Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Whitestone Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) - Part 3
Date:	12 November 2026

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:03:21 - 00:00:27:29
Thank you, everybody. And we are now resuming the hearing, Issue Specific two. We're now on Item three point two of the agenda, other projects and coordination. I can see that the agenda has come up on the screen, so thank you for that. If I can now invite the applicant to provide the update as set out in the agenda. Thank you.

00:00:28:20 - 00:00:53:21
Thank you, madam. It's just going to be me on Item three point two, Angus Walker for the applicant. I will provide an update on the status of other projects as requested. I will focus on the ones for which relevant rep references are given in the agenda item, namely Harmony Energy, JJS1, ERG Holding and National Grid.

00:00:55:16 - 00:01:09:05
I may be able to respond to other ones as well if you have any other ones, but I'm less prepared for the other ones. Cumulative impact, generally, we will address in 3.3D,

00:01:11:00 - 00:01:24:17
which seems more appropriate for the general question of cumulative impacts. So to start, if we could bring up from the land plan sheet eight, just to give us something to stare at.

00:01:29:23 - 00:01:34:15
I'll deal with Harmony Energy and JJ as one together because they're both...

00:01:38:27 - 00:01:40:03
Accept sheet eight.

00:01:41:23 - 00:01:44:02
Yes. So

00:01:46:07 - 00:01:54:17
both of these companies are promoting BESS schemes which overlap with the order limits.

00:01:56:06 - 00:02:06:13
Both of them initially had their permission refused, and they were both overturned that refusal was overturned on appeal on the same day, namely the nineteenth of November twenty twenty five.

00:02:08:04 - 00:02:14:20
If we can zoom in a bit on the blue parcels in the second bottom half of the plan.

00:02:17:00 - 00:02:36:16
Harmony Energy, I have actually prepared a graphic that overlays the red line boundary of these two planning applications, but it's not in the examination documents. So I can show it if you like, but we can just refer to use the land plans for the moment and I could show it submit it with

00:02:37:05 - 00:02:41:20
I think it might be useful And to see then if you could submit it, Sure. Debline

00:02:42:02 - 00:02:56:13
On that understanding, look, we're all ready. So there you can see that segment of Sheet eight. The yellow area is Harmony's red line boundary, and the green area is JJS1's red line boundary.

00:02:58:01 - 00:03:12:03
Essentially, are confident that we will be able to thread the cable being in the blue area to the north of Harmony Energy within the red line within the order limits.

00:03:16:05 - 00:03:26:20
And so both projects will be able to take place. And particularly, JJS-one will be fairly distant from the cable.

00:03:29:00 - 00:03:38:13
Harmony also, we will have we will need some sort of arrangement to it for simultaneous working if that's what happens. And probably

00:03:40:04 - 00:03:42:08
by a signed agreement with them.

00:03:44:18 - 00:04:03:10
We have just recently sent them a draft statement of common ground, both these parties. I won't have had time to react to it yet, as that was this morning. But just to show progress. So I hope that gives an idea of how we are treating these two.

00:04:07:02 - 00:04:16:08
Instantly their own two red line boundaries overlap slightly. Secondly, they probably have to reach some sort of agreement with each other on the highway.

00:04:18:22 - 00:04:30:08
Okay. Next one is Pennyhill Wind Farm, owned by ERG UK Holding Limited. If we could just switch to Page forty Sheet fourteen of the land plan.

00:04:33:01 - 00:04:46:17
Zoom out a bit. It's actually six turbines. Four of them are on the sheet fourteen that you can see there. There are two to the south on sheet eighteen. But just for the purpose of this conversation, I'll just show this one.

00:04:49:15 - 00:05:03:03

It's worth noting that this the wind farm was sold to ERG UK Holding fairly recently, and we did engage with its previous owner initially, but now we are engaging with ERG Holding.

00:05:05:24 - 00:05:16:15
They have submitted a detailed relevant representation, which we have responded to in our by

00:05:18:07 - 00:05:19:22
procedural deadline A.

