



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	East Pye Solar
Hearing:	Recording of Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) – Part 1
Date:	16 September 2026

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00:00:03:04 - 00:00:14:24

Afternoon, It's now two PM and time for this issue specific hearing to begin. Everybody can take their seats, please.

00:00:18:19 - 00:00:30:02

As usual, can I just confirm that everybody can hear me clearly? And can I also confirm that the live streaming and recording of this event has commenced?

00:00:36:24 - 00:00:38:02

Was that a yes?

00:00:40:24 - 00:01:17:28

Yeah. Good. I would like to welcome you all to this issue specific hearing. This part of the examination of the application for development consent order for the East Pye Solar project. This first issue specific hearing is on the scope of the proposed development site selection and alternatives and the draft development consent order. My name is David Cliff. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to examine this application. And I'm now going to ask my colleagues and fellow panel members to introduce themselves, each of whom have also been appointed by the Secretary of State and who will lead on different parts of this hearing.

00:01:20:17 - 00:01:25:25

Good afternoon. My name is John McEvoy. I'm a chartered civil engineer, and I'm a member of this panel.

00:01:28:02 - 00:01:34:05

Good afternoon. My name is Claire Taylor. I'm a chartered town planner and a member of the panel to examine this application.

00:01:37:11 - 00:01:51:23

Thank you. Together, we constitute the examining authority of this application. Our role is to examine the application and to report to the secretary of state for energy security and Net Zero with a recommendation as to whether or not a development consent order should be made for the proposed development.

00:01:53:18 - 00:02:33:27

As previously mentioned, we've also got several members of the Planning and Spectra's case team here today led by Robert Cook. Please, can you forward any questions about procedure and the administration of the event to those, please? And also, I mentioned to James Ledsham, who's leading the virtual side of things for us today. A few housekeeping matters as usual. Can everybody please set all devices and phones to silent? I think everybody here probably knows where the location of the toilets are. But if you're here for the first time through the doors at the back and then down the corridor on the left hand side, There's no planned fire alarm tests this afternoon.

00:02:34:02 - 00:02:44:18

The fire exits are on the right hand side, continue along the balcony down the steps, and the gathering area is in the car park behind or to the front of the building.

00:02:46:09 - 00:03:00:26

Now just briefly to explain the purpose of this issue specific hearing, we generally will be following the agenda that was published on the National Infrastructure Planning website last Wednesday.

00:03:04:12 - 00:03:20:11

And perhaps just for those who've not seen it, I don't know if there are any hard copies of that agenda circulating around the room. That could be just presented on the screen. If you could just scroll through it so people can see that. It's also available online, of course.

00:03:22:19 - 00:04:02:01

This hearing is being held to address certain matters and questions identified by us through our reading of submissions to date, including the application documents and relevant representations received in response to the application. Of course, we've also heard some quite detailed and helpful oral submissions in the two open floor hearings this morning and yesterday. We consider the matters relating to site selection alternatives would benefit from questioning by the examining authority. We also consider it will assist our examination for matters relating to the scope of the proposed development to be examined through a hearing to ensure that the scope and particular details of the proposed development are clearly explained and understood.

00:04:03:02 - 00:04:44:04

Furthermore, we'll be asking some initial questions on certain particular topics to help our understanding of the scope of the applicant's approach on particular issues, and those are listed in Item four of the agenda. This does not indicate, and this is an important point, that these topics are more important to our examination than any other topics. Further detailed consideration of all topics will take place through written questions and hearings where these are necessary. And as I explained at the preliminary meeting yesterday, for those that were there, there is a process with written representations, our written questions, responses, and then we decide what further topics need questioning at an issue specific hearing.

00:04:44:23 - 00:04:57:27

Also, with the understanding that written representations are the primary form of examination and recent questions for this examination. So hearings are only required for particular specific topics.

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And towards the end of the hearing, and this will be tomorrow, we'll be asking questions regarding the applicant's draft development consent order. These will be quite high level, fairly sort of general questions with more detailed questions to follow in writing and in or at a further hearing, if necessary. Just a note on the timetable.

00:05:23:05 - 00:05:53:23

In terms of where we expect to get through today, we will be closing at five p. M. Today. Obviously, we go to five minutes past five, fine. not We're going to be continuing beyond much beyond five p. M. Today. So today, we are expecting to get through item two, which is the applicant's approach to site selection and alternatives. And we're expecting to get through roughly half of Item three, which is scope of the proposed development. We may get a little bit further on, but I don't think we're going to get through the whole of Item three this afternoon.

00:05:53:25 - 00:06:12:21

But as of always, these things are very difficult to predict, it's and difficult to actually sort of predict in advance how much time is necessary for each item. But I think we can confidently predict that we won't be addressing Item four until tomorrow morning. So if you're here for just Item four, then don't expect it to be considered this afternoon.

00:06:19:29 - 00:06:53:17

And as today is about primarily the scope of the proposed development, this hearing is not to hear detailed representations relating to the actual effects of the proposed development. So however frustrating that might be for those in the room who want to talk about effects, we've already heard a lot about that already and read a lot about that. Please bear with us. It's important that we get through our questions today that we want to ask in line with our impositorial approach as the examining authority. So there will be some times, I'm sure, where interested parties might feel a bit frustrated that they're not being involved in the discussion.

00:06:53:26 - 00:07:28:17

Is because today is really for our questions on what we've read so far. But we will endeavor where we can and where there is time to to to involve parties from the from from the floor as much as is possible, but we do need to get through our written questions today and tomorrow. And obviously, we've also got the local authorities here as well today, and I'm sure there'll be opportunities for representations from the local authorities. But we do need to get through our recent questions, which are really based on what we've read and heard so far, and a bit other opportunities to join the examination for representations.

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So this hearing will very much differ from the open floor hearings you've already been to or you might have seen that took place today and yesterday.

00:07:46:18 - 00:08:16:25

Meeting will continue tomorrow morning at ten AM, and we will close tomorrow afternoon at no later than four PM. So wherever we get to, we're going to close no later than four p. M. Tomorrow. We will be seeking to get through the entire agenda. If for some reason we can't, then certain matters can be left for written questions. But obviously, everyone's answers can be concise. We're not expecting repetition of things that we've already read. So take it as read that we've read all the documents.

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Today is to sort of go beyond that. So what we don't want to hear is just repeats of representations or indeed just repeats of what the applicants already put in writing.

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But you can, of course, refer to particular documents, and that can be very that can be very helpful. And if you feel you can't answer question today because you require time to get the information, then please just let us know and it might be we'll be able to defer that response to deadline one. And a recording of today's hearing will be available on the website as soon as possible following the meeting. And again, if people look at that recording and think, oh, I want to comment on that, please do so at deadline one in writing.

00:09:00:11 - 00:09:11:07

We've already talked about the general data protection regulations, which Planning Inspectorate is subject to, so please don't put into the public domain information that might be personal or sensitive.

00:09:12:22 - 00:09:45:25

The reason for that being that recordings of these hearings are kept on the website for some considerable time. All the information put into the examination is made available publicly. But if you do want to refer to particular sensitive information that has to be out of the public domain to comply with the GPDR regulations, then please talk to the case team because there will be a way of doing so in writing. So as of this morning, I think for those of you are there, there was one lady who wants to talk about a health condition of a member of her family.

00:09:46:04 - 00:10:18:03

Obviously, that had to be done in very general terms rather than talking about the specific health conditions of a particular person, for example. Now in terms of introductions, to speed up proceedings, what... Don't intend this morning to go through the traditional instructions of going through everybody who wishes speak because it tends to take a lot of time. I'm not particularly sure how helpful it is. And we obviously went through the instructions of the key parties or the the groups on the preliminary meeting. And, of course, we've already heard from lots of interested parties and residents, etcetera, well. as So in a way, the introductions have already taken place this week.

00:10:18:05 - 00:10:49:02

So everyone's happy with that. I don't intend to go through formal introductions. But when, at the beginning of each item, for example, the applicants and the councils want to name their representatives, then that, of course, is fine. And subject to what I've already said, if there is opportunity to allow representations from the floor, then you want to put up your hand, then we can

deal with that way and you can introduce yourselves at that time. But we already know people's faces. We know people's names by and large, and everyone's been introduced.

00:10:49:04 - 00:11:19:21

But when you speak, introduce yourself with your name. And if you're working for a group or, etcetera, your company, then give your position. is So everyone happy that we don't go through the normal traditional introductions? Okay. And when you do speak on each occasion, give your name, if relevant, the name of the organization, and please speak clearly into the microphone. And if you're not at the table with a microphone, wait for the roving microphone to come to you, and I will ask that we have people ready for that so that it can come to us as quickly as possible when we get to that point.

00:11:24:06 - 00:11:27:03

Does anybody intend to record the hearing today?

00:11:29:15 - 00:11:30:09

Okay.

00:11:34:23 - 00:11:42:11

Seem to have a mid afternoon break today. It's around about three thirty depending on what time we are in the where we are in the agenda, but we will be having a break.

00:11:44:14 - 00:12:19:28

For those joining virtually, please use the same link as you used today to access tomorrow's proceedings. We will keep a list of any action points that arise today. And I think our favored approach is that we will agree the action points as we go along, and we'll expect the relevant party to agree to that particular point. So we won't be going through at the end of the hearing the list of action points. We will just publish the action points online as soon as it's appropriate. But that makes it particularly important that we make sure everyone's clear on the action point when it is raised as an action point.

00:12:20:00 - 00:12:29:01

Sometimes it's not always that clear at the end of this discussion about what was actually meant. So let's try and be precise with action points, if everyone can bear that in mind.

00:12:31:04 - 00:12:51:27

And then please, can anyone who speaks today provide a written summary of the oral representation by deadline one? Okay. Before we move on to the substance of the agenda, it's my colleague, Ms. McEvoy, who'll be leading on-site selection and alternatives. Does anybody have any questions about the agenda or how this hearing will be conducted?

00:12:57:09 - 00:13:11:16

No no questions online. Okay. Well, I'm glad that is clear. So let's then proceed agenda to item two, which is the applicant's approach to site selection and alternatives.

00:13:12:08 - 00:13:23:08

Thank you. This agenda item concerns the applicant's approach to site selection and reasonable alternatives. Examining authority have reviewed Chapter five

00:13:25:10 - 00:13:28:14

and the site selection assessment documents.

