



Preliminary meeting note

Application: The Drovers Solar Farm
Reference: EN0110013
Time and date: 10am on Wednesday 6 May 2026
Venue: The Duke's Head Hotel, Kings Lynn

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

1. Welcome and Introduction

Anthony Johnson (AJ), single examining inspector, welcomed those present and introduced himself as the Examining Authority (ExA), to examine the Drovers Solar Farm application. AJ explained the appointment was made by the Secretary of State (SoS).

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

The ExA confirmed that information about the application is available on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website and that the ExA will use this to communicate and to provide access to documents throughout the examination.

The ExA explained that a link to the Planning Inspectorate's Privacy Notice was provided in its [Rule 6 letter](#).

The ExA acknowledged that venues for the hearings in Swaffham were considered, however, the only venue that suited the requirements didn't have availability for the dates. Further, the ExA commented it will endeavour to use a venue closer to the proposed development site for the next hearings in September.

2. Video recording

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

3. Examination process

The ExA referred to [Annex B](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter regarding the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). Further information can be found:

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

4. Initial assessment of principal issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the initial assessment of principal issues (section 88 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), which can be found in [annex D](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 8 April 2026 and asked for any comments on them. The ExA confirmed it will have regard to all important and relevant matters during the examination and when writing its recommendation report to the Secretary of State.

Mr Bennett representing Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council raised concerns about how cumulative impacts between the Drovers Solar Farm and the proposed High Grove Solar project would be assessed, given that the Drovers examination is expected to close before the High Grove DCO (Development Consent Order) is submitted.

The ExA clarified that it would be looking at the cumulative assessment as part of the examination. Furthermore, the ExA clarified that regarding High Grove Solar, if it is accepted for examination, then there would be a separate examining authority that would also consider the cumulative effects.

Alex Tresadern representing The Drovers Solar Farm Limited (applicant) stated that High Grove Solar had been considered within the cumulative assessment for all relevant topics in the Environmental Statement, based on available information, and confirmed ongoing collaboration with RWE. He expressed confidence in the robustness of the cumulative assessment and welcomed further discussions during the examination.

Dr Mark Holmes supported the concerns raised and emphasised the significant cumulative impacts of both projects on the Nar Valley SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), an internationally important chalk stream, and the wider biodiversity of the area linked to the Breckland Special Protection Area, stating these should be priority issues at this stage.

5. Examination Timetable

The ExA noted a request from the applicant, already received in writing at Procedural Deadline A, to amend the draft examination timetable contained in [annex E](#) of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further comments from the parties in attendance. All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the rule 8 Letter.

The ExA set out that it has already considered the time of year in which the examination will fall, specifically so that the next hearings would be after the main summer holiday period in week commencing 7 September. Furthermore, the ExA provided a reminder that it 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 Preliminary Meeting.

The examination timetable can be found in the [rule 8](#) letter published on 13 May 2026.

6. Procedural decisions

The ExA clarified the seven procedural decisions in [annex H](#) of the Rule 6 Letter and asked for any comments.

Alex Tresadern (applicant) confirmed that draft Statements of Common Ground had been issued to all relevant parties and that comments were welcomed, noting that the draft for National Energy System Operator (NESO) had also been prepared and would be issued once the correct contact was confirmed.

In relation to site inspections, Alex Tresadern confirmed that the applicant would provide a draft itinerary for the accompanied site inspection by Deadline 1, in accordance with the ExA's request.

He also confirmed that the applicant had noted the additional submissions accepted into the examination, including late submissions, and that the applicant would respond in full to these, alongside other relevant representations, at Deadline 1.

7. Any other matters

Mr Hubbard requested clarity as to how the examination proceeds when there's no confirmed connection point or substation location. The ExA responded that the item was raised as a procedural decision before the preliminary meeting and the applicant had provided a response. The applicant responded that it was an agenda item for the next day's issue specific hearing and that it didn't propose to go into the full detail of its response but was available for separate discussions before the open floor hearing in the afternoon.