00:05:22:14 - 00:05:23:08
Essentially,

00:05:25:13 - 00:05:34:24
although we have excluded that's what the yellow areas mean, they're actually outside the order limits, excluded their leased areas for the turbines, which are those circles.

00:05:37:06 - 00:06:11:13
They say they need a wider area to operate and maintain the turbines. So we're awaiting more information about what that area is. And we are seeking rights over the roads that they use to access and maintain the turbines. We are just proposing to share that access, not to exclude them in any way. There is also an issue about when both us and them have obligations to reinstate at the end of the lives of our projects.

00:06:11:29 - 00:06:24:01
It doesn't make sense for whoever ends first to reinstate. We might as well pass that duty on to the second one and only do the reinstatement at the end of the longer lasting one.

00:06:27:13 - 00:06:33:17
Finally, although no doubt I will be corrected if I haven't listed all the main issues,

00:06:35:05 - 00:07:09:14
ERG are proposing a repowering exercise. But from the information we've been given, we don't know whether the new turbines won't be in the same place as the existing turbines because they'll be bigger and need to be further apart probably. We are yet to receive any information about where they might be at the moment without any it's really too inchoate for us to be able to accommodate on that front. But we're confident we will be able to agree something on all the other points.

00:07:11:05 - 00:07:13:02
Finally, National Grid.

00:07:16:01 - 00:07:36:27
If we could have a look at Sheet nine now. So that big blue parcel in the middle is the proposed long lane new substation, which is where this project is proposed or National Grid has requested that we connect, where the connection agreement that we'll no doubt hear more about in Item three point three.

00:07:40:02 - 00:08:00:23
National Grid, this new substation is part of their great grid upgrade. And in the last month, they have made an application for a compulsory purchase order and an application under Section thirty seven of the Electricity Act,

00:08:03:05 - 00:08:16:00
which gets deemed planning permission, so there won't be a separate planning application, to build or repower and upgrade an overhead line running south from this substation.

00:08:17:25 - 00:08:35:24
But it is not well, the substation doesn't exist yet, so the line comes from Brinsworth, but it will be moved to from here. And then I believe it will roughly follow the line of the existing power line going south. So it will cross our order westernmost order limits.

00:08:38:09 - 00:08:46:04
If you can just see the tiny inset in the top right of that page, we are looking at the northwestern

00:08:48:06 - 00:08:57:10
page. So it will cross due south there. So it will cross our order limits to some extent. So again, we are

00:08:58:26 - 00:09:30:14
proposing to work with National Grid so that both projects can be it's obviously very much in our interest for the substation project to go ahead and for the grid upgrade that comes from it as well. So if there should be any question of simultaneous construction, we will make sure that that is handled through protected provisions. So and that is where we are with those four parties on item A.

00:09:30:16 - 00:09:32:02
So then item B,

00:09:33:20 - 00:09:36:19
there are already protected provisions in the

00:09:39:08 - 00:10:12:26
draft development consent order for National Grid at Part six of Schedule eleven. We have some other ones. I think Schedule eleven goes up to about Part eleven. There's quite a lot of different protective provisions. As is typical with development consent orders, Part one is a generic set of protective provisions for any electricity gas undertaker that will apply to them in absence of any other agreement, particularly with them.

00:10:14:14 - 00:10:19:18
We do have another one for Cadent, for example, another set of protected provisions specifically for them.

00:10:21:23 - 00:10:34:25
I think ERG would like protected provisions in the order, but we would prefer a side agreement with them. And we are proposing to send them heads of terms for that agreement shortly.

00:10:40:06 - 00:11:08:00
And I think that covers protective provisions and draft development consent order. Well, mitigation measures, as you are item C, is essentially that we will have a working arrangement in protected provisions and or signed agreements about should these projects have to be built at the same time. Or even if they're not built at the same time, we may still need some sort of agreement who goes first and how that works.

