, APs have a right to be heard in relation to any objection about the effects of compulsory acquisition on their interests in land, and a right to be notified of any compulsory acquisition hearing. All APs are IPs, whether or not they have made a valid relevant representation.

Certain bodies are statutory parties and they have been invited to the PM. Statutory parties can elect to become IPs without having made a valid relevant representation by notifying the ExA in writing.

The ExA has the power to involve people who are not IPs in the examination as though they are IPs, including by inviting them to the PM. However, this is only done in exceptional circumstances, for example if it was clear that the application would materially affect a person, they are not automatically an IP or eligible to elect to become an IP and they had been unable to take the necessary action to register as an IP.

The ExA has decided to invite the following other persons to the PM:

- Representatives or promoters of any other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that could interact with the proposed development, including as a minimum: High Grove Solar Farm, East Pye Solar and Norwich to Tilbury
- National Energy System Operator NESO

## **Conduct of the preliminary meeting**

The ExA estimate that the PM will take up to three hours to complete.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. In recognition of the fatigue associated with on-screen communication, the ExA will provide breaks during the PM as appropriate.

A digital recording of the PM will be made available on the project webpage as soon as practicable following the close of the PM. The recording allows any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed at the PM. The making and publication of these recordings are a means by which the ExA meets the legal requirement to hold the PM (and any other

hearings) in public. In this regard, **anyone speaking at the PM will need to introduce themselves each time they speak**, to ensure that someone listening to the recording after the event is clear who was speaking. A written note of the PM will be produced and published as soon as practicable following the close of the PM.

As the recordings are retained and published, they form a public record that can contain personal information to which The UK General Data Protection Regulation applies. Participants must do their best to avoid providing any information which should otherwise be kept private and confidential. If there is a need to refer to such information, it should be in written form. Although this will also be published, personal and private content can be redacted or removed before it is made publicly available. Any person who is unclear on this point should ask the Case Team for guidance before they place personal and private information into the public domain.

The Planning Inspectorate's practice is to publish the recordings and retain them for a period of 5 years from the SoS's decision on the DCO. If you actively participate in the PM, it is important that you understand that you will be recorded and that the recording will be made available in the public domain. Please see our [Privacy Notice](#) for more information about how we handle your data.

Following the ExA's introductions, each participant who has been registered to speak will be asked to introduce themselves, including any organisations or groups that they represent. The ExA will then conduct the meeting in accordance with the agenda. If you prefer not to have your image recorded, you can switch off your camera at any point.

### **The examination process**

The examination of NSIPs follows different processes to those, for example, of a public inquiry into a planning appeal following the refusal of planning permission. The main differences are that the examination of NSIPs are primarily a written process and hearings take on an inquisitorial approach as opposed to an adversarial one.

This means that the ExA will probe, test and assess the evidence primarily using written questions. While some hearings are held to provide supplementary evidence, questions to the applicant or to witnesses will come from the ExA. Questioning or cross-examination of witnesses by other parties will not generally be allowed.

In terms of opportunities to provide evidence in writing, the draft examination timetable makes provision for the following written processes:

- Local authorities can submit LIRs if they wish. Whilst these are voluntary, the PA2008 provides that if they are provided, they must be considered by the SoS in reaching a decision. Consequently, LIRs are a very important method for local authorities to communicate issues of concern to the ExA, the SoS and their residents
- IPs can make written representations (WR) and comment on WRs made by other parties

- IPs can respond to the ExA's written questions (ExQs) and comment on responses to these written questions provided by others
- IPs may be asked to contribute to the making of statements of common ground (SoCG) if it appears that there are matters on which they and the applicant agrees, and if it would be useful for this to be clarified. SoCGs most usefully extend to catalogue matters that are not agreed or are outstanding

The draft examination timetable includes a series of numbered deadlines for receipt of written submissions. Timely submissions received by the relevant deadline and that address its purpose will be accepted. **Documents received after the relevant deadline are only accepted at the discretion of the ExA and may not be accepted to ensure fairness to all parties.** Circumstances where documents are submitted late without good reason, causing inconvenience or delay to other parties can amount to unreasonable behaviour.

These written processes will be the principal means used by the ExA to gather information, evidence and views about the application. However, the examination will only be effective if all parties resolve to give timely, full, frank, clear and evidenced answers to every question that is relevant to their interests and to engage fully with any other related processes such as the completion of WRs and SoCGs.

There is no merit in withholding or delaying information, or in failing to co-operate, and should it occur, any unreasonable behaviour that caused another party to incur wasted expenditure could lead to an award of costs against the offending party.