00:13:30:04 - 00:14:09:02

From our reading of the application documents and the submissions received during the examination to date, applicant has explained that the Norwich Main initially formed the basis of the connection strategy, but was subsequently discounted following discussions with National Grid concerning available capacity and the scope for expansion. The discussion of this agenda item is intended to assist the examining authority in understanding how the chosen scheme evolved, how reasonable alternatives were assessed and whether environmental considerations drove the outcome.

00:14:09:07 - 00:14:28:06

And in addition, how the change from Norwich, Maine to Great Malton influenced the site selection process. So starting with topic A on this agenda item, which is the Norwich Main substation, I want to address my questions to the applicant. Can I ask please who will be speaking on behalf of the applicant on this topic?

00:14:29:26 - 00:14:52:05

Afternoon, sir. Toby Yates, associate Vincent Masons. I'll generally direct the questioning depending on where it needs to go. I'm joined to my right by Mr. Ian Douglas, who will be leading on matters in relation to sort of site selection more specifically. And then to my left by Mr. Sy Gillett, who can talk more closely around matters in relation to National Grid.

00:14:53:06 - 00:15:16:14

Mr. Yates, thank you. So in terms of starting the questioning, I'd like to explore the transition from Norwich Main substation to the eventual Great Molten point of connection. So my question really is what was the point at which the applicant considered Norwich, Maine to be effectively unavailable rather than simply less preferable?

00:15:19:05 - 00:15:51:05

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. I'll come to Mr. Gillette in a second for context that drew us to this area initially. Before I do that, it was conversations with National Grid that led us to Norwich, Maine in the first place. And at that point, we and the applicant team started to consider suitable solar sites from twenty kilometer radius from that Norwich, Maine substation in parallel to discussions that were ongoing with the National Grid.

00:15:51:07 - 00:16:28:18

So they were overlapping processes whereby the applicant was progressing their site selection for the solar from Norwich, Maine, given the conversations that have been had with National Grid. But then as a result of those conversations with National Grid, there's a point in time in that conversation where National Grid explained that there wasn't going to be suitable capacity at Norwich Main or the ability to do works to Norwich Main to extend the capacity that was unavailable at that time. And that's what

directed the applicant further south when National Grid had identified that there would be available capacity along the overhead line.

00:16:29:27 - 00:16:47:09

Thank you. So at that point, which stages of the site selection process had already been completed at the point that the decision was taken not to progress with Norwich Main? How much of the site selection process had been completed at that time?

00:16:50:13 - 00:17:04:00

So it's on behalf of the applicant. So as that's how in the site selection assessment, which is APP-two fifteen, is effectively a six stage process that was carried out in totality as the first four...

00:17:04:02 - 00:17:21:02

I didn't ask that question in terms of I just want to know how much or proportion of site selection had been completed at the point in time that a decision was taken not to progress with Norwich Main? Was it fifty percent, twenty percent, seventy five percent or even zero percent?

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So it's the first four stages out of those six that had been completed by reference to that Norwich Main, and it was after that Stage four that it switched to the Great Malton.

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Okay. That's helpful. So again, at that point in time, had the solar generating areas and connection infrastructure been decided upon?

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Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. No. Not decided upon, albeit as a result of the exercise that are being carried out from stage one to four, which I can run through in in high levels, if that would be useful. As a result of that, the applicant had identified solar sites that were suitable by reference to the different national policy tests and driven by factors which are set out in the documents, so can go into detail if that would be useful. As a result of that exercise at stages one to four in relation to Norwich, Maine, a suitable solar site had been established, which is what's been used ultimately for the scheme, but it wasn't the end of the process.

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The sort of validation ex that had been carried out, which is why I'm not saying that it's been decided because it wasn't the end of the site selection process.

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Okay. To follow on from that then, at what point during the project development process was Great Molten first identified as a potentially feasible alternative connection location?

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So it's on behalf of the applicants. I'm just asking the team if if we've got dates, if that would be useful. I'm not sure if it's been as precise as I say. It's sort of this this parallel exercises that happen with discussions with National Grid and the site selection in terms of suitable solar locations. And

then obviously, the exercise of identification of Crete Malton naturally flowed as a result of the end of that conversation with National Grid where they said, you can't use Norwich Main, you need to move somewhere and they've had line.

00:19:34:05 - 00:20:01:04

It's probably okay for now. Thank you. So I tend to follow on from that. So at what point at the point Norwich Main was discounted, what consideration was given to restarting the site selection process entirely from the new point of connection. So based on my question on that Great Molton has been chosen as the point of connection, was there a restart of the site selection process when Great Molton was chosen as the point of connection?

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Was the process started fresh, if you will?

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Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. No, it wasn't. And the reason being is set out at paragraph four point six point one of the site selection assessment, and that sets out that the sites that were identified as part of stages one to four, which were driven by Norwich, Maine, still remained within twenty kilometers when considered from Great Malton. So it wasn't necessary to do a complete rebrand because stages one to four, which established suitable solar sites by reference to the key test and national policy such as grid connection, radiance, topography, etcetera, that all still applied at the point of considering it from Great Malton because it falls within that twenty kilometer radius.

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And I think it's important at this point to identify that given stages one to four, whilst it was from Norwich, Maine, I. E, within twenty kilometers from Norwich Main, it then also fell within twenty kilometers from Great Malton. So suitable solar sites had been identified within a reasonable radius of what would become the point of connection. So the question that then might follow is, yes, of all that might be the case, but it's then still a different twenty kilometers, which is what stages five and six go on to determine.

00:21:23:02 - 00:21:58:11

But the the part I just want to quickly get across is that having established that suitable solar location as a result of stages one to four, which was still viable, that aligns with the alternatives position in national policy, which supports that, that doesn't then have to be the best site for solar generation. Point that policy gets across, and I'm pointing to paragraphs 4.3.9 and 4.3.15 of NPS EN1 here, that reflects that you just need to set out the main reasons for your choice.

00:21:58:14 - 00:21:59:01

Okay.

00:21:59:03 - 00:22:25:26

I'm aware of the policy. You for that. In essence, I was to ask the question, was it fresh, unconstrained search exercise undertaken based upon Great Moulton as the emerging point of connection? Was there a restart of the site selection process? And what you're telling me is there wasn't a complete fresh unconstrained search AXA undertaken, and Greg Lawson became the preferred point of connection.

00:22:26:08 - 00:22:46:08

So it's behalf of the applicant. That's correct in part, but just so I'm I'm clear on what I'm trying to get across here. It wasn't a fresh assessment in terms of what was done before and then start again, albeit stages five to six of the site selection assessment were fresh elements of a site selection assessment, which then identified.

00:22:46:25 - 00:23:01:23

In terms of the scheme before us, before the panel, the examination authority, would all the currently proposed solar sites have emerged at Great Molten in the starting point from the outset?

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To be it's on behalf of the applicant, yes.

00:23:06:22 - 00:23:13:21

K. So I can follow-up with that. Were any sites closer to Great Malton considered after Norwich Main failed?

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There'll be some behalf of the applicant. Again, yes, through stages five and six of that site selection assessment. You want to drill into that in more detail, it'd be mister Douglas that talks to that.

00:23:28:09 - 00:23:44:14

So in terms of the applicant in the applicant's view is the evidence is your principal evidence that the EXA should have confidence that the eventual project configuration remains the optimum reasonable solution despite the fundamental change in the point of connection.

00:23:46:21 - 00:24:20:28

Toby Hates, on behalf of the applicant, the applicant's position is that the solar sites identified are suitable solar sites by reference to the key tests in the national policy, MPS EN three and the factors influencing site selection. Tested in national policy isn't necessarily whether it's the optimum site selection, But the applicant's position is that they do fit those tests within national policy, that's clearly set out throughout each stage of the site selection. And therefore, that is the Stage one to four evidence that says that it is suitable in accordance with those tests.

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Okay. Thank you. I'll now turn to the local authorities. I ask whether South Norfolk District Council or Norfolk County Council have any questions or comments to make.

00:24:35:29 - 00:24:44:06

Thank you. Comments to make. I'll turn briefly to the interested parties. Does anybody have any comments to make on what they've just heard? There are two hands raised.

00:24:47:07 - 00:25:23:20

I just wanted to ask, obviously, the TEC register, there is a connection point called North Anglia Node A, which a lot of different projects are planning to connect to, which I assume will be on the new

transmission network, on the Norwich to Tilbury line. I just wanted to ask why when Norwich Main became unavailable, the applicant didn't consider also putting their project on North Anglia node A on the new transmission network rather than connecting it at an additional substation on the existing transmission line? Thank you.

00:25:23:22 - 00:25:30:19

Doctor. Perry, thank you. The applicants under no obligation to respond, but they can if they wish to make some comments if they choose so. Thank you.

00:25:32:23 - 00:25:59:04

Toby H, on behalf of the applicant, I'm joined online here. I would like to pass it, if that's okay, sir, to discuss this in more contextual detail. I'd just sort of flag as a high level answer. As a result of discussions with National Grid, they said there wasn't available capacity at Norwich Main, but did identify capacity as being available on the overhead line. The grid connection agreement that was then entered with National Grid identified a point of connection

00:26:01:08 - 00:26:28:09

at that point of connection that's going ahead with the scheme. And the key policy that frames this is paragraph 4.3.24 of National Policy Statement EN1, which identifies that the possibility of all suitable sites should be explored. In this context. We are pointed towards the overhead line, and that's what's being secured. It doesn't then stop other projects from finding suitable solar or other development that could go into that connection. But I would like to go to a colleague online who can give more details of that.

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Yes, that's okay. Thank you.

00:26:32:29 - 00:27:17:09

Good afternoon. Thank you. It's Dave Elvin from the applicant. Just to respond on the point about East Anglia connection node versus the connection agreement that we have with National Grid. So as my colleagues outlined, we originally went to National Grid and spoke about Norwich Main, and they said that there's basically no ability to extend that. And in such circumstances, what happens is Grid come back to the applicant in that context to say, if there's capacity on the overhead line, and that's what they've done in this case, they gave a us contract that said it's our responsibility to find the land and secure planning consent for a new substation.

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So that happened before the East Anglia connection node was envisaged, because our understanding is at that point in time, there weren't any other people applying to connect in that same locale.