00:11:09:16 - 00:11:19:06
So I've only covered those four projects because you listed their relevant reps. But if you have any other you'd like me to talk about, please let me know. Thank you.

00:11:21:08 - 00:11:22:12
Thank you, Mr. Walker.

00:11:24:24 - 00:11:48:17
Those were the main other projects where there seemed to be a need for coordination between this project and then that we had. If I could just ask you, you say that you propose to work with National Grid, and you've just described the works that will be required at the Long Lane substation.

00:11:50:03 - 00:11:54:08
Have the discussions commenced with National Grid? And how are they being progressed?

00:11:55:15 - 00:12:17:12
Discussions have commenced in terms of connecting at the substation. They haven't told us which side of the substation or where we're plugging in as far as I'm aware. But we've put a big circle around the whole thing so that we can attach anywhere according to what they want. We haven't sorry?

00:12:19:20 - 00:12:20:14
I can't hear.

00:12:22:22 - 00:12:27:26
I could and Jonathan Thompson, perhaps supplement what I'm just saying.

00:12:29:09 - 00:13:02:26
Jonathan Thompson for the applicant. With National Grid, as Mr. Walker has just said, we have the whole of the site at the moment within the order limits. The we are in discussions with ENGET about exactly where the bay that we use would be located. And we don't expect, of course, to be using the whole of that site. It is likely that we will be towards the southeastern side of the site, but we may because we're taking access from Long Lane, we will need access from the west as well.

00:13:05:26 - 00:13:18:08
Thank you. In terms of the great grid upgrade, because their application was only made two weeks ago, we haven't started talking about that yet. Sorry, that was Angus Walker for the applicant.

00:13:19:02 - 00:13:21:16

Is this something that you do anticipate?

00:13:21:18 - 00:13:24:06
Yes, indeed. Will. Do Do need you need to to

00:13:25:24 - 00:13:28:22
madam. We will respond about how that is going.

00:13:29:28 - 00:13:30:22
Thank you.

00:13:34:29 - 00:13:50:08
If you've finished your statement on that, I think at this stage, would like to go to Lindsay Reid on behalf of ERG to come in on on the points made by mister Walker, please.

00:13:52:11 - 00:13:56:18
Yes. Lindsay Reed on behalf of ERG. I

00:13:57:07 - 00:13:58:04
I suppose at

00:13:58:06 - 00:14:31:23
the moment, there is clearly from the response that they've provided to a relevant representation. There seems to be, a sort of fundamental disagreement between that and the ERG about whether the proposed project and the DCO would have an impact on Pennyhill Wind Farm. ERG do have real concerns about the very close proximity of the applicants proposed infrastructure to the existing wind farm and the compulsory acquisition and temporary possession powers that are being proposed.

00:14:32:13 - 00:15:11:19
So by way of context, I suppose, it's it's quite standard practice that once a wind farm is being constructed, developer will restrict the area of their lease, to the area sort of immediately around the turbine footprint. But under the lease, they'll have the benefit of certain rights over the landlord's wider property, and they'll impose certain restrictions on how that wider property can be used. And that means that the developer has the ability to to use the wider property when required, but landowners can still continue to use the land as long as that's not in a way that that would impact the developer's ability to safely operate, maintain, and decommission the wind farm.

00:15:12:16 - 00:15:47:05
So in this case, the applicant is is seeking consent for development, due to the the proximity, would be incompatible with, ERT's requirements for for maintenance and and decommissioning of the wind farm in due course and potentially repowering. And then they also proposed powers in the DCO, which would allow that can to extinguish or override the important rights that have been secured across the land and around the leased areas, are provided to help protect the safety, of Pennyhill Wind Farm.

00:15:48:13 - 00:16:20:08

Shared access was mentioned, by mister Walker. The applicant referred in their response, to our relevant representation to an intention to issue heads terms for an agreement relating to shared use of the private access tracks. We haven't received that yet, or an indication when that can be expected. Obviously, if the applicant wants to, use that as a way of resolving some of ERG's concerns about the access tracks, we really need those as soon as possible, if there's gonna be any chance of having an agreement in place before the end of examination.

