



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Kingfisher Solar Farm
Case reference	EN0110018
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	15 January 2025
Meeting with	Meeting with Orsted and Quod
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the Planning Act). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The proposed development

A Development Consent Order (DCO) will be sought by Orsted Onshore UK Ltd (the Applicant), likely via a project special purpose vehicle company. The Applicant is part of the Ørsted Group, a global developer of renewable energy projects. The DCO will be sought for a new solar farm comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) modules and mounting structures, a substation, export cables, habitat management and biodiversity enhancement, highway works (vehicular access), the management of any public rights of way, and associated development (such as boundary treatments, security equipment, landscaping, access tracks, earthworks, and surface water management). The proposed development is expected to produce a generating capacity of approximately 320MW. The Applicant will also seek compulsory acquisition powers for permanent and temporary rights to acquire land, and rights in and over land, to enable the project to be built and operated. The Applicant is currently seeking voluntary agreements with relevant landowners in the first instance.

The project will be located within the administrative boundary of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, on approximately 911 hectares of land three miles to the north of Beverley, east of Beswick and Beverley Road (A164), and west of the River Hull. The proposed development will connect to the existing National Grid Creyke Beck Substation. The Applicant explained that it plans to co-locate the connecting cable corridor for this project (connecting the solar array sites to the substation) with the Hornsea Four Offshore Wind Farm cable corridor. In answer to a question from the Inspectorate, the Applicant said that it was at an early stage of exploring options to run the cable corridor alongside the Hornsea Four cable corridor and that the consenting strategy was ongoing and to be confirmed. The DCO application for the main Solar Farm remains separate. The Applicant also said that a Battery Energy Storage System would not form part of the proposed development.

The Applicant's Design Lead explained how the design of the proposed development was following four distinct 'design principles': climate (the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change); people (reflecting society's needs and shared benefits); places (taking account of the identity of place and improving the environment); and value (achieving multiple benefits and solving problems well). These design principles had been informed by the design guidance issued by the National Infrastructure Commission and the Applicant was also aware of the Inspectorate's recently published advice on Good Design. Under these principles, the Applicant would explore ways to engage in open discussions with stakeholders and local people on what is most valued in the built, cultural, and natural environment and how local recreation, ecology and biodiversity might be enhanced. The Inspectorate said, in reference to its recently published webinar on good design, that the Applicant should provide a clear statement on

its design approach and particularly its design 'vision', and how different local views or other inputs have influenced the design. The Applicant acknowledged these points and said that it intends to submit a Design Approach Document with its DCO application.

The Applicant also said that it was reviewing the potential for cumulative effects with nearby developments, either built or proposed, such as the Peartree Solar Farm.

Consenting programme

The Applicant is working to the indicative timescale below, subject to any changes needed:

- project launch - 20 January 2025
- non-statutory consultation – 3 February to 9 March 2025
- submission of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping request – late May 2025
- publication of the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) - Q3 2025
- statutory consultation and publication of the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report ('PEIR') - Q4 2025
- Adequacy of Consultation Milestone - Q1 2026
- application submission (including a Potential Main Issues for Examination document) - May 2026.

Early engagement with statutory bodies, local authorities, and stakeholders

The Applicant said it was planning to communicate its early plans for its project with the local community, businesses, landowners and key political stakeholders over a five-week period during February and March 2025, to obtain initial feedback which may lead to refinement of the proposed development before statutory consultation takes place. This will include the Applicant offering briefing meetings to Members of Parliament, Councillors, and the Parish and Town Councils (numbering five such Councils across the solar array area, and eight across the cable route and substation) to discuss the proposed development. The Applicant said that it had already held meetings with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council (on 1 November 2024 and 13 January 2025) and was preparing to hold meetings with relevant statutory bodies such as Natural England, Historic England, the Environment Agency, and the Canal and River Trust.

The Applicant said it would use different communication modes to reach local communities and hard to reach groups, such as sending hard copy maildrops to all properties within its consultation zone (a 3km radius around the solar array boundary and 500m from the cable route and substation), pop up posters in the local area, media adverts and a press release to local titles, as well as holding a virtual exhibition and four in-persons events in Hutton Cranswick, Lockington, Beverley and Cottingham, and providing consultation booklets, maps and a feedback form. The Applicant explained that it would be compiling a database of seldom heard groups to enable inclusive engagement during its consultation phases.