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Subsequently, and it's absolutely true that on the National the Grid tech register that there is identified... There are a number of connection nodes in Ixtang are identified on that register. Those are of unknown location at this stage, and that links to National Grid's connections reform process. And basically, that's a little bit of a circular process whereby the queue of grid connections has been reviewed and some of those offers will be given to other projects in an order.

00:28:06:20 - 00:28:28:00

And depending on how many of those accept or decline those, that would dictate potentially where that new connection node could be. So National Grid have, I'd call it, a placeholder. That's what those connection nodes are. That's why they're not named as any particular location. And that refers to, as Thierry said there, to subsequent connections after the one that we have in this case.

00:28:30:22 - 00:28:32:07

You. That's helpful.

00:28:35:11 - 00:29:12:02

Please. Mallett, part of the BEPS team. I just really want to ask quickly. You had four options for site selection. And I have done a bit of analysis on what you came out with, and it seems to me very much so that Great Malton was squared into or squeezed into be the acceptable site. I would also ask why was there no assessment against all three sites within the Horlock rules? Because I feel that if that was taken forward, the plateau would have been the least acceptable.

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Thank you.

00:29:14:19 - 00:29:17:20

Just wanted to get... I can ask the applicant to respond.

00:29:24:05 - 00:29:26:07

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant.

00:29:27:25 - 00:30:07:02

So the approach to National Grid substation site selection, obviously, you should be aware, is separate from solar suitability, but it's also set out in the site selection assessment. It's in section three of that. And you'll see that sections three point three and three point four of that site selection assessment set out the guiding criteria, which guided effectively the identification of the suitable site for that new that new substation. The four key aspects of that are grid capacity, and that's in accordance with paragraph two point ten point fourteen of NPS EN three, similar test which applies for the solar.

00:30:08:07 - 00:30:39:18

Also, accessibility to the points of connection for abnormal indivisible loads, so a traffic based consideration, proximity to the four hundred k b over line, given there's gonna have to be a connection from National the Grid substation into that transmission network. And also, clearly, the site selection assessment sets out the key guiding criteria included both the Horlock rules, which is the sighting of the new substation itself and the whole foot rules, which relate to the overhead line elements of that site selection.

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Again, if you want to explore that in more detail how that was applied, we've got experts here that can talk to that. But the site selection assessment confirms that they did form a key part of that site selection exercise.

00:30:51:01 - 00:31:17:16

Sorry, Mr. Stitch, thank you for your explanation. Thank you. Okay. We'll move to Item 3b sorry, 2b, search area methodology. Again, my question to the applicant. Just want to understand a little more about the selection of the twenty kilometer radius as the preferred radii for site selection. That's referred in app forty one, which is chapter five of the environmental statement.

00:31:19:18 - 00:31:38:10

And the twenty kilometer radius is considered by the applicant to be a viable cable connection distance for a solar project of this scale. Can you explain how the initial search area was established? How is the twenty kilometer area established over the factors for selection of that radius?

00:31:39:18 - 00:32:12:05

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant, I'm going to pass shortly to my colleague, Mr. Douglas. The context for this is that, as referred IGP are a leading developer with various of these projects ongoing, and it's a it's a standard form approach that IGP have used across successful projects, including West Burton solar project, Cotton solar project, and a list of others that are either in examination or have closed examination. So it's well preceded on IGP projects, and there's other precedent that's referred to in the documents.

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But Mr. Douglas can talk through the suitability of that in more detail.

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Thank you, yes.

00:32:18:27 - 00:32:22:11

You, Mr. Yates. Ian Douglas on behalf of the applicant.

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I'm not sure there's much more I can actually add to, well, the context that Mr. Yates has set out there. But

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the setting of a twenty kilometer search radius is, as I say,

00:32:44:00 - 00:33:00:06

an approach that has been adopted by this developer before on other schemes? And is factors taken into account will relate to their view in terms of the context of

00:33:02:08 - 00:33:06:08

the topography of the land, irradiance levels and

00:33:08:01 - 00:33:38:12

land availability. And they will also take into account quantum and scale of the scheme, the generating capacity. And in addition to that, within that twenty kilometer search radius or within a particular

search radius, any particular crossings, constraints in relation to highways, water courses and other infrastructure.

00:33:39:18 - 00:34:04:19

And in this instance, this was based on those factors, the twenty kilometer search area was deemed to be suitable, and that was set at the time initially for the Norwich Main when Norwich Main was being considered, as explained by Mr. Yates. And the search for sites took place within that radius.

00:34:05:04 - 00:34:33:04

I just want to establish, because there had been a transition in the point of connection, was the search radius moved? Was it altered to reflect the Great point of connection or did it remain static? So let's say you're choosing Norwich, Maine, you have a twenty kilometer search radius, Then it transitioned to Great Milton. Did that... Did the center of that radius move? Yes. Now

00:34:33:25 - 00:35:17:24

It'd be on behalf of the applicant. Yes. It did. The center moved. The twenty kilometer distance didn't. So the Norwich Main substation was used as the center for twenty kilometer radius from Norwich Main. When the point of connection then later changed to Great Malton, it was a twenty kilometer radius from Great Malton that was used. And as I said, it's a standard approach IGP used because it's considered suitably precautionary to apply across all of the different solar developments. And notably, it's paragraph four point two point four might be helpful here from the site selection assessment that sets out some of the different radiuses and search areas used by other projects, which obviously will have different contexts.

00:35:17:26 - 00:35:44:22

And you've got those ranging from five kilometers up to twenty kilometers. And as I say, the examples of twenty are IGP, Longfield Solar Farm is five kilometers, Tilbridge is fifteen kilometers, for example, Cape Breton is eight kilometers. I won't read them all out. But the point being that twenty kilometers is clearly suitably precautionary and therefore applicable in both the context of using Norwich Main substation and then Great Malton as the center point for that radius.

00:35:46:03 - 00:36:01:24

Okay. Thank you. I have no further questions on that topic. I'll just look to the local authorities, Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk District Council, interested parties. Doctor Barry?

00:36:03:03 - 00:36:20:07

Just wanted to ask about the mapping that you've used in your site selection assessment document. It appears to be inconsistent. So initially, when you were looking at

00:36:22:25 - 00:36:56:15

the earlier mapping, it's labeled in figure eight that a very large area in brown beige, which is labeled as unconstrained land, including ALC grade three. So led that you to the selection of your solar sites. But when you moved the latest search area around the actual point of connection at Great Malton, figure ten maps planning and environmental constraints. Figure eleven then shows only tiny blue areas as unconstrained land.

00:36:57:07 - 00:37:34:22

And the reason is that at that stage, you've excluded ALC grades one to three land from your unconstrained land mapping. So you appear to have one criteria for selecting your land initially and then to be using a completely different criteria for your assessment of alternatives at a later date? And equally, if you are saying that grades one to three land means that the land should be not used for your scheme, then that actually covers the majority of your solar sites.

00:37:35:24 - 00:37:36:09

Thank you.

00:37:49:03 - 00:38:24:06

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. So I guess we just take it step by step. Steps one to three of the initial site selection exercise considered key factors, as I've said, from the NPS EN3 factors influencing site selection. At the end of Stage three, suitable sites that had excluded sites involving non BMP land had resulted in there being insufficient land available to deliver a scheme of this size if BMV land was to be avoided.

00:38:24:20 - 00:39:13:04

And obviously, the reason the applicant had sought to avoid BMV land was pursuant to the national policy test that sets out BMV land should be avoided where possible, which is why in those early stages, the applicant had sought to avoid it. At stage four, this is still from Norwich, Maine, the applicant then, given the limited extent of the non BMV land within the twenty kilometer search area, reintroduced land as part of its consideration land that would involve BMV, and allowed that's permitted by the national policy envisaged by the national policy because EN3 says that it is likely that applicants' developments will use some agricultural land, and that is what we've had to do because it wasn't possible to deliver a scheme of this scale without using it.

00:39:14:05 - 00:39:54:24

That's what led to the identification of a suitable site from Norwich, Maine. Turning to the point then as to how that potentially looks to differ from Great Malton at Stage five, given, as I explained, it wasn't a rip up and start again of the exercise, but it was intended to be an enhancement of that exercise to see if there was other potentially suitable sites from Great Malton. The intention of Stage five was to identify whether there were any potentially non BMV sites within twenty kilometers of Great Malton that may to be pose a reasonable alternative for the sites that have been selected from stages one to four.

00:39:55:06 - 00:40:25:16

And as explained in the site selection assessment, as a result of stage five and the potential developer areas, there wasn't any sites that were then considered on that basis. And that's where we proceed to stage six, where effectively, again, similar to that change at stage four where it was done from Norwich Main point of connection, there was then consideration given to alternate development zones where the potential of including BMV at that stage from Great Malton was also considered.

00:40:25:23 - 00:40:42:07

But again, the conclusion was that there wasn't suitable sites identified. And I come back to my point earlier that even if there was, it wouldn't change the applicant's position that the site it selected is suitable because the test isn't to find the best available site in any event.

00:40:43:11 - 00:40:49:20

So to summarize Doctor. Perry's question, the exclusion criteria adopted during the course of the selection process?

00:40:51:22 - 00:41:29:22

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. No is the short answer because the factors influencing site selection and design from national policy were the key factors that underpinned the assessment from stages one to four from Norwich Main and also stages five to six. I think where the potential confusion comes from is how BMV was sought to be avoided and reintroduced as part of both of those site selection exercises. It might be useful to point here that since the application was submitted, some updated predictive mapping has been published by DEFRA.

00:41:29:29 - 00:41:44:05

And that sort of confirms this point further actually that when you look at the site more widely, including twenty kilometers from Great Malton, it isn't possible in that area to avoid the MV land to deliver a scheme of this scale.

00:41:45:26 - 00:41:52:23

Thank you. If there's a further hand raised, we can take a further question. Councillor Charley?

00:41:53:21 - 00:42:27:09

You so much. Yes, Victoria Chan on behalf of my Hopeful Frutin Council. I just really wanted to ask whether comparative assessment demonstrates as to why the disperse of a multisite configuration was preferred to a more consolidated configuration capable of delivering the scheme. This is sort of based on the sister application going through called the droves of IGP who have stated in that application that continuous sites with fewest landowners is their prioritized

00:42:29:10 - 00:42:34:16

approach to this. And, obviously, East Pai Solar is spread and dispersed.