00:16:24:18 - 00:16:56:24
An inherent part of achieving good design for development is considering how it integrates with other land uses. And and in its current form, we're we're concerned that the proposed development challenges the continued operation of the wind farm, by prejudicing ER... ERG's ability to safely operate, maintain, and decommission it. These concerns were raised with African several months ago, but not been yet adequately addressed. And and and so we're now having to deal with these in an examination process, which is not ideal.

00:16:56:27 - 00:16:57:12
I

00:16:59:11 - 00:17:05:24
think that's everything I I was intending to respond to there. Is there anything else we can assist with?

00:17:07:04 - 00:17:11:00
No. Thank you very much. That's very helpful to have your comments on this.

00:17:11:04 - 00:17:31:25
I was just also gonna mention that we weren't because we were discussing the the relationship between the project and wind farm now. We weren't planning to participate in, agenda item three point two, which also mentions the relationship between existing and proposed developments. But if there is anything that you were hoping to discuss under that agenda item, please do let me know.

00:17:33:18 - 00:17:38:29
Thank you. If I could now pass to Mr. Walker if you have any

00:17:39:06 - 00:17:51:25
personal... Thank you, Angus Walker, the applicant. We do appreciate your concerns, and we do want to work together. Please do let us know what area you would like

00:17:54:02 - 00:18:11:16
to operate within and what when you will need this and that sort of thing, and we will negotiate with you. But we need more information from you. Sorry, I'm addressing a good party rather than yourselves, rather than the examining authority.

00:18:13:06 - 00:18:21:11
But we are confident we can negotiate some sort of accommodation for the two projects.

00:18:25:04 - 00:18:30:22

Do you anticipate that this is going to be something that is going to be achieved during the course of the examination?

00:18:30:29 - 00:18:37:11
Well, I'd hope so. The examination only started two days ago. We've got nearly six months. That should be possible.

00:18:38:22 - 00:18:41:19
We are looking at a five month timetable.

00:18:42:13 - 00:18:52:01
Mean five months. Angus will cover the applicant, of course. Yes, definitely five months, but even five months is, we think, is sufficient time to reach agreement.

00:18:52:03 - 00:18:57:14
Okay. Perhaps this is something that you can update further at deadline one and that's

00:18:57:16 - 00:18:58:10
the Yes, madam.

00:18:59:26 - 00:19:01:16
We keep you updated.

00:19:01:18 - 00:19:02:08
Thank you.

00:19:04:00 - 00:19:06:22
Lindsay Reid, is there anything further you wanted to come back to on that?

00:19:08:21 - 00:19:29:25
No. I was just going to confirm that further to the preliminary meeting, we've... Have also now received a draft statement of common ground, which, we're reviewing and, hopefully progressing that and and hopefully receiving detailed heads of terms soon for an agreement will help us to narrow down the the disagreement between the two parties.

00:19:32:04 - 00:19:33:01
Thank you very much.

00:19:35:01 - 00:19:41:06
If we could now pass to Tessa Fletcher for Harmony.

00:19:45:11 - 00:20:17:25
Hello. Yes. Tessa Fletcher, senior planning manager at Harmony Energy. As stated in our original representations, Harmony Energy holds an approved and extended planning consent for battery energy storage development, which falls within the red line boundary of the Whitestone project. The

proposed development would directly affect the deliverability of our scheme, which we intend to construct within the next five years. Our concern is that the footprint of our site will not leave enough physical space for the Whitestone cable to be installed within the preexisting field boundaries if that were the intention.

00:20:18:09 - 00:20:55:26
We did receive the statement to common ground this morning, but have not yet had chance to robustly review or comment on that. We have spoken to Whitestone directly. And since our original representations, we have been looking for a resolution, specifically the use of HDD as a credible proposal for the laying of the cables across the site. We have under option if necessary. It is our position that there is no compelling case for acquiring rights to open cut trench through our best development as this would sterilize our scheme and because the same public benefit could be achieved through HDD with materially less interference to its deliverability.