The ExA has discretion to make amendments to the examination timetable for the wider benefit of the examination. If possible, events will be arranged for times when all relevant parties are available, but the ExA is under a duty to complete the examination by the end of the six-month period beginning with the day after the close of the PM. This requirement is set by legislation, and while the ExA will try to rearrange event dates to accommodate all relevant parties, in practice there will be limited scope to alter dates set out in the draft examination timetable.

The statutory time limit for the examination means that where there are matters that still need to be discussed and agreed between the applicant and IPs, it will be very helpful to the ExA if these could be progressed as early as possible.

### Hearings

The draft examination timetable includes provision for hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties.

Any registered IP may request an **open floor hearing** (OFH) to make oral representations about the application if they believe this to be preferable to relying on their written representation, though both carry equal weight. Oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing, but they should not simply repeat matters previously covered in the written submission. Rather, they should focus on specific detail and explanation to help inform the ExA. There should be no new or unexpected material in oral representations. A written summary note

with any supporting evidence or references will be requested of each speaker following the hearing.

As with all examination events, OFHs are subject to the powers of control of the ExA, as set out in the PA2008 and supporting legislation. Participants must register in advance by the deadline shown in the examination timetable and in accordance with the instructions. It is common practice for the ExA to set a time limit for each speaker and speakers with common points are asked to come together to nominate a spokesperson or representative speakers to cover specific topics, so as to avoid repetition. Speakers representing public authorities, community and membership organisations or multiple IPs are normally provided with an additional time allowance, recognising their representative role.

The applicant's draft DCO provides for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights, and the temporary possession of land. APs (meaning those whose land or rights over land are affected) have a right to request and be heard at a **compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH)**. If one or more APs request to be heard then a CAH must be held. Provisional dates for CAHs are included in the draft examination timetable along with deadlines by which requests to be heard must be submitted.

The ExA has the discretion to hold **issue specific hearings (ISH)** if it would aid in the examination and there is a specific reason this would be more helpful than reliance on written evidence only. The lack of an ISH on one or more topics does not suggest that that topic is less important than others which are subject to a hearing. Rather, it is an indication that the ExA is satisfied that the issues can be fully considered through written submissions and responses to its written questions and that each party has had a fair opportunity to put its case.

The draft examination timetable includes a number of dates reserved for ISHs and IPs may make suggestions for topics to be discussed at an ISH in their written or oral representations to the PM.

It may be necessary for the ExA to hold more than one ISH on the draft DCO. This is normal practice, and they are held on a without prejudice basis. Parties can suggest modifications and amendments to the draft DCO provided by the applicant with the application, without prejudicing their overall position on the application.

Holding such hearings does not imply that the ExA has reached any judgements on the merits of the application. Whatever the ultimate recommendation is, the ExA must make sure that the draft DCO is fit for purpose if the SoS decides to grant consent, as any consent will be subject to requirements (similar to planning conditions) set out in the draft DCO.

At hearings it will not normally be necessary for parties to make long and detailed submissions that require, for example, PowerPoint presentations. Any supporting detail/ information can be provided in writing following the event by the relevant deadline.

The draft examination timetable includes deadlines for participants to notify the ExA that they wish to speak at an OFH or a CAH.

## **Site inspections**

As part of the examination process the ExA may undertake site inspections. These can be either unaccompanied or accompanied.

The purpose of these is for the ExA to see features of the proposals within the context of the evidence put forward. Notes of unaccompanied site inspections (USI) are published on the [project webpage](#).

Accompanied site inspections (ASI) will only be necessary to view land to which there is no public right of access, or with no clear view from nearby locations with open public access. The purpose of ASIs is familiarisation only and no discussion of the merits of the proposed development will be entertained during an ASI.

The ExA may decide to hold USIs to relevant nominated locations, supported by the submission of additional written, photographic, video or even drone material if this would be preferable to not visiting sites or holding ASIs in circumstances which could make them difficult and unduly time-consuming to conduct (for example if public health restrictions are in place). The ExA may also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of a USI on an access required basis (ARSI)

The draft examination timetable includes a deadline for IPs to make submissions suggesting sites and locations that the ExA should visit. These will be used to inform further USIs/ ARSIs as well as possible ASIs. It is not generally considered necessary to revisit locations in ASIs that have already been visited in a USI.

## **Interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)**

Applications for orders granting development consent for other NSIPs in Norfolk submitted for examination and expected to be submitted for examination, include:

- Norwich to Tilbury – the application was accepted for examination on 26 September 2025.
- East Pye Solar– the application was received on 5 March 2026
- High Grove Solar Farm – the application is expected to be submitted in October 2026.