00:42:35:27 - 00:42:42:22

K. Council Chandra, we will be dealing with the land ownership further on under agenda item two. Is that okay?

00:42:42:24 - 00:42:44:07

Yes, sorry. It's just the site selection.

00:42:44:09 - 00:42:46:00

Okay, thank Okay,

00:42:48:12 - 00:42:56:19

I've got no further questions on agenda item 2b. We'll move to agenda item 3c, the Great Malton selection.

00:43:00:15 - 00:43:07:02

So we'd to understand the selection of Great Molten as opposed location for the National Grid Substation.

00:43:08:22 - 00:43:20:23

We're particularly interested as an examining authority and understanding the relative importance of environmental, operational, engineering and cumulative impact considerations in arriving at that conclusion.

00:43:24:11 - 00:43:38:21

So to the applicant, can you explain the principal reason that Great Malton emerged from the site selection process as the preferred location for the National Grid Substation? Thank you.

00:43:43:16 - 00:44:19:11

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. If you want to go into more detail, I will pass to colleagues. Again, I'd just point back to Sections three point three and three point four of the site selection assessment that sets out the overarching principles that guided that site selection exercise, I suppose, in high level terms. And again, if you want to go into more detail, I'll rely on colleagues to sort of principal elements of that site selection for the substation were suitable transport arrangements and access and then proximity to the overhead lines given that's where the connection will be required from the substation into the transmission network.

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We can explore each of those in further detail if that would be useful.

00:44:22:20 - 00:44:39:18

Okay. This is a high level issue specific hearing. So really it's about understanding the high level decisions. So again, you stated transport was decisive and you stated the overhead lines proximity were decisive. So they are the two decisive factors in the selection of Great Malton. Am I correct?

00:44:39:23 - 00:44:57:16

Yes. And then in addition to the grid capacity as well and then also following the application of the Hallock rules and the Hallford rules, which goes into some nuanced environmental factors that did influence that site selection. So it's the four principal aspects are set out in that site selection exercise.

00:45:00:05 - 00:45:01:18

Okay. Mr. Dates, thank you.

00:45:03:17 - 00:45:18:14

So you've explained the two key drivers being transport and overhead line proximity. If, for example, Norwich Main substation had been located elsewhere, Would grape molten still have emerged as the preferred location?

00:45:37:17 - 00:46:10:00

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. Pause there slightly just because it goes slightly hypothetical, if I can say, sir. I think the distinction that's worth noting is obviously the exercise that we carried out for the solar, for example, in relation to Norwich, Maine as an existing point of collection. So therefore, the focus was on the national policy test for identifying suitable solar sites. Whereas for a new point of connection, that's guided entirely from the outset from discussions with National Grid where there's availability for a point of connection.

00:46:10:12 - 00:46:22:05

And then the site selection exercise arises from there by reference to the key tests from the Horlock rules, the Holford rules, the national policy, viability and proximity, as I've explained, as of four key tests.

00:46:23:04 - 00:46:28:29

So could I put it this way? Is Great Malton the optimum site for the National Grid substation?

00:46:39:18 - 00:47:07:26

So, yes, on behalf of the applicant pausing again there just because of the use of optimum. I'm conscious not to rule out the potential that there's there's other areas that that that could be used for future developments and points of connection. But here, the site that's been selected at Great Malton is suitable, does meet all of the tests I've set out, And therefore, it's robust when you apply those different tests. So it doesn't need to be the optimum. It just has to hit each of those tests, it does.

00:47:08:11 - 00:47:15:13

Great. Thank you. So again, sticking with Great Malton, just want to understand the cumulative infrastructure considerations.

00:47:17:01 - 00:47:25:25

To what extent has the applicant assessed the concentration of existing and proposed energy infrastructure in the vicinity of the Norwich Main substation?

00:47:33:12 - 00:47:47:23

It's on behalf of the applicants. I'm going to pass to my colleague, Mr. Booker, who can deal with environmental impact and cumulative. Just so Mr. Booker, please clear, are you talking about cumulative at Norwich or at the new points of connection for Great Malton?

00:47:50:09 - 00:47:53:25

Norwich, Maine initially, and then Great Malton afterwards. Thank you.

00:47:58:19 - 00:48:03:13

Russell Buckley on behalf of the applicants. I can only speak to this

00:48:05:27 - 00:48:06:16

apologies.

00:48:08:07 - 00:48:39:28

It certainly sounded like I was being amplified from my interview, but there we go. So I can only talk to this point from the EIA perspective rather than the site selection assessment, which was done slightly earlier. But from the EIA perspective, in the cumulative assessment, so we looked at all of the cumulative energy qualifying cumulative energy schemes within a twenty five kilometer radius of the site. We also took into account so that distance and I just know that you're asking about the distances earlier.

00:48:40:00 - 00:49:16:03

So we look at that distance because we go through all of the different technical topics. I'll go through and identify zone of influence with the scheme from every technical topic and then essentially push out as far as those topics go. We also took into account a lot of feedback on cumulative effects because the number of additional schemes were identified in the relevant reps, as I'm sure that you've seen. And that was why we ended up with the twenty five kilometer area, and all of the applicable energy schemes as identified within the chapter are assessed.

00:49:17:15 - 00:49:25:25

But as I say, that was as we presented things in the ES as opposed to site selection process, if that was what you were referring to.

00:49:26:26 - 00:49:41:06

Mr. Pabtree, thank you. I suppose my interest now really stems from Great Malton is the preferred substation location. Was there an assessment done on the clustering effect of locating a substation in Great Malton?

00:49:42:10 - 00:50:14:11

It would be on behalf of the applicant. I think the point here, sir, is some overlap with what's been discussed earlier, but the test that we've applied in terms of site selection obviously come from national policy. Paragraphs two point ten point seventeen to two point ten point eighteen set out where cumulative impacts form part of that exercise. So if I can just read it to give full context, it explains to maximize existing grid infrastructure, minimize disruption to existing local community infrastructure or biodiversity and reduce overall costs.

00:50:15:00 - 00:50:46:28

Applicants may choose the site based on nearby available grid export capacity. Point there is that the applicant sought to connect into Norwich, Maine, which is existing infrastructure, and that was the initial discussion that was held with National Grid. The paragraphs of that national policy then go on to explain the application because of the cumulative impacts of situating a solar farm in proximity to other energy generating stations and infrastructure. Point there is that we did through that discussion with National Grid to try and utilize existing connection infrastructure.

00:50:47:08 - 00:51:18:02

National Grid then directed us elsewhere. We then applied the suitable tests, which don't have a focus on cumulative impacts in terms of identifying suitable solar sites, suitable site for a new national grid substation, given that's what the grid connection agreement required. But as to Mr. Bookley then explained, the cumulative aspect as the national policy tests required were then considered as parts of

an assessment once that site selection exercise had concluded and identified the solar site and substation site as being suitable.

00:51:18:09 - 00:51:26:19

The cumulative assessment was then carried out to ensure that any effects arising from the works that were proposed from those sites were acceptable in policy terms.

00:51:28:24 - 00:51:31:08

Mr. Booker, I think the answer is yes. Am I correct?

00:51:34:08 - 00:51:35:00

Yes.

00:51:35:19 - 00:51:36:28

Thank you.

00:51:43:24 - 00:51:53:24

Have no further questions. I'll ask if anybody's questions, local authorities or interested parties. I can see two hands raised. That is Doctor. Berry and this councillor.

00:51:54:04 - 00:52:14:10

Thank you. I just wanted some clarification on the site selection for the National Grid substation. So as I understand it, you originally chose a site further south from Great Malton as the location for the National Grid substation.

00:52:16:15 - 00:52:30:24

Those of us who live here knew that that site that you had chosen was already under option for a solar farm for Simpson's Malting, is our local Malting, which we made you aware of.

00:52:32:24 - 00:53:06:10

So I wanted to ask, what point did you actually do any environmental assessment of that specific piece of land? And what assessments did you do? Because you appeared not to know that it was already under option to another company. And then when you subsequently realized that land was unavailable, you decided to move your substation location closer to Great Malton. You then presented that to the community at a targeted consultation.

00:53:07:07 - 00:53:46:20

And even though this new substation was well, it was a lot closer to the village. And as we heard this morning, within maybe twelve meters of people's gardens, you told us at that point that there were no new impacts from this new location for your National Grid Substation. Therefore, the preliminary environmental impact report would not be updated, and there would not be any new surveys to take into account this quite significant move of an extremely large piece of infrastructure closer to our villages.

00:53:47:09 - 00:54:07:18

So I would just like some clarification about that process of site selection, subsequent site movement and then the lack of any updates to the preliminary environmental impact report to take into account the new location of the National Grid substation right next to people's homes? You.

00:54:08:12 - 00:54:19:24

We'll be dealing with that under agenda item E, but it's a very detailed question. So to avoid that detail being lost, if the applicant is willing to ask that question now, I'd be very grateful.

00:54:21:10 - 00:54:51:11

Toby Hates, on behalf of the applicants. Yes, sir. If you split it up into two parts, I'll deal briefly with the first part, and then I'll pass to Mr. Elvin online to deal with the second part. First part being how did, I suppose, the exercise work and the environmental elements that were touched on. And then the part that Mr. Elvin will come in at will be to deal with the land position and the awareness that we had in that regard. Guess conscious not to repeat information that's in the written documents.

00:54:52:03 - 00:55:39:01

But as a result of using the four key tests I explained earlier for the new substation identification, that did identify three possible sites. And the site selection assessment then works through each of those three sites. But you'll see in the site selection assessment, which was submitted with the applications, obviously, following the payer at the point of application, that recognizes the existence of the planning application for the solar project and then how that influences the shift in the originally identified three options to then the option that was then land on in this analysis within that site selection assessment, which shows as a result of identifying that planning application for the solar project, how that new site was assessed and considered suitable.

00:55:39:03 - 00:55:46:18

So I'll leave that there for now and then pass to Mr. Elvin to talk about the sort of property and land negotiation side.

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Mr. Yates, thank you.

00:55:49:27 - 00:56:27:19

Thank you, Mr. Yates. Yes, just to confirm, so the landing question at site one is adjacent to the other solar farm that was mentioned, which I believe is being developed by a company called PACE, P A C E. It is something we were aware of very early on in the process because that land is owned by the same landowners that owns part of Site one. So that wasn't a factor in determining it, as Mr Yates outlined. It was to do with the surveys and feedback from the environmental consultants that changed the proposed location from further south to site further north within site one.

