



WHITESTONE
solar farm

WHITESTONE SOLAR FARM

Volume 1: Application Form

1.5 Pre-Application Programme Document

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Document Purpose

- 1.1.1 Whitestone Net Zero Limited ('the Applicant') is proposing to submit an application to the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero ('SoS') for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') for the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a new solar energy and storage facility known as Whitestone Solar Farm ('Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2 National Infrastructure Planning Guidance – 'Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' and 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: 2024 Pre-application Prospectus', updated in October 2025, requires the production and submission of a Programme Document setting out the timetable and activities during pre-application.
- 1.1.3 This Programme Document has been prepared to support the pre-application stage of the Proposed Development. It is a live document and will be updated by the Applicant as necessary until the submission of the DCO application.
- 1.1.4 The Proposed Development is currently part way through the pre-application process. At the time of issuing the Applicant has completed Statutory Consultation.

1.2 Description of Whitestone Solar Farm

- 1.2.1 Whitestone Solar Farm is a proposed new solar farm with associated battery storage and infrastructure that would help meet the country's need for low-carbon, homegrown energy. The Proposed Order Limits comprise a total area of approximately 1490 hectares (ha) for the Site for up to 750 MW to meet the proposed grid connection.
- 1.2.2 The Proposed Development is located east of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, within the administrative areas of the City of Doncaster Council and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council close to the M1 and M18. In the southernmost part of the Proposed Development, the boundary crosses into North East Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire County Council ('the host LPAs') and would connect into the proposed new 400 kV National Grid substation near Brinsworth (Long Lane Substation), located east of Long Lane, Rotherham, where there will be available capacity which the Applicant has secured by agreement.
- 1.2.3 The Proposed Order Limits encompass all land within the Site and Cable Corridor Options, which would include:
 - Solar PV Infrastructure (PV Panels, Mounting Structures, Fencing, and Power Conversion Stations (PCS));
 - BESS;
 - Substations (Primary and Satellite);
 - Grid Connection Corridor;
 - Ancillary Works (including on-site cabling, access tracks, fencing, security, and drainage works);
 - Temporary Construction Compounds;

- Highway Works; and
- Landscape and biodiversity mitigation / enhancement.

1.2.4 The Proposed Development has been divided into three areas, connected by underground cables and are named after the Proposed Development - "Whitestone Solar Farm". For ease of reference, each of the three areas has been allocated a reference number:

- Whitestone 1 (W1): NGR SK 503962;
- Whitestone 2 (W2): NGR SK 477874;
- Whitestone 3 (W3): NGR SK 481807.

1.3 Document Structure

1.3.1 This document details the following information:

- Timetable of the Pre-Application process including the planned submission date;
- Areas of interest for consideration and resolution and the plan to resolve or manage them;
- The plan for engaging stakeholders; and
- Programme risk management.

2. PRE-APPLICATION TIMETABLE

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 During the pre-application stage, a detailed programme was developed to achieve the key activities required prior to submission. At the time of writing, the project is part of the way through this programme. This chapter summarises the activities that have taken place to date and forecasts those activities remaining to achieve successful submission of the DCO Application.

2.2 Planning Submission Date

- 2.2.1 It is the Applicant's intention to submit the DCO Application for Whitestone Solar Farm in late May 2026.

2.3 Timetable of Activities

- 2.3.1 The Proposed Development was publicly launched on 13 November 2024.
- 2.3.2 The non-statutory consultation began on 18 November 2024 and was originally scheduled to continue to 17 January but was extended to 31 January 2025 in response to feedback received during the consultation.
- 2.3.3 The 11-week non-statutory consultation period included a series of in-person and online public information events, meetings with host Council members and parish councils, and a series of site visits to local properties to meet with residents near the Proposed Development.
- 2.3.4 Following the non-statutory consultation period, in March 2025 further engagement was conducted to inform the public of the updated masterplans, this included revisiting neighbouring properties, briefing host council members and parish councils, posting a newsletter to approximately 30,000 addresses in the local area and emailing an update to anyone who has signed up to our 'keep informed' list. The Statutory Consultation began on 16 September 2025 and ended on 28 October 2025.
- 2.3.5 To notify consultees, the Applicant issued the required s42 notices to prescribed consultees, local authorities, and land interests. The Applicant also posted the s47/48 notice in papers as required to publish the Statement of Community Consultation and announce the upcoming consultation. The Applicant posted a leaflet to the consultation zone, which included approximately 48,000 addresses to announce the upcoming consultation and how to take part.
- 2.3.6 During this six-week period, anyone with an interest in the project could learn more about the updated proposals through materials that were available online at the Applicant's website (www.whitstonesolarfarm.co.uk), or in person through a series of public information events. Materials were also available by request.
- 2.3.7 The Applicant hosted a series of eight in-person information events located across the site which were attended by 718 individuals. The Applicant also hosted an online briefing for the host parish councils.