## **The Examining Authority**

The Secretary of State has appointed me as the Examining Authority (ExA) for the Drovers Solar Farm for this project alone. Therefore, I will carry out the examination for this project only and will have no responsibility for the examination of those other projects.

I would, however, stress that in examining the application for the proposed Drovers Solar Farm and in making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero I will, amongst other things, be considering the cumulative effects of this NSIP with other projects.

## **Examination documents, communications, and submissions**

All documents, communications and submissions will be available through the project webpage and will be dealt with separately from those for other projects. Therefore, to ensure that we receive your submissions for this project, please take care to make them in accordance with the specific procedures for this project, as set out in this letter, and as subsequently notified by the ExA.

## **Examination timetable**

The ExA's draft examination timetable is set out in Annex E.

I anticipate that several parties will also wish to participate in the examination of one or more (if they are accepted for examination) of the other projects, as well as this one. I am also aware that there is an overlap of the examination stage of this project with Norwich to Tilbury and potentially with East Pye Solar if it is accepted for examination. As such, I recognise the potential for resource challenges for parties wishing to participate in more than one examination at the same time.

I have developed the draft examination timetable as necessary for its examination. Consistent with that, I have ensured that there are no Deadlines and events that clash with the examination timetable for Norwich to Tilbury. If I decide to change the examination timetable, then I will consider the potential for clashes with the examination deadlines or events with Norwich to Tilbury and potentially East Pye Solar if it is accepted for examination.

## **Overlapping issues**

The applicant submitted Figure 2.1: Cumulative Schemes [APP-068] with its application that sets out the locations of a short list of cumulative schemes.

Given the proximity of some of these schemes to the Drovers Solar Farm, I have recognised the importance of considering cumulative effects with other developments in the locality, as set out in my initial assessment of principal issues in Annex D.

Recognising the potential for the information available on other National Infrastructure Projects to change during the examination, the draft examination timetable in Annex E sets out requests for the applicant's updates during the examination (Refer to Annex F), which includes a 'Report on the interrelationship with other NSIPs'. The content of this report is to include the matters set out in Annex H under the heading of 'Report on the interrelationship with other NSIPs'.

## **Initial assessment of principal issues**

This is the initial assessment of principal issues prepared as required under section 88(1) of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). It has been prepared by the Examining Authority (ExA) following its reading of:

- the application documents
- the relevant representations received in respect of the application
- its consideration of any other important and relevant matters

This initial assessment has guided the ExA in forming a provisional view as to how the application is to be examined. It is not a comprehensive or exclusive list of the issues that will be subject to examination and inevitably some issues will overlap or interrelate. The ExA will have regard to all important and relevant matters during the examination and when it writes its recommendation to The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero after the examination has concluded.

The policy and consenting requirements and documents associated with the PA2008 are an integral part of the examination and are therefore not listed as principal issues. It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equalities duties are not listed as principal issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind.

Regarding national policy, the following National Policy Statements (NPS) have effect, and the issues contained within will be an integral part of the examination (all came into force on 17 January 2024):

- Overarching national policy statement for energy (EN-1), for example matters relating to the need case, assessment principles and generic impacts as relevant (including civil and military aviation and defence interests, greenhouse gas emissions, historic environment, landscape and visual, land use, noise and vibration and socio-economics)
- National policy statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3), particularly section 2.10 relating to solar photovoltaic generation, for example matters relating to biodiversity, water, landscape and visual, glint and glare, heritage, traffic and transport, noise and vibration and agricultural land.
- National policy statement for electricity networks infrastructure (EN-5), for example matters relating to climate change, biodiversity net gain and good design.

Whilst matters relating to compulsory acquisition and the draft Development Consent Order are not listed as principal issues, they will form an integral part of the examination.

Consideration will be given to all relevant matters during the construction, operation and decommissioning activities associated with the proposed development, and cumulatively with other plans and projects, as necessary. Cumulative effects will be considered on a topic by topic basis and as such, have not been listed as a separate issue in their own right.

It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equalities duties are not listed as principal issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind.

The order of the issues listed does not imply any order of prioritisation or importance. The bulleted items under each issue are indicative and do not preclude other sub-items being considered.