00:56:31:07 - 00:56:36:08

Albert, thank you for that explanation. So I have a question for Karl Katchpole.

00:56:40:06 - 00:57:12:02

The development consent order when you were looking for a site to use, what were the I know you said there was four criteria that has to be ticked. Reading through some of the things that should be

looked for, grid connection feasibility, that's possibly a tick. The landscape and visual impact, definitely across. Ecological and biodiversity effects, again, definitely across. Flood risk and drainage, not sure. Agriculture, land impacts, definitely across.

00:57:12:24 - 00:57:26:00

Heritage and arcology, definitely across. Highway and construction access, probably across. And noise and residential amenity, definitely across. So which four criteria did you actually comply with?

00:57:27:28 - 00:57:32:26

That's okay, Paul. Thank you. I'll ask the applicant to respond. Mr. H, thank you.

00:57:33:06 - 00:58:06:05

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. Happy to pick those up in more detail in writing, I think, to make sure we capture each of those. I suppose the initial response is to try and give some comfort is that in landscape terms, again, there's recognition that virtually all nationally significant energy infrastructure projects will have adverse effects on the landscape. That's paragraph 5.10.5 of EN1. The fact that this one does isn't an anomaly. It's a large scale solar development policy recognizes that would be the case, so it isn't as easy as to say it's across.

00:58:06:22 - 00:58:47:04

BMV explained earlier, the policy test is to try and avoid BMV where possible, failing that the policy envisages that it can be used. I've explained how the earlier stages did seek to avoid where possible, that wasn't possible and therefore was reintroduced in policy test terms. Whilst we identified an as impact on BNB, it's a tick in policy test terms and that's the planning balance that needs to go forward. Same with the grid connection and the other points that I can deal in turn in writing, but I think there's a distinction between effects that then arise and the policy test in terms of identifying suitable solar sites and the effects that may arise from developments of this nature.

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The applicants application documents at the moment already set out, we can draw out specific parts, do tick each of those boxes as appropriate for a scheme of this nature.

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Steve, thank you. If we take that forward as an action point for deadline one, please, to address the questions raised by Councillor Carl Cashpole. Councillor Cashpole, is that acceptable?

00:59:10:21 - 00:59:19:24

Thank you. Okay. We'll now move to agenda item two d, which is the role of land availability in site selection.

00:59:21:19 - 01:00:05:21

So the purpose of this part of the agenda is to understand the role that land availability played in the site's evolution and selection process. The examining authority appreciates that deliverability is a legitimate planning consideration and that voluntary agreements can be an important aspect of scheme development. However, the documents before us appear to indicate that land availability was a particularly influential factor throughout the site selection process. We therefore wish to understand

whether environmental suitability informed landowner engagement or whether landowner engagement itself materially influenced which locations were subsequently assessed.

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So we really want to examine the robustness methodology of and whether the treatment of land availability is consistent with the applicant's obligations in relation to alternatives.

01:00:18:22 - 01:00:28:26

So my first question, can you assist the examining authority by explaining at a high level when landowner engagement first commenced in relation to the scheme? Thank you.

01:00:30:29 - 01:00:34:24

Toby Yates on behalf of the applicant. I'll pass to Mr. Elvin online.

01:00:36:08 - 01:00:38:10

Mr. Yates, thank you. Mr. Elvin?

01:00:40:08 - 01:01:21:05

Yes, thank you, Mr. Yates. So essentially, when we develop any project, we look at the point of connection, as has already been highlighted, have a search radius, and we look at a number of factors, primarily at that point, constraints. So for example, if you were looking at Norwich Lamp Main as we originally started, you probably wouldn't head north very far before you came across the city of Norwich, that area would be excluded. So you're then into refine areas on that basis, and then we go out to the landowners in that area that we believe there's suitable land from a planning perspective, and that's a myriad of points, as I'm sure you're well aware.

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And then during the dialogue with landowners, what we tend to find is some land is available, some land is not available, and it can be a whole host of reasons that the landowner may say,

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regardless of what is on a land grade map, for example, some people will tell us that better to farm than another. And that's not just based on land grade, it's based on other factors. So it just becomes quite an iterative process of working in combination with those planning constraints and with landowners and that feedback. So it's a simple... You can say that looks like the best land and turn up there, you wanted to use compulsory barrels, which we don't, for securing land for the sites.

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So

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I think that's probably, in principle, how we go about it, and that's consistent across all our sites. That's probably the simplest way of explaining it. Happy to take further questions if that's useful.

01:02:24:24 - 01:02:44:05

I do actually, Mr. Elvenar, if I can. So did the applicant first identify environmentally suitable areas and then seek landowner participation? Or was it the reverse that you identified willing landowners and then assessed those land parcels against environmental criteria?

01:02:45:11 - 01:03:09:11

In terms of order, it was the former. So looking at the event... Environmental impact. So that's on assessment as a desktop assessment. It's obviously pre survey. But... So we did that first and then went to the landowners. Yes. Once we got feedback from the landowners, we then revisit that process to sort of refine that desktop assessment, if that makes sense.

01:03:10:09 - 01:03:24:10

Mr. Allen, thank you. Can you point us to any information in the application submissions that would indicate was the that order of the selection process, the environmental screening first, followed by the landowner engagement?

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I think

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that's preferable if that's okay, sir.

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Can we agree that as an action point?

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Absolutely.

01:03:34:26 - 01:03:39:03

So Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. If I can just start at this stage

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Toby, it's... Thank you.

01:03:40:09 - 01:04:15:09

As well to give some comfort. I think the way the questions posed is is whether it was a sort of clear chronology of, okay, you've got the perfect site as a result of your site selection exercise, then let's go and speak to those landowners only. I think in practice, there's an element of overlap where you've got a site selection exercise that's ongoing in relation to identifying suitable sites. And in parallel, you have an exercise to understand will any of this actually be available from a land negotiations perspective because ultimately, scheme of this scale would never come forward if there was no willing landowners.

01:04:16:00 - 01:04:52:26

And just on that, as we've explained in detail this morning or this afternoon rather, the document set out how the site selection exercise when considered in isolation identifies the sites that form part of the scheme as being suitable under the policy tests. The point here in terms of willing landowners is

dealt with more by reference to the Planning Act two thousand and eight guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land because what that sets out is that applicants have to be able to reasonably demonstrate that they have considered alternatives to the use of compulsory acquisition.

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So that puts an emphasis and a primacy on being able to have land under voluntary agreement because if you'd identified a parcel of land that's suitable as a result of the site selection exercise, but it's not available in a property perspective with landowners, and then you've got other sites which are suitable as a result of the environmental exercise, which the applicant did, that is then available to willing landowners. That is then preferred by reference to the compulsory acquisition guidance because it shows that you've avoided the need to rely on compulsory acquisition powers.

01:05:27:15 - 01:06:06:00

Final point I'll just make on that to sort of clarify the potential confusion then, the scheme does seek compulsory acquisition powers, as you're aware. But as explained in the statement of reasons, which is APP-eighteen, that is primarily as a fallback in relation to the main sites where voluntary agreement is in place. And the necessity there is that the alternative to compulsory acquisition is the voluntary agreement. So if that fails, is that in accordance with the guidance to seek the compulsory acquisition as a fallback? But in reality, that's a very different situation to seeking compulsory acquisition powers over an entire site where you've not got a voluntary agreement in place in the first place.

01:06:07:10 - 01:06:17:20

Thank you. So in terms of the examiner, for examination purposes, it would really be helpful to understand whether one process materially influenced the other. Can you answer my question, please?

01:06:19:13 - 01:06:23:20

Maybe it's on behalf of the applicant. We'll take that away and respond in detail in writing.

01:06:24:10 - 01:06:26:07

Just confirm that with an action point?

01:06:27:01 - 01:06:27:25

Yes, sir.

01:06:27:27 - 01:06:28:17

Thank you.

01:06:30:19 - 01:06:42:06

Okay. And again, perhaps on that vein, were there any occasions where land came forward because a landowner was willing to participate and that availability influenced the subsequent environmental assessment process?

01:06:45:19 - 01:07:17:13

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. Again, if we go into landowner discussions, I'll point to Mr. Elvin. But the answer is no because the site selection exercise was carried out, as we've explained,

accordance in with that six stage process that one didn't influence the other. They were running parallel, and the ultimate decision making may influence the other. But it isn't a case that because you've got a willing landowner, you then can manufacture the different policy tests to show that it's suitable. It's too robust processes that follow each other in parallel.

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Perspective, is a concern that landowner willingness appears to have driven the process much earlier than the environmental assessment. That is our concern at this time.

01:07:35:17 - 01:08:09:03

Toby Yates, on behalf the applicant. That of concern is understood, and we know that's been raised in the relevant representations. What we can seek to draw out further from the action point that we just picked up is to explain the position more fully as to how the site selection exercise is inextricably linked to landowner negotiations and how each of those do play a role in determining what is ultimately the site that's put forward and explain how one doesn't necessarily influence the other, but they form part of the whole package that's considered to identify a suitable site for development.

01:08:11:18 - 01:08:32:28

Mr. Yates, thank you. So my next question, I think Mr. Yates and Mr. Elvin may already have answered. I'll ask the question again. So I'd like to explore the relationship between environmental suitability and commercial availability. Was environmental screening undertaken before engagement with landowners? Mr. Elvin indicated it was. Is that the case?

01:08:35:16 - 01:08:39:16

It will be on behalf of the applicants. Yes, Mr. Alvin is confirmed.

01:08:40:08 - 01:08:58:14

Okay. And again, can you explain the nature of that screening? So there's an environmental screening. How thoroughgoing comprehensive was the environmental screening? And that's my question. Just to dig down to know how much screening was undertaken. Was it high level? Was it quite comprehensive? Thank you.

01:09:11:08 - 01:09:19:04

Mister, it's on behalf the applicant, of I'll go to Mr Elvin who can probably dig into that a little bit further than I can.

01:09:19:06 - 01:09:21:11

Mr Yates, thank you. Mr Elvin?