- 2.3.8 Anyone could submit their written feedback on the proposals by the close of the consultation period. This included the option to submit feedback through a digital feedback form on the Applicant’s website or a paper feedback form available at the information events or by request. Individuals could also submit their feedback by email to the project inbox (info@whitestonesolarfarm.co.uk) or by writing to the Freepost address. A total of roughly 2,000 pieces of feedback were submitted by these methods. An additional roughly 8,000 copies of petitions were submitted by the Freepost address.
- 2.3.9 In addition to the community feedback, the Applicant also received feedback from statutory bodies, local authorities and other non-statutory organisations.
- 2.3.10 At this time, the Applicant is reviewing the feedback that was received during the consultation period to help inform the updated proposals and final Environmental Statement that we will submit in the DCO application.
- 2.3.11 Table 2.1 summarises the key milestone dates for the Proposed Development. Those highlighted in green are activities that have now taken place and are complete. The remaining dates are approximate forecasts based on our current understanding of the Proposed Development and required remaining work.

Table 2.1: Whitestone Solar Farm Key Pre-Application Activity Dates

Milestone Description	Actual / Forecast Date
Project Launch	13 November 2024
Non-Statutory Consultation	18 November 2024 to 31 January 2025
PINS Inception Meeting (number 1)	13 February 2025
Project update	March to April 2025
EIA Scoping Report Submitted	23 April 2025
EIA Scoping Report Opinion Received	3 June 2025
Consultation with Local Authorities on Statement of Community Consultation	June- August 2025
PINS Project update meeting (number 3)	13 August 2025
Statement of Community Consultation published	September 2025
Statutory Consultation	16 September – 28 October 2025
PINS Project Update Meeting (number 3)	26 November 2025

Milestone Description	Actual / Forecast Date
PINS Project update meeting (number 4)	27 February 2026
Environmental Statement Complete	April 2026
Targeted Consultation	04 March – 03 April 2026
PINS project Update Meeting (number 5)	23 March 2026
PINS Pre-submission meeting (number 6)	14 April 2026
Application Submission	10 th June 2026

2.4 Other new documents required

- 2.4.1 In addition to the above key milestones, the Applicant is required to prepare the following -
- Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM);
 - Issues Tracker; and
 - Potential Main Issues for Examination.
- 2.4.2 A status update for each of these documents is set out below.
- 2.4.3 The AoCM has been prepared by the Applicant and was issued to the Local Planning Authorities for comment early in February 2026. Following the requested response period for comments from the Local Planning Authorities the AoCM was issued to PINS at the start of March 2026.
- 2.4.4 The Issues Tracker is a live document being prepared and updated; it is the aim to issue an update to this to PINS in early/mid March 2026. Issues have been tracked throughout the pre-application stage, and similar issues have been presented in Section 3 of this document.
- 2.4.5 The Potential Main Issues for Examination, which is based on the Issues Tracker, should be a short document which, where possible, as agreed with the relevant statutory bodies and local authorities. It is the aim to agree the Potential Main Issues for Examination with as many stakeholders as possible before submission, and it is the aim to issue this document at the start of May to give a period of approximately 1 month to discuss and agree this where possible prior to the DCO submission.
- 2.4.6 Additionally, in accordance with the October 2025 updates to the PINS Pre-application Prospectus, the Applicant is required to produce a 'Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker' in 1 of 2 available templates. As discussed during the meeting on 27th February 2026, it was agreed that the Applicant would not produce a Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker pre-submission and this would instead be submitted with the application. The Applicant will continue to provide updates on all land and rights negotiations in the remainder of the Project Update Meetings.

3. AREAS OF INTEREST FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 This section identifies the Applicant’s view on the main considerations that may require resolution with stakeholders and the associated next steps.