00:20:56:15 - 00:21:25:24
We would ask that this be given consideration, and we'll be making further written representations at the appropriate time. I would stress that we are keen to work with the neighboring schemes where possible. However, we fully intend to deliver our scheme. And therefore, as I'm sure you can appreciate, we want to protect our scheme and ensure it can be delivered. Until the HDD position and any related issues are fully resolved, Harmony considers that the effect on the best development remains a matter that requires ongoing examination. Thank you.

00:21:29:00 - 00:21:32:11
Thank you for that. Mr. Walker, do you want to comment there?

00:21:32:23 - 00:21:49:11
Angus Walker for the applicant. Simply thank you for those comments. We will continue to negotiate with Harmony Energy and hope to again resolve this issue before the end of within the next four months and twenty nine days.

00:21:54:09 - 00:22:00:29
Thank you. Turning to the councils. Mr. Gulley, do you wish to?

00:22:02:08 - 00:22:12:20
You. It's Jane Beckett on behalf of Doncaster and Rotherham Council. Our comments aren't specific to these specific projects, and I think they're probably better dealt with in terms of

00:22:25:11 - 00:22:31:21
Moving to the Parish Councils. Mr. Northcote, believe you wanted to speak on this matter.

00:22:32:13 - 00:22:36:15
Yes, sir. Briefly, madam, as I promised to.

00:22:39:06 - 00:23:15:15
We just want to raise the point, really. There's need for coordination with more schemes than just referred to. There are other schemes underway and proposed. And in particular, obviously, the

common lane or the common farm, solar farm at Northampton, the construction is likely to be finished before these people are able to develop if consent is granted. But we do have this slide to note that there's a planning application at Harthill for a BESKI, which is immediately adjacent to the order limit and immediately adjacent to where an access is proposed, that is still undetermined.

00:23:17:15 - 00:23:56:26
So we just want coordination on a wider sense to be considered. And a point that often perhaps gets overlooked, in everything we tend to hear about, it's coordination about construction, coordination of operation. But we mustn't forget down the line that needs to be coordination of decommissioning phase. There's lots of things that potentially might come to the end of their life at a similar time where they're abutting. And I don't know quite how we can crystal ball gaze to what happens in sixty years' time, but there does need to be, I think, some element that coordination at decommissioning stage needs to be considered and thought about.

00:23:57:08 - 00:23:57:23
You.

00:24:01:27 - 00:24:04:28
You'd like to come back on the points made. Campus.

00:24:05:00 - 00:24:37:12
Angus Walker for the applicant. We are monitoring other planning applications in the area, partly for the purpose of cumulative impact assessment, but also for any interface with the project. So we will continue to do that. It's in our interest to do so. Decommissioning, as you say, it is difficult to predict what's going to be the situation in such a long time ahead, but we do have an outlined decommissioning management plan that will handle how decommissioning is carried out.

00:24:38:01 - 00:24:48:29
And I imagine it will respond to the situation at the time in terms of other applications and other developments in the area.

00:24:51:08 - 00:25:10:25
In terms of the other projects, some of which have been referred to by Mr. Northcott now, And since the application was submitted, there's obviously been some projects that have been approved. Is this something that will be updated in your documents at deadline

00:25:13:17 - 00:25:22:08
deadline one, but we will be updating the long list of cumulative developments, which will include such projects by deadline two.

00:25:24:16 - 00:25:26:11
So that is an ongoing process.

00:25:30:24 - 00:25:36:19
Thank you. That other project you mentioned is also Harmony Energy, it turns out.

00:25:38:05 - 00:25:50:13
Yes. So yes, this is an ongoing process. We need to monitor these projects, and we'll be reporting to the examination a new long list of cumulative projects potentially affecting cumulative impacts.