In answer to a question from the Inspectorate, the Applicant explained that some objection had been raised at this stage from local parties, which had been expected for a scheme of national significance.

Environmental constraints and issues

The Applicant had found no scheduled monuments, listed buildings, national landscapes, statutory or non-statutory ecological designated sites within the proposed site, following its initial surveys. However, there are some areas of flood risk towards the east of the site, being Flood Zones 2 and 3. Functional floodplain would be avoided, where practicable, and the Applicant would be engaging with the Environment Agency and the Council on possible mitigation. Additionally, agricultural land classification (ALC) surveys had commenced, denoting that most of the agricultural land within the redline boundary was of ALC Grade 3. The Applicant said it would undertake appropriate discussions with Natural England to determine the extent of soil surveys and soil management required in relation to the chosen site. The Applicant would also be avoiding public rights of way where possible, as well as nearby railway lines. In answer to a question from the Inspectorate, the Applicant said it was already drafting protective provisions for any assets owned by statutory undertakers. Subject to review, it was also thought that no Crown Land was on or near the site. The Applicant can now confirm this.

The indicative masterplan shows a nominal 650 acres of the site to be set aside for environmental mitigation, with 1,600 acres for the solar arrays. These figures are indicative only and are intended to demonstrate a typical split between the developed area and mitigation land. The final split between land uses will be subject to ongoing design and survey work.

The Applicant explained that there were several heritage assets close to the site, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and the Beswick Conservation Area. The Applicant also highlighted the Tophill Low Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in proximity to the site, which is designated for waterbird features, and noted the potential for the site to be functionally linked with the SSSI, which would be discussed with Natural England in respect to the results from the ecology surveys. In answer to a question from the Inspectorate, the Applicant said that the closest European site was approximately 10km away. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to agree the scope and extent of the wintering and breeding bird surveys with relevant consultation bodies, including Natural England.

EIA Scoping

The Applicant said that an exact date for submitting its scoping request was not yet determined but confirmed it would keep the Inspectorate updated as this becomes further refined. The Inspectorate referred to its recently published advice on the Commitments Register and Technical Advice for Scoping Solar Developments, as well as requiring a GIS Shapefile to be provided at least ten working days before the scoping request is submitted. The Inspectorate also advised the Applicant to ensure, to the best of its ability, that charging arrangements are in place with relevant statutory consultees before scoping begins, to enable those bodies to have the appropriate resources in place.

Environmental surveys

The Applicant reported that breeding bird surveys were undertaken (between April 2024 and June 2024), together with a UK Habitat Survey (ongoing since September 2024), wintering bird surveys (September 2024 to March 2025), ALC survey (November 2024 to March 2025), and a geophysical survey (January 2024 to March 2025). The Applicant was

looking to begin surveys on other ecology receptors (bats, great crested newts, badger, water vole), noise, trees, Automatic Traffic Counts, cultural heritage walkovers and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment photography in due course.

Submission date

The expected date for submitting the DCO application is May 2026.

The pre-application service offer

Pre-application service tier requested

The Applicant explained that it had experience of the DCO process from sponsoring offshore wind developments. In the Applicant's opinion, the project is not deemed to be particularly novel or complex (given the use of established technology) or that it would be particularly controversial in the local area. There are also relevant National Policy Statements in place. On this basis, the Applicant thought that the basic pre-application service tier was proportionate to its project and the level of experience within its team.

The Inspectorate noted the level of information the Applicant had provided in its draft Programme Document and during the Inception Meeting, and considered that confirming the basic tier was likely (which it would seek to do shortly after the meeting). The Inspectorate would also set up its project website page, once the proposed development had been launched.

Feedback on the applicant's initial Programme Document (post meeting note)

The applicant supplied the Inspectorate with its initial Programme Document before the Inception Meeting in line with our request under the 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. Having reviewed the document, the Inspectorate considers that it satisfactorily covers the expected content as set out in the government's pre-application guidance at paragraph 10. In particular, the Programme Document provides enough detail about the proposed development, its pre-application timetable, the main issues identified and proposed activities for the pre-application process, and the Applicant's approach to early engagement with statutory consultees and other parties, at this early stage. However, the Applicant should also set out its identification of risks to achievement (in addition to how these risks will be tracked and managed), as well as further details on the development of the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) and dates for consultation on the SoCC, dates for any likely Project Update Meetings with the Inspectorate, how Local Authorities will input on the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone, and progress with Planning Performance Agreements, in future iterations of its document