Table 3.1: Main Issues and next steps by topic area

Potential main issue	Summary of Issue	Proposed Activities
Green Belt	The Proposed Development is located within the South and West Yorkshire Green Belt.	<p>The Applicant will produce a Green Belt Assessment as part of the DCO submission to explain why the Proposed Development should not be considered as ‘inappropriate’ development in the Green Belt.</p> <p>The Applicant is also producing a Site Selection Assessment to set out the rationale for the Site being located in the location it is, which will link to the Green Belt Assessment.</p>
Coal Mining	Previously active coal mining area, with numerous shallow mines, mine shaft entries and Development High Risk Areas. Potential risks associated with the siting of infrastructure will be informed by historical mining activity. The Proposed Development will be designed with consideration of these risks.	Engagement with the Mining Remediation Authority, and completion of a Coal Mining Risk Assessment.
Local designations	Part of the Site is in Brampton Common Local Wildlife Site (LWS), designated for skylark and species rich hedgerow. Potential for the Proposed Development to impact species and habitats in this designation. Surveys have been undertaken to determine the sensitivity of the LWS to the Proposed Development.	<p>Early engagement with the host LPAs, and Natural England (NE).</p> <p>Inclusion of appropriate mitigation measures in the Proposed Development, for example, skylark plots if skylark territories are impacted.</p>
Biodiversity	Potential for European Protected Species and sensitive habitats and	Habitat surveys will be undertaken during the pre-application stage to

Potential main issue	Summary of Issue	Proposed Activities
	<p>species to be impacted by the Proposed Development, such as reptiles, badgers and migratory fish. Ongoing baseline and targeted surveys will determine the presence of habitats/species. The results will feed into the embedded mitigation for the emerging design of the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>inform the design of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with host LPAs, NE and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to confirm appropriate methodologies are utilised and robust assessments are carried out.</p>
<p>Landscape and Visual</p>	<p>Due to the scale and nature of the Proposed Development, there is potential for impacts to Landscape Character and visual amenity of the area. Ongoing surveys and assessment will continue to inform the design process, as well as careful consideration of consultation feedback.</p>	<p>Assessment of landscape and visual impact ongoing with surveys and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling to inform design. We are seeking engagement with the host LPAs (subject to their external procurement) and NE will be completed to ensure the assessment takes due consideration of consultee expectations, and comments. Mitigation provided by screen planting will be embedded within the can influence the emerging design for the Proposed Development.</p>
<p>Flood Risk</p>	<p>Potential for the Proposed Development to impact flood risk within and outside the Site Boundary. Careful consideration of potential impacts to local watercourses, drainage, and groundwater is required to ensure no increase in flood risk elsewhere.</p>	<p>Ongoing engagement with the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA). Analysis of flood data and modelling will inform any required mitigation and will be considered in a Flood Risk Assessment.</p>
<p>Agricultural Land</p>	<p>The Proposed Development will be built mostly on agricultural land, changing the land-use from crop cultivation to energy generation, and reducing food production. Consideration of positive and negative impacts is required to assess the overall impact to food production and security in the area.</p>	<p>An Agricultural Land Classification survey has been undertaken in the solar area and the results of which will be used to evaluate the potential impact of loss of BMV land with regard to the impact for food production and security for both the local and regional context, taking account of historical land uses. It will also inform the management practices for soil handling during construction and decommissioning. Ongoing consultation with Natural England.</p>

Potential main issue	Summary of Issue	Proposed Activities
Cultural Heritage	<p>The surrounding area contains a number of Heritage Assets and buried archaeology, the extent of which is unknown to a degree, such as the Scheduled Monument – Conisborough Parks Romano-British Villa.</p> <p>Ongoing geophysics surveys will shed light on the most sensitive areas, and this will need to inform the emerging design of the Proposed Development and determine the scope of further archaeological investigations.</p>	<p>Geophysics surveys have now been conducted within the solar area, and trial trenching at hard infrastructure areas is due for completion in March. These surveys have/are being conducted to reveal the most sensitive heritage/archaeology areas. Consultation with South Yorkshire Archaeology Service to confirm methodologies and assessment of archaeological assets.</p> <p>Consultation with Historic England will be used to agree the assessment scope for designated heritage assets, including potential direct impacts and indirect setting impacts.</p>
Noise	<p>Potential for the Proposed Development to emit noise from some of the associated infrastructure during operation, as well as the noise associated with construction and decommissioning</p>	<p>Mitigation through design – the design will be sensitive to noise sensitive receptors (residential and ecological), with commitment to locating noise emitters at suitable distances from residential areas. Construction and decommissioning activities would be phased where required to reduce noise impacts in any one area. Background noise monitoring will be used to ensure noise limits at sensitive receptors are not exceeded by the Proposed Development.</p>

Table 3.2: Whitestone Project Risks

Risk	Summary of Risk	Proposed Mitigation	Next Steps
Environmental Risk Assessments (EIA)	<p>Delays or challenges in completing the EIA, which is critical for identifying environmental impacts and obtaining necessary approvals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage experienced environmental consultants early in the project - Conduct preliminary environmental surveys (where possible) to identify potential issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue stakeholder engagement with relevant environmental agencies. - Continue to schedule in regular progress