01:09:24:08 - 01:09:54:18

Thank you, sir. Yes, it might be easier. We can provide a document that we would have used early in the process that highlights all of the different types of environmental effects. It's a desktop assessment, as I mentioned earlier. So that has a range of things. So that has things like flood risks considered, heritage assets, scheduled monuments, SSIs, listed buildings, a vast array, probably thirty, forty different subjects.

01:09:54:23 - 01:10:27:21

So we go through each of those things and look at those constraints using publicly available online data with respect to each of those separate environmental aspects. So we do run that process on the whole area within that twenty kilometer range that's been discussed as a start point to identify areas which we would then approach landowners within that section. But I'm happy to to to share that document. Not sure that that's something we've submitted. It's not something we've previously been asked for in other examinations, but no problem with sharing that whatsoever.

01:10:28:01 - 01:10:29:02

That's helpful, sir.

01:10:29:04 - 01:10:35:16

Mr. Alvin, that's very helpful. If that could be taken forward as an action point, to receive that document. I'm very grateful. Thank you.

01:10:35:26 - 01:10:39:16

Of course. What is the document? What's the document called, just for the record?

01:10:40:13 - 01:10:44:03

I think if we call it a desktop planning review, that's okay, sir.

01:10:46:03 - 01:10:49:24

That's our name for that document, but that's... Yeah. We can call it that.

01:10:50:17 - 01:11:01:19

Thank you. That's very helpful. My question back to Mr. Yates. Would environmentally preferable land have been assessed if it was not controlled by a willing landowner?

01:11:03:20 - 01:11:25:08

Maybe it's on behalf of the applicant. Again, sorry, don't seem like I'm combative, but again, it's... The the test they're applying isn't necessarily whether it's preferable to identify land that is suitable when you've applied those tests. I just want to be clear there because what I don't want is conversation around landowner discussions, which is, as I explained, parallel

01:11:26:26 - 01:12:01:00

commercial exercise to influence the robustness of the site selection that's being carried out. And as it goes into detail in the documents, I won't cover in too much detail here. Stage one of the site selection exercise covers things at a fairly high level around grid connection that's pursuant to paragraph two ten thirteen to two ten eighteen of E and three, the radiance and site topography, which is two ten point one one to two point one two of E and three and also the size, shape and suitability of the site.

01:12:01:07 - 01:12:39:27

There are high level considerations that come in at an early stage in terms of site selection for the solar. Obviously, if there's no indication of suitable solar as a result of applying that test for site selection purposes, would it make sense from a commercial perspective to go and engage landowners there because you could get a land agreement for site that isn't suitable? On the flip side, which I think

is where you're focusing more, just because it would be prudent of a developer to then go and approach landowners where initial indications at an early stage are that actually there is potential suitable sites here, doesn't then mean that the rest of that assessment from a site selection perspective is undermined or isn't robust.

01:12:39:29 - 01:13:17:03

And the site selection assessment is pretty clear at every stage how the different elements of the national policy, not landowner negotiations, either lead to the inclusion or exclusion of certain sites. And it's the outcome of that process, not the landowner process that has led to the site selection exercise. The benefit, as I've explained in parallel, is that if you then got willing landowners that have signed up to option agreements for those sites, you then got a site that's suitable environmental terms and also limits the need to rely on compulsory acquisition powers, which is then a prudent scheme to bring forward in accordance with both policy and compulsory acquisition guidance.

01:13:18:02 - 01:13:25:13

Thank you. I'll look to the local authorities and interested parties. Doctor. Barry is a hand raised.

01:13:26:18 - 01:13:38:15

I have three questions. Firstly, it was actually the first question that you had asked to Mr. Elvin. What was the date of that landowner engagement began? He never actually gave us a date.

01:13:39:28 - 01:13:43:18

And I'll put it to the applicant. Thank you, Doctor. Perry. Thank you. Mr. Yates?

01:13:45:08 - 01:13:51:11

Toby, it's on behalf of the applicant. I'm not sure we have that specific date in front of us, but we can build that into our written submissions.

01:13:51:13 - 01:13:53:28

Mr. Yates, we'll take that forward as an action point. Thank you.

01:13:55:02 - 01:14:37:11

My second question was to do with these environmental checks that you did when selecting the land. So a large amount site seven of is actually in currently in the countryside stewardship scheme for the conservation of red list birds, such as lapwing, skylarks, and turtledoves. So we are paying public money to create habitat for them. Why were those sites not ruled out from your choice? And there are other areas of land which equally recently had been in that scheme to create specific areas for conservation.

01:14:39:01 - 01:14:52:07

This was all visible on Magic Map, which I assume is what you were using to do your selection from the list of items that Mr. Elvin discussed. So I just wanted to know why

01:14:54:25 - 01:15:01:09

inclusion in the countryside stewardship scheme did not automatically rule out these sites as unacceptable. REPRESENTATIVE:]

01:15:02:01 - 01:15:07:02

Doctor. Deberry, thank you for your question. Again, I'll ask Mr. Yates, the applicant, to answer. Thank you. Mr. Yates?

01:15:08:14 - 01:15:50:14

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant. So you'll see, I guess, most clearly at stage two of the site selection assessment for suitable sites, you'll see that there's various environmental and planning constraints that need to be considered when identifying a suitable site. That includes things such as agricultural land classification, which is being discussed, and this policy relating to that also includes proximity to sensitive human receptors or dwellings, and that's set out in National Policy, paragraphs two point one zero point one nine of NPS EN three amongst areas of flood risk, and you'd be well aware that the majority of the site is in located Flood Zone one.

01:15:51:01 - 01:16:24:23

It also then, as part of that Stage two of the site selection assessment, considers various designations in relation to landscape, ecology and cultural heritage. Point I'm getting across here is that there's various elements that need to be considered and have different national policy that points to how those need to be considered. And they have been and that's set out in the site selection exercise. And the selection of a site and suitability is driven by the key factors that are identified in the national policy as well as consideration of these other factors.

01:16:25:00 - 01:17:05:08

And in practice, you might move away from a site that's got a particular ecological designation. I can't talk about in too much detail. The key point is you might then move to a site where it's got other ecological or planning constraints. And that is why the policy sets out the different tests that need to be applied, including the likes of BMV where flexibility is given that if you cannot avoid a particular constraint and you've sought to do so where possible, you then are allowed to include it. It's the application of those policy tests, which the applicant has done, including in relation to ecological designations that is still determined that the site that was selected is deemed suitable in terms of the planning policy and on balance.

01:17:06:21 - 01:17:17:06

Thank you. A lot of information there. I just wondered whether you'd be willing to respond in writing to the second question raised by Doctor. Perry as an action point. Is that acceptable? We can do that.

01:17:18:19 - 01:17:23:06

It would be on behalf of the applicant so that we can speak to our oncologist to pick that up for sure.

01:17:23:15 - 01:17:26:17

Thanks, I'm very grateful. Thank you indeed. Doctor. Perry, your third question?

01:17:26:22 - 01:18:10:23

Thank you. My final question. So you've said that it was impossible to create a smaller scheme without well, it was impossible to create this scheme without using BMV land. So did you consider a smaller scheme or indeed no scheme at all? Because there was a point on the third of December

twenty twenty four when Ireland Green Power wrote to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero about the regional solar targets because the regional solar target for East Anglia at that point, T7, was nine hundred megawatts for this period, two thousand thirty one to 'thirty five.

01:18:11:23 - 01:18:49:20

And Macquarie, your owner, also wrote the Department for Energy Scooter net zero, which we found through Freedom of Information, saying that there were multiple Macquarie projects of this type, which wouldn't get grid connections if the existing way of calculating the regional solar targets remained in place. And Macquarie then asked for the distribution and transmission targets to be combined so that projects such as this, their own transmission scale projects, would be able to secure grid connections.

01:18:50:07 - 01:19:45:21

I then had a meeting on the twenty seventh of January twenty twenty five with DESNES at Macquarie headquarters specifically to discuss projects in these regions which were affected. And T7, our region, was one of the regions discussed. And this specific project, East Bisola, was discussed at that meeting, we found, from Freedom of Information requests. So my question is, really, when Island Green Power and Macquarie discovered that there was no actual need for these transmission projects under the Clean Power two thousand thirty action plan, its regional existing regional targets and no land other than BMV land was available, why did you not decide at that point not to develop this project at all? You already had no connection at Norwich Main.

01:19:46:03 - 01:20:10:04

Surely at that point, the answer was this project was not needed and you had no connection. And therefore, the logical conclusion, if there was also no land other than BNV land, the logical conclusion was not to develop the project at all rather than lobbying government to change the way that the regional solar targets were calculated, which they eventually did.

01:20:10:28 - 01:20:19:03

Doctor Barry, thank you. It's a very comprehensive and detailed question. I will ask Mr. Yates to respond, but you may not be able to do so. But Mr. Yates, thank you.

01:20:19:11 - 01:21:03:00

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant, I'll give a high level response. And if you want more detail, I've got Mr. Relevant and Mr. Gillett, who can potentially answer in more detail. And then the initial point I just want to make is that this is a nationally significant infrastructure project with a five hundred megawatt anticipated export, which exceeds the one hundred megawatts threshold that's set in under the Planning Act. Therefore, pursuant to Section one hundred and four of the Planning Act two thousand and eight, the national policy statements are relevant for the Secretary of State's decision making, and that sets out a very clear need in EN1 for developments of the scale.

01:21:03:10 - 01:22:02:09

It's unequivocal that there's a need for developments of the scale, and that's touched on in lots of detail in our statement of need, which is APP-two zero six. And just touching on the point around why do we consider a smaller scheme or even no scheme, the answer to the no scheme is set out in the statement of need. There's a need for these developments, and that's why we're seeking it. And there is

a grid connection agreement in place with National Grid in order to deliver it. In terms of why not a smaller scheme, Paragraph four point three point two three of EN1, which is the same document that sets out that there is a critical national priority for these types of developments, explains that the Secretary of State should be guided in considering alternative proposals by whether there is a realistic prospect of the alternative delivering the same infrastructure capacity, including energy security, climate change and other environmental benefits in the same time scale as the proposed development.

01:22:02:16 - 01:22:24:14

So the point there is that the document sets out that there is a very clear need for development of this scale. We've got a grid connection agreement for a five hundred megawatt solar farm. So the alternatives that only need the only alternatives that need to be considered here are alternatives that could deliver that five hundred megawatts of solar. It's therefore not appropriate to consider either smaller or no scheme at all.

