



# Planning Inspectorate

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

Our Ref: EN0110020

Date: 06 October 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

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

### **Application by Whitestone Net Zero Ltd for an order granting development consent for the Whitestone Solar Farm**

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

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the lead member of the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an examination of the above application I am writing to introduce myself and the other members of the ExA. My name is Rebecca Norman and the other members of the ExA are Craig Loughlin and Helen van Willegen. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed on the [documents](#) page on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)).

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

### **Invitation to the preliminary meeting**

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

| Date                                                                                                     | Start time                                                                                                                                                                                      | Venue and joining details                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Tuesday 10 November 2026</b>                                                                          | <b>Registration and seating available at venue from:</b><br><b>9:30am</b><br><b>Virtual registration process from:</b><br><b>9:30am</b><br><b>Preliminary meeting starts:</b><br><b>10:00am</b> | 1925 Suite, Asseal New York Stadium, New York Way, Rotherham, S60 1FJ<br>and<br>By virtual means using Microsoft Teams<br>Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered |
| <b>IMPORTANT:</b> The preliminary meeting should be completed before 1.00pm on Tuesday 10 November 2026. |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 23:59pm Tuesday 27 October 2026 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).**

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

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

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **23:59pm Tuesday 27 October 2026** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **23:59pm Tuesday 27 October 2026**.

## Purpose of the preliminary meeting

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to enable views to be put to us about how the application should be examined. The ExA will therefore limit the scope of the preliminary meeting to consideration of **how the application will be examined**. See **annex B** to this letter and the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application is to be examined by **procedural deadline A (Tuesday 27 October 2026 23:59)** (see **annex D** to this letter).

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

### **Requests to participate at the preliminary meeting**

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

If you wish to participate at the preliminary meeting, you are required to notify the ExA in writing on or before **23:59pm Tuesday 27 October 2026** (see **procedural deadline A**).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **After the preliminary meeting**

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

### **Notification of initial hearings**

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

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



- Open Floor Hearing (OFH1) on Tuesday 10 November (Blended event)
- Issue Specific Hearings (ISH1 and ISH2) on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 November 2026 (Blended event)

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

### **Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority**

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

- Use of AI in submissions
- Statements of common ground
- Request for suggested locations for an accompanied site inspection
- Status of examination documents
- Acceptance of additional submissions into the examination
- Hearing visuals
- Comments on Relevant Representations
- Closing statement

### **Changes to land interests**

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

### **Managing examination correspondence**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Awards of costs**

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

### **Management of information**

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

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

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

Yours faithfully

*Rebecca Norman*

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



## **Lead Member of the Examining Authority**

### **Annexes**

- A**     Agenda for the preliminary meeting
- B**     Introduction to the preliminary meeting
- C**     Initial assessment of principal issues
- D**     Draft examination timetable
- E**     Notification of initial hearings
- F**     Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
- G**     Applicant's Updates
- H**     Examination documents and Information about the 'Have your say' page

This communication does not constitute legal advice.

Please view our [Privacy Notice](#) before sending information to the Planning Inspectorate.