00:25:52:23 - 00:26:04:15
Thank you. We had a number of interested parties this morning who indicated that they wish to speak on this topic. I do apologize, Mr. Knight.

00:26:07:07 - 00:26:55:00
It's only a quick one. Philip Knight for Carrysburg Parks Parish Council. I'd just like to mention the fact that there's also the Ilias development that's adjacent to the red line on Whitestone one that needs to be considered as well and potentially added to the long list as well. So we need to make sure that, that's recognized. And also, I'd like to understand and clarify, please, what commitments are enforceable with any of these agreements in relation to any discussions that are happening with these other parties? And how that will be committed to and enforceable? We've talked about, obviously, legal heads of terms and legal documentation, but is that enough? Should it be in the DCOs, etcetera? So just some questions there, really.

00:26:58:16 - 00:26:59:10
You'd like to... Hang on,

00:26:59:12 - 00:27:11:28
just walk off the applicant. I can confirm the Ilios application is already on our long list. We are oh, they're shaking their heads. Well, will be then if it's not already.

00:27:13:11 - 00:27:23:21
Me, sorry. Liam Herbert from Rob's Price Council. We identified yesterday during the college section that the ADEOS application is not on the long list. We've checked this morning and we've informed...

00:27:24:18 - 00:27:40:19
Okay. I apologize. Perhaps it's already on the long list that will be submitted at deadline two, and I've been I've misinterpreted my post it note. I apologize for that. But it certainly will be incorporated by the next deadline.

00:27:42:19 - 00:27:44:09
Was your other point?

00:27:45:13 - 00:27:47:15
About the protections and how we secure that?

00:27:47:17 - 00:28:03:11
Yes. There are various ways to ensure that we are committed to this joint working arrangements and that sort of thing. So one way is in the draft development consent order itself, which is legislation. And so we and it's a criminal offense to

00:28:05:03 - 00:28:27:05

disobey it. So that protective provisions are in Schedule eleven for various parties and, for example, National Grid. Another method is by having a site an agreement with the party, just a two part party agreement with them, which is effectively a contract, which we would be breaching if we didn't do what it says.

00:28:28:22 - 00:28:31:04
Those are the principal two ways of yes?

00:28:33:23 - 00:28:45:01
And just to clarify that if it's a legal contract, how is that dealt with, just for clarity in relation to if you sell the site if consent was given.

00:28:46:17 - 00:28:58:21
These agreements should cover the sale of the site or indeed the other party selling their interest to somebody else so that they will endure beyond any changes of ownership on either side.

00:29:04:06 - 00:29:17:00
Thank you, Mr. Knight. Apologies for admitting you then. So if we could then turn to the interested parties. I have Mr. Reynolds.

00:29:22:11 - 00:29:23:15
Thanks very much indeed.

00:29:28:14 - 00:30:09:21
I'm I'm really struggling to to sort of understand some of the information that's being given given out. I I find it hard to understand the... For instance, the the the report we got yesterday by the biologist who, didn't seem to be concerned about the the own entomologist that we put up. I know it's too late to talk about it now, but he was just dismissed. He was talking about insects and all these kind of stuff, but it had a massive impact. And is that still gonna be kind of on the cards to be considered when we go away, or is that just kind of logged and forgotten? Does that actually form form part of a kind of the decision making process?

00:30:12:24 - 00:30:16:19
If I could just come back on that. So the issues that discussed at the

00:30:16:21 - 00:30:36:19
hearing today, they they go on throughout the whole examination. So they... It's not that... Because the ecology section's finished, we've not finished considering that. We will continue to consider all topics and points raised throughout the whole examination. Yeah. The thing I really wanted to speak on was the sort of...

00:30:38:05 - 00:30:50:09
And I'm quite prepared to sit and wait. The the fact that now brownfield sites have have been analyzed and mentioned yet, and that's really what I want to comment on.

00:30:50:19 - 00:30:52:21

That will be covered in item three point

00:30:52:23 - 00:30:55:15
three as well. Is... Come back on that. Yep. Cheers.

