From: Whitestone Solar
To: [redacted]; Whitestone Solar
Subject: RE: Preliminary Meeting 10th November
Date: 21 October 2026 15:06:18

Good afternoon Mark
Thank you for your email.
In response to your query concerning the hearings and how principal issues will be covered:
You mention in your email that you are registered to attend virtually but also mention travelling to the venue – please note that as you are registered for virtual attendance, you are not required to travel to the venue, and there will be measures in place to allow you to participate from home via Microsoft Teams. A joining link for the hearings with instructions will be sent to the email address you provided in your registration form no later than Monday 9 November 2026.
Please note that that the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting is to discuss the procedure and processes of the examination and that the principal issues for the application itself will not be discussed at this meeting. These matters will be covered in the issue specific hearings (ISHs).
The Examining Authority will be covering the principal issues on a topic basis i.e. landscape and visual, traffic and transport etc, and therefore will be considering all of the areas within the application under each of these.
An agenda for the ISHs will be published a week in advance of the hearings themselves (no later than Wednesday 4 November 2026), which will indicate the running order and areas for discussion, and may assist you in deciding when you would like to join in. The agendas will be published on our website, and if you have not already done so, we advise that you sign up to receive notifications when we update the website: Get updates | Whitestone Solar Farm
In response to your query concerning European sites and scoping:

Scoping Report

The Scoping Report identifies the South Pennine Moors SAC (special area of conservation)/SPA (special protection area) as the nearest European site, approximately 17.5 km south-west of the proposed development (paragraph 7.3.20). It also states that the nearest European sites are more than 15 km away and that there are "no connecting pathways to the Site" (paragraph 7.3.2). Paragraph 7.5.6 indicates that the applicant expects the HRA (habitats regulations assessment) to include a brief statement confirming that there are no pathways capable of affecting a European site. On that basis, international statutory designated sites are scoped out in Table 7.3.

Scoping Opinion

The Scoping Opinion (ID 3.1.2) states that international statutory designated sites for all phases are scoped out because there are no European sites within the red line boundary or area of influence. It refers to the South Pennine Moors SAC and SPA as being located 17.5 km south-west of the nearest point of the proposed development and concludes that, given the location of the development, the matter can be scoped out of further assessment.

Natural England response

Our Environmental Services Team have reviewed Natural England's scoping response and could not identify any specific reference to the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA. Natural England requested that matters proposed to be scoped out should be adequately justified and specifically identified several nearby SSSIs (sites of special scientific interest), together with relevant air-quality and hydrological pathways. In their Relevant Representation (RR-1968), Natural England has advised that, as no impact pathways requiring assessment were identified for internationally designated sites, an HRA is not required for the DCO application.

Overall view

The query raises a fair point about the transparency of the approach, as the biodiversity chapter in the Scoping Report does not appear to identify precautionary, effect-specific Zones of Influence for

European sites. However, this does not necessarily mean that the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA should be scoped in.

Given the 17.5 km separation, the nature of the solar farm and the applicant's stated absence of connecting pathways, together with the fact that Natural England has not raised any concerns regarding effects on the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA and has advised that an HRA is not required because no relevant impact pathways were identified, there is no indication from the information reviewed that the European site would be affected by the proposed development. On this basis, scoping out this matter seems reasonable at this stage.

We hope that this has been of assistance. If you have any further queries, please let us know.

Kind regards

Whitestone Solar Farm Case Team

National Infrastructure

Planning Inspectorate

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From: [redacted]

Sent: 15 October 2026 15:01

To: Whitestone Solar

Subject: Preliminary Meeting 10th November

Good afternoon, I have registered to speak "virtually" at the forthcoming meeting but wondered if my question could be answered beforehand.

I live in the village of Harthill in [redacted] of the proposal and travel to Rotherham takes over an hour by public transport. I'm willing to travel there and attend online, however, I would like to better understand how the ExA are proposing to address the Principal Issues for each of the Work Packages, WS1, WS2 & WS3.

Each work package has its own unique features and challenges and I don't necessarily want to have to sit through discussions on the Principal Issues for WS1 & WS2 which are many miles from where I live.

How will the ExA address this ?

Many Thanks, Malcolm [redacted]

On a separate issue Natural England have informed me that "The Planning Inspectorate's early Scoping Opinion agreed that European Protected Sites could be scoped out of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework based on a lack of direct pathways.

In order to ascertain the European sites that may be affected by the Proposed Development it is necessary to identify precautionary Zones of Influence (ZoI) for each potential effect, this was agreed at the One Earth Solar farm Project.

I would like to understand how the Planning Inspectorate came to this decision, is this something that you can help with or does it require an FOI request.

Many Thanks, Malcolm

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