<b>Principal Issue</b>	<b>To include, but not necessarily limited to:</b>
<b>Need, site selection and alternatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for the proposed development</li> <li>• The approach to alternatives, including location, scale and technology</li> </ul>
<b>Aviation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on precision approach radar at RAF Marham</li> <li>• Adequacy of mitigation for Glint and Glare effects, and birdstrike safeguarding</li> </ul>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on species and habitats, including bird populations</li> <li>• Adequacy of proposed Skylark and Curlew mitigation areas</li> <li>• Effects on designated sites and habitats of principal importance</li> <li>• Effects on veteran trees and hedgerows</li> <li>• Biodiversity net gain and how this would be secured</li> </ul>
<b>Climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequacy of greenhouse gas assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on the historic environment, including archaeology, and the setting of designated heritage assets such as listed buildings and scheduled monuments</li> </ul>
<b>Flood risk, hydrology and water resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequacy of the Flood Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Adequacy of risk assessment regarding hydrogeological modelling and impacts from pollution on surface and ground water</li> <li>• Water resources required during construction and operation</li> </ul>
<b>Grid connection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications arising from uncertainty of National Grid Electricity Transmission plc's new substation and the proposed development's grid connection</li> </ul>
<b>Land and soil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects (including cumulative) on agricultural land, best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land and other land</li> <li>• Adequacy of soil management plan</li> <li>• Adequacy of waste and materials management</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape and visual (including good design)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequacy of the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment</li> <li>• Effects (including cumulative) on landscape character and visual amenity</li> <li>• Adequacy of the Glint and Glare Assessment</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which good design would be demonstrated</li> </ul>
<b>Noise and vibration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects (including cumulative) on residential receptors</li> <li>• Adequacy of proposed mitigation and how it would be secured</li> </ul>
<b>Population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects (including cumulative) on employment, businesses and the local economy</li> <li>• Effects on the public rights of way network, including the experience of its recreational users and new permissive paths and how these would be secured</li> <li>• Effects on health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Health and safety associated with battery energy storage system</li> </ul>
<b>Transport and access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects (including cumulative) on the road network and road users and the suitability of proposed highways works</li> </ul>

## Draft examination timetable

The Examining Authority (ExA) is under a duty to **complete** the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting.

The examination of the application primarily takes the form of the consideration of written submissions. The ExA will also consider any oral representations made at hearings.

Item	Matters	Date
1.	<p><b>Procedural deadline A</b></p> <p>Deadline for receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>written submissions on the examination procedure, including any submissions about the use of virtual methods and the draft examination timetable</li> <li>requests to be heard orally at the preliminary meeting and / or attend at the venue in person</li> <li>requests to be heard at open floor hearing 1 and / or attend at the venue in person</li> <li>requests to be heard at the issue specific hearing 1 and / or attend at the venue in person</li> <li>suggested locations for site inspections (accompanied or unaccompanied), including justification, for consideration by the ExA</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wednesday 22 April 2026</b></p>
2.	<p><b>Preliminary meeting</b></p>	<p><b>Wednesday 6 May 2026 (morning)</b></p>
3.	<p><b>Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1)</b></p>	<p><b>Wednesday 6 May 2026 (afternoon)</b></p>
4.	<p><b>Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1):</b> Strategic matters associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need, site selection and alternatives</li> <li>Grid connection</li> <li>Cumulative effects</li> <li>Aviation</li> <li>Landscape and visual</li> <li>Cultural heritage</li> <li>Flood risk and water resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>Thursday 7 May 2026</b></p>