01:22:26:08 - 01:22:31:17

Thank you. I'm happy to hear from your colleagues if they can add further to the question. Thank you.

01:22:32:01 - 01:22:37:19

There'll be some part of the applicant. I'll pass firstly, I think, to Mr. Elvin online. And then if needed, Mr. Gillett.

01:22:38:13 - 01:22:40:11

Thank you. Mr. Elvin?

01:22:40:13 - 01:23:12:11

Thank you, sir. Yes, Dave Elvin for the applicant. I think probably just in very simple terms, the connections reform process that's been referred to with National Grid, it's probably a different definition of needed, just to be clear, but they define projects that are ready and needed. And those projects, they've prioritized in their connections reform process. So that's a process written by NISO in consultation with DESNES and approved by Ofgem. So it's obviously very separate to planning.

01:23:12:26 - 01:23:28:21

But the outcome of them running that connections reform process is that the Pye East project and its connection is deemed ready and needed by National Grid. That's using their terms. We can probably back that up in writing just to define those terms more clearly for you, sir, if that's useful.

01:23:29:08 - 01:23:38:16

Mr. Hubbell, thank you. I am going to ask Mr. Yates if he's agreeable for a written response to the third question posed by Doctor. Perry. But thank you for that submission, Mr. Buckley.

01:23:44:24 - 01:23:54:26

So on behalf of the applicant. If I can just let Mr. Gillett come in, it might save the need for a written submission. It might clarify any underlying concerns.

01:23:54:28 - 01:23:56:19

Mr. Gillett, please. My apologies. Thank you.

01:23:57:05 - 01:24:00:09

Good afternoon. Simon Gillett. For the applicants,

01:24:04:11 - 01:24:41:19

building on what Mr. Alvin said around the definition of need within the national policy statements and the capacity ranges that are set out in the Clean Power two thousand thirty action plan and the regional capacity ranges, which have been set out in an annex to that plan and then reissued as another annex to that plan. I think it's really important to say, just done a word search for those two annexes for the word target within those annexes. And it doesn't exist because these capacity ranges are not targets, that's something that's really, really important.

01:24:42:06 - 01:25:02:14

National policy sets out that there is an urgent need to decarbonize the electricity system and get to on the way to getting to net zero. And that's about getting the electricity system clean, and the government has set a target that it wants to get the electricity system clean by two thousand and

01:25:06:04 - 01:25:39:21

system generation capacity so that clean electricity can be used to take our cars off the road, boil us out of houses, reduce the use of petrol, reduce the use of gas and move us towards a clean green economy. And that sets out in policy. EN1 paragraph 3.2.6 explains that it is not government's intention that project consent should be limited by the capacity two thousand thirty capacity ranges or National Grid's prioritization.

01:25:40:18 - 01:26:24:08

And indeed, the planning for new energy infrastructure, which was the consultation to the new NPSs, which was published at the end of twenty twenty five explains the Clean Power two thousand thirty is not a fixed ceiling on technology deployment or approvals. So those capacity ranges are not a target. Once we hit them, we're not done. We can't walk away. They're like a headlight down the road towards achieving net zero. And in the same way that as we drive overnight and our head we've reached the corner in the road and the headlights stop, we turn that corner, the headlights will shine to new numbers, potentially larger numbers and later numbers, and the journey will continue until we're at net zero.

01:26:24:10 - 01:26:45:23

So it is not the case that national policy or National Grid's prioritizations undermine the need for this project or indeed an unprecedented number of other projects, which are also needed. And that's the context within this development is coming forward to maximize its grid connection.

01:26:46:07 - 01:26:55:13

Mr. Gillard, thank you. Mr. Yates, again, asked a request, if I could, if you could provide as an action point a response to the third question from Doctor. Barry.

01:26:56:24 - 01:27:07:14

So Yates, on behalf of the applicant, yes, I suggest It's mostly to be in our written summary of oral submissions that we'll be submitting at deadline when we can pick everything up that's being said there.

01:27:08:11 - 01:27:11:19

Okay, Mr. Aides. Thank you. Sorry, Doctor. Barry?

01:27:12:14 - 01:27:46:25

Sorry, I just wanted to clarify a couple of points. So the regional targets which we've been referring to are actually the criteria of need in terms of Nassau deciding which projects get grid connection. So it's in terms of the need for the project, which is on the basis of are they within the regional capacity targets that Nassau has set out? And do they have land agreements available? So in fact, the regional target is central to need.

01:27:46:27 - 01:28:17:06

It's not that you can wildly overstate it. That is the basis on which grid connections are given, that they meet the need which is set out in the regional targets. Equally, the regional targets are there because each region has different types of energy being generated in that area, which all needs to be accommodated on the transmission network. So in East Anglia, our transmission network is largely designed to carry offshore wind because that we're bringing it all in off the North Sea.

01:28:17:15 - 01:29:02:01

So consequently, we have a very large regional target for offshore wind in the nasal regional targets. But we originally had a small regional target for solar because our transmission network is designed to carry offshore wind. So actually, exceeding these regional targets by a particular type of energy generation will mean that that will have to be switched off because regional the regional priority will be for offshore wind. So actually, having these targets, they are targets, and they are important because otherwise, the balance of energy generation in the region isn't doesn't work.

01:29:02:03 - 01:29:38:25

And it means that there are additional constraint payments for energy generators producing excess generation of a type that is not required in that location. And I also just wanted to say as well that in Ofgem's TM04 plus assessment in April twenty twenty four, it demonstrated that our region, T7, had already more than exceeded its solar targets for combined distribution and transmission.

01:29:39:17 - 01:30:12:25

So that was with projects already in construction, consented or in planning. So even the combined targets, the new combined targets, which were put forward by the government after lobbying from Macquarie, Ireland Green Power and other transmission developers, this region by April twenty twenty four was already in excess of those combined targets in terms of solar generation? Thank you.

01:30:14:18 - 01:30:18:18

Doctor Barry, thank you. I will ask the applicant to respond. Mr Yates?

01:30:19:12 - 01:30:54:09

Toby Yates on behalf of the applicant. Just very briefly initially before passing to Mr Gillett. I'd say that much of that discussion was around how it feeds into National Grid on East identifying the need for a connection and the grid connection statement, which is APP-two zero seven confirms that a grid connection agreement is in place with the applicant for a five hundred megawatt export, and therefore, there is a need from the NISO perspective for this development as well as the policy need, which I discussed earlier.

01:30:54:23 - 01:31:00:09

But I'll pass to Mr. Gillett to discuss more about the balancing points raised with the offshore wind and solar.

01:31:02:19 - 01:31:03:22

You, Gillett.

01:31:04:21 - 01:31:06:28

Thank you, sir. Simon Gillett for the applicant.

01:31:08:22 - 01:31:27:09

Again, not to be competitive, but I'll reiterate that the capacity ranges are a prioritization, not a target. They are a tool used and implemented, established by government to help get those projects which are most ready, that's one criteria.

01:31:29:12 - 01:31:31:05

On the grid,

01:31:32:20 - 01:31:44:20

assuming or sorry, lost my train of thought. It's about getting projects which are ready and are strategically aligned onto the grid. The strategic alignment

01:31:46:08 - 01:32:11:06

criteria is around the ability grid for companies to connect schemes and the readiness criteria around a developer's ability to bring a scheme forwards in the timeframes required. And as my colleague, Mr. Yates, said, this is a prioritized scheme. So within that list of schemes

01:32:13:02 - 01:32:40:23

which have achieved a gate to status, this is one of those schemes. So if those capacity ranges were targets, this would be a scheme which is prioritized to reach that target. But those capacity ranges are not targets, they are directions in how to prioritize schemes which are coming forwards.

01:32:42:09 - 01:32:48:13

Thank you. I think we'll have to leave that point there. Thank you. Sandra Mullet, I believe you were adjourned.

01:32:50:08 - 01:33:25:08

I think this is Sandra Mullet, part of BEP's team. I think she's taken a step back actually because I was still thinking about the site selection. And what I was going to say is East Pie's own site selection

material recalls that the grid connection, the point of connection, the access, technical feasibility and commercial deliverability and landowner willingness was central to the process, and they state that within their documents. I'm sorry, I don't have the document in front of me, but it was stated in that document.

01:33:25:16 - 01:33:53:15

So as far as I am concerned, no matter what they say about EIS, it already comes down to landowner willingness. And also, there are alternative development zones, which they have also highlighted in their documents, which they didn't take forward. They didn't assess them in any which way. So I just think that there is a limitation in their in what they are saying. So thank you.

01:33:54:10 - 01:33:58:03

Mr. Mullard, thank you. I'll ask the applicant to respond. Mr. Yates?

01:34:01:04 - 01:34:16:12

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant. I think much of that will be dealt with, if not already, through the clarification note that's going to be submitted to set out how the land position related to the environmental assessment and site selection.

01:34:16:19 - 01:34:31:27

States, thank you indeed. As time is moving on, we will move on now to the final point on this agenda item, which is two d, the National Grid Substation Assessment. And I'm particularly focusing on options 4A and 4B.

01:34:34:23 - 01:34:52:12

The purpose of this part of the hearing is to assist the examining authority understanding the applicant's decision making process and the extent to which the preferred optimum merged position from substation arose whether it was driven by the environmental assessment or other factors.

01:34:54:14 - 01:35:25:03

The EXA is seeking to establish whether sufficient information has been provided to us to understand why Option 4B was selected, what factors were determinative and whether any comparative assessment remains outstanding? So my questions are to the applicant initially. Can the applicant just briefly explain why Option 4B was selected as the preferred location for the National Grid Substation and why Option 4A was discounted? Thank you.

01:35:30:24 - 01:35:32:14

Ian Douglas for the applicant.

01:35:36:02 - 01:35:45:09

Consideration of the two options are as set out in the site selection assessment, APP215.

01:35:48:20 - 01:35:56:10

There's a table three point two after paragraph 3.5.27, which sets out the comparative

01:35:58:28 - 01:36:07:08

criteria relating to site selection internationally designated areas, areas of local immunity value,

01:36:10:14 - 01:36:18:28

visual screening, visual noise and other matters associated with that and land grading.