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Risk	Summary of Risk	Proposed Mitigation	Next Steps
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a comprehensive EIA structure with a clear timeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviews of the EIA up to submission.
Community and Stakeholder Opposition	Local community or key stakeholders opposing the project, potentially leading to delays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct the robust community engagement strategy set out within the Statement of Community Consultation. - Hold a sufficient number of public consultations and provide transparent information about the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalise project plans to address community and stakeholder concerns where possible. - Provide updates to parish Councils through webinars at critical stages of the project. - Provide updates to the community with clear explanation of project changes, with the latest community newsletter being issued in March 2026.
Land Acquisition and Site Control	Difficulties in securing land rights or control over the proposed site, leading to potential legal disputes or delays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a thorough due diligence process on land ownership and any existing covenants or restrictions for the Site. - Engage with landowners early to negotiate agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalise all land acquisition agreements.
Technical and Design Issues	Challenges related to the technical design and feasibility of the solar farm, potentially affecting the project timeline and costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage experienced engineering and design firms to conduct feasibility studies for the Site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include iterative design improvements based on stakeholder and

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Risk	Summary of Risk	Proposed Mitigation	Next Steps
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rigorous site assessments have been conducted to identify technical constraints. - Develop flexible design options to accommodate unforeseen technical issues. 	<p>technical feedback.</p>
<p>Political and Policy Changes</p>	<p>Changes in local or national policies regarding renewable energy could impact the project's feasibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stay informed about policy developments and engage with policymakers. - Develop adaptable project plans that can accommodate policy changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularly review and update the project's risk management plan to reflect policy changes. - Maintain open communication channels with policymakers and regulatory bodies.

4. APPROACH TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 This section sets out the Applicant’s proposals for further pre-application consultation, including engagement with statutory consultees and local authorities during the pre-application stage.
- 4.1.2 As detailed in section 2.3 above, the Applicant has already undertaken a non-statutory consultation between 18 November 2024 and 31 January 2025, and a statutory consultation between 16 September and 28 October 2025. The Applicant intends to complete a targeted consultation on minor proposed changes to the draft Order Limits in Spring 2026, as well as ongoing engagement with statutory consultees and local authorities leading up to the submission of the Application.
- 4.1.3 Each of these stakeholders has different interests in the Proposed Development and will want to engage with the Applicant differently. To facilitate meaningful engagement, the statutory consultees have been categorised into broad groups as shown in Table 4.1.
- 4.1.4 Table 4.1 below outlines the summary of key stakeholders, and proposed tools to engage with them.

Table 4.1: Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

Audience	Methods of Engagement
Planning Inspectorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement including required statutory notices ● Invitation to meetings
Prescribed Consultees (Technical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement through relevant technical lead(s) including required statutory notices ● Invitation to consultation events and meetings ● Preparation of SoCG (where required)
Prescribed Consultees (parish councils)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement via email including required statutory notices ● Invitation to attend consultation events ● Invitation to attend meeting (host only)
Prescribed Consultees (Community and non-governmental organisations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement via notice by post or email ● Invitation to consultation events ● Advertisements through social media and required statutory notices through local and national newspapers

Audience	Methods of Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updates to project website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community newsletter sent to 'keep informed' list and posted to website
Host Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement including required statutory notices ● Ongoing liaison with relevant technical leads ● Invitation to consultation events and meetings ● Project website ● Preparation of SoCG
Neighbouring Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement including required statutory notices ● Invitation to consultation events ● Project website
Prescribed consultees (Land Owners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement including required notices ● Invitation to consultation events ● Advertisements through social media and required statutory notices in local and national papers ● Updates to project website

4.2 Financial support to stakeholders

- 4.2.1 The Whitestone Solar Farm project team values and recognises the important role played by all stakeholders. We also recognise that many organisations, especially Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have stretched resources. To support their engagement with the Proposed Development, the Applicant has offered Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with the host local authorities.
- 4.2.2 The Applicant currently has PPAs signed with the following local authorities:
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council;
 - City of Doncaster Council;
 - North-East Derbyshire District Council.
- 4.2.3 In addition to the PPAs with the local authorities the Applicant will meet the financial requests of statutory bodies (e.g. the Environment Agency) when they are made.

5. MINIMISING PROGRAMME RISKS

5.1.1 The project manager for the Proposed Development monitors the programme on an ongoing basis, allowing for the early detection and resolution of risks and obstacles that could impede progress. This person is responsible for monitoring and managing all aspects of the risk management process. This includes the following –

- The development and regular review of a risk register;
- Ensuring there are adequate resources for managing risks;
- The continual monitoring of the Proposed Development to identify any new or changed risks; and
- Regular reporting on the status of risks to internal senior management.



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