5.	<p><b>Issue by the ExA of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the examination timetable (the Rule 8 letter)</li> </ul> <p>Publication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ExA's written questions (ExQ1)</li> </ul>	<p><b>As soon as practicable following the Preliminary Meeting</b></p>
6.	<p><b>Deadline 1</b></p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comments on relevant representations (RR) and additional submissions</li> <li>responses to ExQ1</li> <li>Local Impact Reports (LIRs) from local authorities</li> <li>written representations (WR) from interested parties and summaries of any that exceed 1500 words</li> <li>written summaries of any oral representations made at open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) and issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1)</li> <li>the applicant's draft itinerary for ASI (if necessary)</li> <li>the applicant's updates – refer to Annex F</li> <li>requests to be heard at a further open floor hearing</li> <li>requests by affected persons (defined in s59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at a compulsory acquisition hearing</li> <li>Any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tuesday 2 June 2026</b></p>
7.	<p><b>Deadline 2</b></p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comments on the Deadline 1 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for Deadline 2</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tuesday 16 June 2026</b></p>
8.	<p><b>Issue by the ExA of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ExA's second written questions (ExQ2)</li> <li>notification of an accompanied site inspection (if required)</li> </ul>	<p><b>No later than Friday 3 July 2026</b></p>
9.	<p><b>Deadline 3</b></p> <p>For receipt by the ExA, from the applicant, of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responses to ExQ2</li> <li>the applicant's updates – refer to Annex F</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friday 24 July 2026</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comments on the Deadline 2 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for Deadline 3</li> </ul>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Publication by the ExA of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ExA's final itinerary for the ASI (if required)</li> </ul>	<b>No later than Wednesday 2 September 2026</b>
<b>11.</b>	<p>Time reserved for hearing(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>issue specific hearing (if required)</li> <li>compulsory acquisition hearing (if required)</li> <li>open floor hearing (if required)</li> </ul> <p>Time reserved for an accompanied site inspection (if required)</p>	<b>w/c 7 September 2026</b>
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Deadline 4</b></p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>written summaries of oral submissions made at any hearings during w/c 7 September 2026</li> <li>comments on the Deadline 3 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for Deadline 4</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 16 September 2026</b>
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>Issue by the ExA of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ExA's third written questions (ExQ3) (if required)</li> <li>the Report on Implications for European Sites (if required)</li> <li>the ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to the draft Development Consent Order</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 30 September 2026</b>
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>Deadline 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responses to the ExQ3 (if required)</li> <li>the applicant's updates – refer to Annex F</li> <li>comments on the Deadline 4 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for Deadline 5</li> <li>comments on the Report on Implications for European Sites (if required)</li> <li>comments on the ExA's schedule of changes to the draft Development Consent Order (if required)</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 16 October 2026</b>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b>Deadline 6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>parties closing statements of final position including matters not resolved by the end of the examination</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 30 October 2026</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the applicant's closing summary statement</li> <li>• the applicant's final updates – refer to Annex F</li> <li>• applicant's final validated version of the dDCO in the SI template with the validation report</li> <li>• comments on the Deadline 5 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for Deadline 6</li> </ul>	
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>Close of examination</b></p> <p>The ExA intends to close the examination on this date. See 'Note about the close of examination date'.</p>	<p><b>Friday 6 November 2026</b></p>

### Note about the close of examination date

The ExA is under a duty to complete the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting.

### Submission times for deadlines

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is 23:59 on the relevant deadline date, unless instructed otherwise by the ExA.

### Publication dates

All information received will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the deadlines for submissions.

### Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES)

Where an applicant has provided a No Significant Effects Report or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report with the application, the ExA may decide to issue a RIES during the examination. The RIES is a factual account of the information and evidence provided to the ExA on HRA matters during the examination up to the date of the publication of the RIES, for the purposes of enabling the Secretary of State, as competent authority, to undertake its HRA. It is not the ExA's opinion on HRA matters. Comments on the RIES will be invited by the ExA and any received will be taken into account as part of the ExA's recommendation to the Secretary of State. The ExA may also raise questions in the RIES to confirm or clarify matters that remain outstanding.

The Secretary of State may rely on the consultation on the RIES to meet its obligations under regulation 63(3) of The Habitats Regulations 2017 and/ or regulation 28 of The Offshore Marine Regulations.

## The Applicant's Updates

The draft Examination Timetable in Annex E includes deadlines for the applicant to provide updates to the examination. This will help with the smooth running of the examination and will ensure that the Examining Authority (ExA) has the most up-to-date information at that time. This annex sets out the ExA's request for the matters to be included in those updates. Please note that final updates must be submitted by deadline 6 (30 October 2026).

### 1. Statements of common ground

Annex H sets out the Statements of Common Ground between the applicant and various parties that are requested by the ExA, and the matters to be covered. The Statements of Common Ground are to be accompanied by a document summarising:

- The status of each Statement of Common Ground.
- The matters agreed between the applicant and each interested party.
- The main outstanding concerns held by each interested party, the reasons for those concerns, the next steps to be taken to address them and the progress anticipated by the next deadline and by the close of the examination.
- When it is anticipated that any draft Statements of Common Ground will be finalised and when the finalised signed and dated copies will be submitted to the examination.

### 2. Updates to the Book of Reference and Statement of Reasons

To include:

- The latest, fully up-to-date versions of the Book of Reference and Statement of Reasons.
- Clean copies and copies showing tracked changes/ explanation for changes to the previous versions.
- Each version supplied with unique revision numbers that are updated consecutively from the application versions, clearly indicated within the body of each document, and included within the electronic filename.
- An updated 'Schedule of Changes to the Book of Reference' [AS-059] setting out the reasons for the changes included in each update.

### 3. Land Rights Tracker

The ExA requests that the applicant maintains the Land and Rights Negotiation Tracker [APP-024]. It is hoped that the applicant and APs (including statutory undertakers) will recognise that the purpose of the Land Rights Tracker is to simplify the whole examination, recommendation and decision-making process. The ExA requests that all parties therefore positively engage with the process.

The applicant can avoid submitting updates as stated above if there are no changes to the previous version.

### 4. Updates to the draft Development Consent Order and Explanatory Memorandum

To include:

- The latest, fully up-to-date versions of the draft Development Consent Order and Explanatory Memorandum.