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The option 4A, clearly, as we've discussed previously, was impacted by the planning consent, which is an aspect of consideration. But in terms of the constraints associated with 4A, there are surface water drainage constraints and

01:36:48:20 - 01:37:00:11

it was considered that option 4A, there was a greater opportunity with that to provide to use the existing land form to screen the

01:37:02:11 - 01:37:11:15

National Grid substation. And on that basis, Option the 4A was discounted and 4B was chosen.

01:37:13:08 - 01:37:31:23

That's helpful. Thanks. Just for clarification, for examination purposes. So it's the case that the planning application for the solar farm, and I'm referring to application twenty twenty four-three thousand eight hundred seventeen. That was merely one consideration amongst many. Am I correct in my understanding?

01:37:37:14 - 01:37:37:29

Thank you.

01:37:44:25 - 01:37:50:25

Can you explain how the comparison between option 4B and 4B 4A was undertaken?

01:37:54:23 - 01:38:10:20

Ian Douglas for the applicant as set out in table three point two of APP two fifteen, which is the site selection assessment, a desktop assessment was undertaken in terms of those the two options

01:38:12:17 - 01:38:21:06

based on informed as informed by other baseline information that we had gathered as part of the progress of the project.

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Thank you. That's helpful. I'm just wondering whether

01:38:33:03 - 01:38:39:22

any environmental topic in Option 4A performed materially better than Option 4B?

01:38:51:20 - 01:38:53:13

Ian Douglas for the applicant.

01:38:57:25 - 01:39:06:11

Sorry, again, to refer to the table as set out at three point two in APP215.

01:39:08:09 - 01:39:28:11

There were some the characteristics of each site were similar in some circumstances, but landscape and landscape screening was a leading environmental factor in that decision making process. And the existence of

01:39:30:18 - 01:39:35:00

flood zones that were impacted by that 4A was impacting.

01:39:38:01 - 01:39:38:20

Sir?

01:39:40:23 - 01:39:52:01

Thank you. That's helpful. I'm looking to local authorities and to other interested parties. Any hands raised from local authorities at Norfolk, Norfolk County Council. Doctor Barry, thank you.

01:39:52:08 - 01:40:48:19

Thank you. I just wanted to ask a further question about the comparison of the environmental impacts of both sites chosen for the potential substation. So when at the targeted consultation, you told the community that you were going to be moving the substation to the new site closest to Great Malton, you told us that the preliminary environmental impact report would not need to be updated because no environmental aspects had changed by the move of site, which suggests that you didn't have different environmental impacts for both sites or that a new environmental impact had not been made for the new site? And consequently to that, I wanted to ask

01:40:50:15 - 01:41:14:27

the environmental surveys and reports that are currently in your application, are they still ones that relate to your initial site, which were in your preliminary environmental impact report? Or did you ever carry out new environmental impacts or surveys for the new substation site closer to Great Malton? Thank you.

01:41:15:06 - 01:41:18:15

Doctor Barry, thank you. I'll ask the applicant to respond. Mr Yates?

01:41:19:23 - 01:41:55:05

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant, again, if you need to drill into this, might need to refer to colleagues. I think the point to clarify is that both options were assessed as part of the preliminary environmental impact report with, obviously, the final position then being captured in the application as submitted. And I think the distinction being referred to in terms of conclusions is that the conclusions are spoken in terms of an EIA methodology approach and likely significant effects. So those conclusions were the ones that weren't necessarily amended as a result of the change in size.

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There may have been some discrepancy in terms of the actual impacts, but in terms of significance threshold, that didn't change.

01:42:04:17 - 01:42:10:10

Thank you. You said you would speak to or would allow other colleagues to speak on this question. Is that permissible?

01:42:12:20 - 01:42:15:26

If I heard you correctly, you said you would refer to other colleagues if required.

01:42:16:20 - 01:42:22:13

Sorry, sir. If there's further specific questions, then I might need to, but nothing immediately to put forward at this moment.

01:42:22:15 - 01:42:27:07

Okay. You. That's a full response. Can I go to Sandra Muller, please, if I may?

01:42:28:20 - 01:43:09:11

Regarding the first EIA, that was for solar panels. What you're proposing now is a huge point of connection substation with all the dangers and environmental impacts that could be caused by the sighting of that plus another four hundred project substation next door and also solar panels. So it's not just taking like for like. It's replacing one pretty innocuous type of project and totally overriding the landscape and the environmental impact with two major infrastructures.

01:43:09:23 - 01:43:10:08

You.

01:43:10:24 - 01:43:14:29

Mr. Mullen, thank you. I'll ask the applicant to respond. Mr. Yates, thank you.

01:43:20:14 - 01:43:40:15

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant, the point here is to avoid any confusion is that the scheme has been proposed to the inclusion of the new National Grid substation. It's the scheme that's been assessed and they're the conclusions that are available in front of the examining authority and all other interested parties as well. And that's the planning balance exercise that will be carried out.

01:43:42:15 - 01:43:45:23

Thank you. Mr. Hook, I believe.

01:43:46:03 - 01:44:08:06

Thank you, sir. I just I didn't quite hear the question or the response, but I gather from what I did hear that Site 4A was a site that's part of an existing planning permission for another development owned by another company. Was that the question you're asking, sir?

01:44:10:04 - 01:44:15:07

When you said they're subject to two planning application going for twenty twenty four reference.

01:44:15:24 - 01:44:34:18

Mr. Hook, from memory, I just want a clarification whether the planning application you referred to for that other solar farm was one of a number of considerations which the applicant took into consideration when they were deciding whether to choose Site 4A or 4B. And the applicant has confirmed that it was one of many considerations.

01:44:35:00 - 01:44:46:20

So one of the Site 4A is actually another solar farms site, which I believe South North was granted planning permission for. Is that correct?

01:44:47:04 - 01:44:50:12

I'll ask the applicant to respond. Thank you. Ian

01:44:53:04 - 01:45:05:15

Douglas for the applicant. Yes, that is the application referenced in the site selection report as approved by a solar farm as approved by South Norfolk Council

01:45:07:08 - 01:45:15:27

sorry, yes, the application as referenced in the site selection report is as approved by South Norfolk Council, I believe last year.

01:45:18:23 - 01:45:24:20

Mary, I believe you had one further question. Oh, sorry. Ms. Mullen.

01:45:25:17 - 01:45:55:00

Sorry. Sandra Mullen. At the targeted decision to move the point of connection substation towards Great Malton, there was no they didn't include any additional environmental statements. During that consultation, we were just literally given a leaflet saying, are we moving it from one site to another? And that was it. There was nothing that... There was no consultation with any of the villagers that were concerned.

01:45:59:19 - 01:46:06:13

And this is the first time sorry, Anessa's telling me. It's the first time we sorry. She has to say it. Sorry.

01:46:06:15 - 01:46:07:11

Doctor Barry,

01:46:07:14 - 01:46:39:00

We were just keep discussing the fact that you've just said that although the preliminary environmental impact report was not updated to the targeted consultation stage, that you have now updated all these surveys. And what you have put into the application is the updated material. Our point is that we were never consulted on any of this material. It's the first time that we've seen it. And particularly, the people in Great Malton who have to live with this. None of this additional survey material was available at targeted consultation.

01:46:39:07 - 01:46:39:22

Thank you.

01:46:40:03 - 01:46:44:10

Doctor. Barry, thank you. I'll ask the applicant to respond. Mr. Yates, please.

01:46:46:10 - 01:47:22:02

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant, might have to dig into this in our written submissions as a follow-up again. I'm being told that both options were assessed as part of the peer. So I think this may be more of a process point around the extent to which that was captured in the detail available at peer stage, then consultation. Then at the point of submitting the application. As I explained, the full scope of works as is now being sought with the National Grid substation on new site as it were has been fully assessed, including the cumulative effects, and that's set out in all of the application documents.

01:47:22:04 - 01:47:26:14

But we can take that away to see if we can add any flavor to that as well in our written submissions.

01:47:26:16 - 01:47:33:06

Mr. Deeds, thank you. So that's an action point to provide a more thoroughgoing comprehensive reply to that last question from Doctor. Barry.

01:47:36:15 - 01:47:41:06

Mr. Eads? Sorry, yes. I've noted that down. Thank you.

01:47:41:08 - 01:47:45:11

Mr. Eads, thank you. Doctor. Barry, one final question, please.

01:47:45:13 - 01:48:18:09

Sorry, just wanted to clarify that what you were proposing between the first consultation and the targeted consultation, the infrastructure had actually changed. You were suggesting a larger national grid substation and a larger project substation. So whatever you had assessed at the peer stage was no longer what you were proposing. Whatever surveys you had done relating to the earlier equipment did not apply to what you were actually proposing at the targeted consultation, which you have actually put into your application now.

01:48:18:21 - 01:48:31:03

So the first time that the residents of Great Malton have seen any of these environmental evaluations and been able to respond to them is now on your actual application. Thank you.

01:48:31:27 - 01:48:39:18

Doctor. Barry, I'm going to suggest that that is included as part of the applicant's response in that particular action point. Mr. Yates, are you okay with that?

01:48:39:27 - 01:48:42:19

Toby Yates, on behalf of the applicant. Yes, that's understood.

01:48:43:01 - 01:48:51:06

Thank you. Need to draw this to a conclusion very quickly. So I'll take the question from Staff District Council. Thank you.

01:48:51:25 - 01:49:02:15

Clad Kirsty, Staff Norfolk District Council. Just to confirm, the solar array that we are referring to at Tibbetshire is granted consent on June thirty, June twenty twenty five, if that's of assistance.

01:49:02:24 - 01:49:04:22

Thank you. That's helpful. Thank you.

01:49:06:12 - 01:49:08:15

The last question, Mr. Hook. Thank you.

01:49:08:22 - 01:49:13:14

Sorry, it's my hearing, but I didn't hear the applicant's response to my I

01:49:18:22 - 01:49:21:11

that the

01:49:25:21 - 01:49:30:24

who had planning is, permission for a solar farm. Yes, no, will do.

01:49:30:26 - 01:49:33:11

Mr. Hook, I understand the answer is yes.

01:49:35:16 - 01:49:36:22

That's correct.

01:49:37:16 - 01:49:38:17

Was that yes?

01:49:38:19 - 01:49:41:04

Mr. Hook, Yes. Thank you.

01:49:41:06 - 01:49:41:26

Thank you.

01:49:43:06 - 01:49:48:27

We'll draw this agenda item to a close and we shall now stop for a fifteen minute break. Thank you.