- Clean copies and copies showing tracked changes to the previous versions.
- A copy of the draft Development Consent Order, showing tracked changes to the application version.
- A clean copy of the draft Development Consent Order in Microsoft Word.
- Each version supplied with unique revision numbers that are updated consecutively from the application versions, clearly indicated within the body of each document, and included within the electronic filename.
- A report validating that the draft Development Consent Order is in the statutory instrument template (obtained from the publishing section of the legislation.gov.uk website).
- An updated 'Schedule of Changes to the draft Development Consent Order', setting out the reasons for the changes included in each update.

### **5. Schedule of the latest versions of the applicant's submission documents and documents to be certified**

To include:

- An updated 'Guide to the Application' [AS-002] document identifying the latest version of each individual document and plan submitted by the applicant and identifying those documents that are to be certified under the draft Development Consent Order.
- Clean copies of any new documents or plans.
- For any updated documents or plans, clean copies and copies showing tracked changes to the previous versions.
- Additionally, for any updated documents or plans that are to be certified, copies showing tracked changes to the application version.
- Updates supplied with unique revision numbers that are updated consecutively from the application versions, clearly indicated within the body of each document, within the electronic filename, and (for the certified documents or plans) in the draft Development Consent Order.
- A 'Schedule of New and Updated Document and Plan Updates' document, or equivalent, setting out the purpose of all new documents and plans and the reasons for the changes to any document or plan included in each update.

### **6. Schedule of progress in securing other consents**

To include:

- An updated 'Consents and Agreements Position Statement' [APP-185] required for the delivery of the proposed development, including the name of the consent, the relevant legislation (or policy or guidance), the consenting authority, the scope of the consent, why it is required, and when it is expected to be obtained.
- A summary of the up-to-date position in respect of obtaining the necessary consents and whether there any reason to believe that any consent will not be granted.
- Where the Environment Agency or Natural England are the consenting authority, and without prejudice to their subsequent decision, written confirmation of whether they have any reason to believe that any consent will not be granted. As well as being required for the ExA to assess the adequacy of the applicant's mitigation proposals, this is required for the ExA to report any known impediments to the Secretary of State.

- A summary of the progress made since the last update, any outstanding matters, the next steps to be taken, and the progress anticipated by the next deadline and by the close of the examination.

### **7. Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects**

Annex H sets out the contents of the Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects that has been requested by the ExA.

## Notification of initial hearings

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
<b>Wednesday</b> <b>6 May 2026</b> <b>2.00pm</b>	<b>Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1)</b>	<b>Registration and seating available at venue from:</b> <b>1.30pm</b> <b>Virtual registration process from:</b> <b>1.45pm</b> <b>Hearing starts:</b> <b>2.00pm</b>	The Duke's Head Hotel Tuesday Market Place Kings Lynn PE30 1JS and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
<b>Thursday</b> <b>7 May 2026</b> <b>10.00am</b>	<b>Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1): Strategic matters associated with:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Need, site selection and alternatives</b></li> <li>• <b>Grid connection</b></li> <li>• <b>Cumulative effects</b></li> <li>• <b>Aviation</b></li> <li>• <b>Landscape and visual</b></li> <li>• <b>Cultural heritage</b></li> <li>• <b>Flood risk and water resources</b></li> </ul>	<b>Registration and seating available at venue from:</b> <b>9.30am</b> <b>Virtual registration process from:</b> <b>9.45am</b> <b>Hearing starts:</b> <b>10.00am</b>	The Duke's Head Hotel Tuesday Market Place Kings Lynn PE30 1JS and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
<p><b>NOTE:</b> If any of the above hearings are no longer required then notification that a particular date is no longer required will be published as soon as practicable on the <a href="#">project webpage</a>, providing reasonable notice to interested parties of the decision to cancel them.</p>			

**You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 22 April 2026 if you intend to participate in any of the hearings and provide all the information requested (see below).**

If you simply wish to observe any of the hearings then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical hearing at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by 22 April 2026 using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **22 April 2026**.

Any request to participate in a hearing **must include** the following information:

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top of any letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- Confirmation of the hearing(s) you wish to participate in, the agenda item(s) on which you wish to speak and/ or brief details of the topic(s) that you would like to raise
- For compulsory acquisition hearings, the plot number(s) of the relevant land provided in the Book of Reference and the Land Plans
- The [Examination Library](#) reference number (with paragraph/ page number where appropriate) of any documents you wish to refer to

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A**.

**Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support or assistance to attend any of the hearings, either virtually or in person.**

### Hearing agendas

For issue specific hearings and compulsory acquisition hearings the ExA will publish a detailed draft agenda on the [project webpage](#) at least 5 working days in advance of the hearing date. However, the actual agenda on the day of each hearing may be

subject to change at the discretion of the ExA. For open floor hearings an agenda may not be published.

### **Procedure at hearings**

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. See The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

The Planning Inspectorate's Advice for members of the public provides important information about hearing procedures:

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

The procedure to be followed at hearings is set out in rule 14 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. The ExA is responsible for the oral questioning of a person giving evidence and the process affords very limited scope to allow cross-questioning between parties.

### **Hearing livestream and recording**

A link to a livestream for each hearing will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before any hearing is due to open. The livestream is available to anybody who wishes to observe a hearing in real time.

All hearings are recorded, and the recordings will be made available on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the close of the hearing. The recordings allow any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed.

## Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

The Examining Authority (ExA) has made the following procedural decisions:

### 1. Procedural decision following issue of acceptance decision

Procedural decision following issue of acceptance decision [PD-004] can be found through the [Examination Library](#).

### 2. Statements of common ground (SoCG)

In relation to some of the principal issues identified in **annex D** to this letter, the ExA would be assisted by the preparation of SoCGs between the applicant and certain interested parties. The draft examination timetable at **annex E** to this letter therefore establishes **deadline 1** for submission of initial SoCGs.

The aim of a SoCG is to agree factual information and to inform the ExA and all other parties by identifying where there is agreement and where the differences lie at an early stage in the examination process. It should provide a focus and save time by identifying matters which are not in dispute or need not be the subject of further evidence. It can also usefully state where and why there may be disagreement about the interpretation and relevance of the information. Unless otherwise stated or agreed, the SoCG should be agreed between the applicant and the other relevant interested party or parties, and submitted **by the applicant**.

The ExA notes that the applicant proposed SoCGs with the following parties in paragraph 7.1.5 of the Planning Statement [APP-043]:

- Breckland Council
- Norfolk County Council
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- National Grid
- National Highways
- Anglian Water; and
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

In addition, having regard to the RRs that have been submitted by the Interested Parties (IPs), the ExA requests, therefore, that the applicant and the following IPs and Other Persons must enter into bilateral or multi-party SoCGs:

- Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Safeguarding Department (representing the Ministry of Defence)
- National Energy System Operator (NESO)

Although NESO has not registered as an IP, a SoCG should nonetheless still be developed. The ExA requests that the applicant initiates contact with these

organisations for the preparation of a SoCGs and also notifies them of this procedural decision.

The above list may be added to during the examination and should not be taken as precluding any IP not listed and the applicant from drafting a SoCG.

For each of those areas that are in dispute, it would be beneficial if each party would put their estimation as to the likelihood that disagreement will remain by the end of the examination. This should be done on a 'Low', 'Medium' and 'High' traffic light model. This will allow the ExA to assess those areas where oral discussions may be most beneficial.

**All of the SoCGs listed above should cover the articles and requirements in the draft Development Consent Order.** Any interested party seeking that an article or requirement is reworded should provide the form of words which are being sought.

Where a particular SoCG cannot be agreed between the parties by **deadline 1**, or if any local authority position needs to be signed off at a higher level, draft versions of that SoCG are requested to be submitted **by the applicant to deadline 1**. The position of the relevant interested parties should then be confirmed in the course of the examination. The draft examination timetable makes provision for updated SoCGs to be submitted at various deadlines with final versions by **deadline 6**.

The content of SoCGs will help to inform the ExA about the need to hold any issue specific hearings during the examination, and to enable the ExA and the applicant to give notice of such hearings in advance of them taking place.

### **3. Local Impact Reports (LIR)**

The ExA requests LIRs from Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council, the host local authorities, though welcomes LIRs from any other relevant local authorities who may wish to submit one. All LIRs are requested to be submitted no later than by deadline 1.

### **4. Closing summary statements**

The ExA requests that the applicant and interested parties submit their closing summary statements at the final deadline 6, detailing the respondent's positions at the close of the examination on their principal issues.

### **5. Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations**

The draft examination timetable at **annex E** to this letter includes a week reserved for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) (week commencing 7 September 2026). The specific date of the ASI will be confirmed closer to the time by a Rule 16 letter, which will be issued to all interested parties.

The ExA requests that interested parties submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **procedural deadline A** (Wednesday 22 April 2026). The request must include:

- sufficient information to identify the location

- the issues to be observed at the location
- information on whether the site can be accessed via public land
- the reason why the location has been suggested.

**Interested parties should be aware that ASIs are not an opportunity to make any oral representations to the ExA about the proposed development.** However, participants may be invited by the ExA to indicate specific features or sites of interest.

The applicant is requested to prepare a draft itinerary for the ASI to be submitted by **deadline 1**. This should include:

- relevant locations referred to in the relevant representations received
- any other locations at which the applicant has predicted likely significant environmental effects
- the locations suggested by interested parties submitted by **procedural deadline A**

Comments by interested parties on the applicant's draft itinerary must be submitted by **deadline 2**.

The ExA will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis. The ExA will also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of an unaccompanied site inspection on an access required basis. **It is not generally considered necessary to revisit locations in ASIs that have already been visited in an USI.**

The ExA will publish its final itinerary at least 5 working days before the date of the ASI.

## **6. Additional submissions**

In addition to the documentation submitted by **procedural deadline A** the ExA has exercised its discretion and made a procedural decision to accept the following additional submissions which can be found through the [Examination Library](#):

- AS-001 to AS-059 - Applicant's Response to s51 advice
- AS-060 - Additional submission from Historic England
- AS-061 - Additional submission from Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Council
- AS-062 - Additional submission from Environment Agency
- AS-063 - Additional submission from the applicant in response to [PD-004]

## **7. Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects**

The ExA has made a Procedural Decision to request that the Applicant provide a Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects by Deadline 1 with subsequent updates at other deadlines as detailed in the draft Examination timetable in Annex E. This will assist with consideration of the interrelationships with the other projects referred to in Annex C and also assist in making an efficient start to the Examination. The Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects is to include:

- An overview of the Proposed Development and the other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects identified in Annex C, including the timings, construction phasing, grid connection and start of operation.
- The approach taken by the Applicant to coordinate the Proposed Development with the other projects, including during the Examination.
- A plan showing the order limits for the Proposed Development and the other projects and the locations of the main features of each, including, where applicable, solar arrays, energy storage facilities, substations, electrical cable routes, grid connection, environmental mitigation areas, temporary construction and decommissioning areas, and construction haulage routes.
- The Development Consent Order provisions required for the Proposed Development to be implemented satisfactorily in relation to other projects.
- Mitigation measures shared with other projects, the specific measures included in those for the Proposed Development, and how they are secured.
- Any other information on the other projects relied on for the cumulative impact assessment, the level of detail, and any changes since the application.
- A summary of the matters coordinated with the other projects, setting out the matters that have been agreed, any inconsistencies or outstanding matters, and the next steps to be taken to resolve them.

## **Examination documents**

The application documents and relevant representations can be inspected on the [project webpage](#).

### **How to stay up to date**

All further documents submitted in the course of the examination will also be published under the [documents tab](#) of the project webpage.

You can also sign up to get [email updates](#).

If you have any questions about the process, examination events or how to access the documents, you can email [thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk) or contact us on 0303 444 5000.

### **The Examination Library**

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [Examination Library](#) (EL) which is accessible by clicking the blue button under the [documents tab](#). The EL is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The EL records and provides a hyperlink to:

- each application document
- each representation made to the examination
- each procedural decision made by the Examining Authority

Each document is given a unique reference which will be fixed for the duration of the examination. **Please quote the unique reference number from the EL when referring to any examination documents in any future submissions that you make.**

## Information about the 'Have your say' page

The '[Have your say](#)' page is available on the [project webpage](#).

You will need to enter your unique reference number ('Your ref' found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate). If you are making a submission on behalf of another person or organisation, and do not have your own unique reference number, then you should enter the unique reference number of the person or organisation you are representing. If you are not a registered interested party then it is at the discretion of the Examining Authority whether or not your submission is accepted.

Submissions will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable following the close of the relevant deadline. For further information about publishing submissions please view our [Privacy Notice](#).

You will be able to submit a document (upload file), make a text representation or both. It is possible to upload multiple files for each individual submission item. Electronic attachments should be clearly labelled with the subject title and not exceed 50MB.

Submissions **must not include hyperlinks** to documents/ evidence hosted on a third party website (for example technical reports, media articles and so on). See The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: Advice for submitting representations or comments](#) for important information about making written submissions. All submissions must be made in a format that can be viewed in full on the Find a National Infrastructure Project website. Any submissions that exceed 1500 words should also be accompanied by a summary; this summary should not exceed 10% of the original text.

You should select the relevant deadline for your submission and then, on the next webpage, select the appropriate submission item as described in the examination timetable at **annex E** to this letter. Please ensure you make a separate submission for each submission item and **do not duplicate your submission**. If you consider that your submission does not fit the description of any of the submission items then please select the submission item 'Other' and ensure that it is titled appropriately.

If you experience any issues when using the '[Have your say](#)' page please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter and they will assist.