00:30:58:15 - 00:31:02:06
Thank you, Mr. Reynolds. And Jeanette Graham, please.

00:31:06:18 - 00:31:36:15
Just a point of clarification. Jeanette Graham, Clifton resident. I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be in three point two or three point three. What I'd like to talk about are the other developments, not necessarily power developments, but quarry and housing estate. Is that this section or the next one, please? I think it's probably more aligned to Section three point three that

00:31:36:17 - 00:31:47:25
we'll be dealing with. I'll come back later then. We're looking at how the projects interact together as opposed to there being other Mr. developments in the

00:31:52:28 - 00:31:57:09
Collins, you said possibly you wanted speak on to three point two?

00:31:58:03 - 00:32:03:21
Mister Collins, resident of Conyersburg Park. I have nothing further to say on this topic. Thank you very much.

00:32:04:18 - 00:32:08:01
And Angela Eastwood, you'd said, no. You're okay.

00:32:10:19 - 00:32:13:28
Holly Beckett, Abigail Cole on behalf of Holly Beckett.

00:32:24:21 - 00:32:36:26
Hello. Yeah. So on this point, I wish to raise serious concerns regarding Carleen Atuli, which is a vital lifeline for the local equestrian community.

00:32:38:17 - 00:32:40:17
Car Lane, which is

00:32:42:19 - 00:33:15:04
an established route, connects via a very narrow, unpaved track towards High Lane to form an established network of circular riding. Rotherham Council records this claimed byway under the reference p r o w forward slash c forward slash sixty seven. While it's formal legal status awaits investigation, its heavy ongoing use by local riders is an established fact on the ground. My concern for this area is twofold.

00:33:15:06 - 00:33:54:05
First, the failure to account for the cumulative constructive disruption, and second, a severe compounding safety hazard for horses and riders. On this issue of construction and access, this cannot be assessed through a standalone traffic management plan in isolation. Obviously, as has has been covered separately from Whitestone, another solar and battery storage scheme is proposed on land off Carling under Rotherham planning application r b twenty twenty five forward slash zero zero twenty nine.

00:33:54:24 - 00:34:24:11
If both developments proceed concurrently, the same narrow lanes and surrounding network will bear the brunt of heavy construction traffic. When reviewing the applicant's a p p forward slash five point one two point one and a p p forward slash two point four, There is no clear mechanism showing how these schemes will operate safely alongside one another. For horse riders,

00:34:26:18 - 00:34:58:00
severing or restricting restricting just one connection... Connecting link, whether on Car Lane or Pennyhill Lane, destroys the viability of the entire circular route and forces vulnerable riders onto unsuitable roads. More critically, this is not merely a matter of convenience. It's a matter of physical safety. Carlene already sits beneath the existing wind turbines, and this route has a documented history of a serious equestrian accident.

00:34:58:03 - 00:35:18:19
In fact, a local rider suffered a broken leg on Carleen after her horse spooked at the moving shadows cast by those wind turbines. Against that known baseline hazard, the the applicant now is installed in a sea of glass solar panels directly beneath those very same turbines.

00:35:20:07 - 00:36:00:09
As as already been raised earlier, horses are flight animals and highly sensitive to sudden light reflections and phys... And visual movement. So what I want to know is how can the applicant credibly determine that equestrian safety will not be severely exacerbated when glint and glare from solar arrays are combined with existing wind turbine shadow flicker on a narrow enclosed lane. To to ensure these risks are properly examined and secured, I respectfully ask the applicant they're required to answer the four specific questions.

00:36:01:03 - 00:36:31:22
So one, the cognitive coordination. What specific coordination has taken place with the developer of planning application r b twenty twenty five forward slash zero zero twenty nine concerning the overlap of construction traffic, shared access routes, and the dead impacts around Carlene. Secondly, a concurrent route viability.

00:36:32:09 - 00:36:45:00
If both developments are concede concurrently, what practical measures will ensure the existing circular riding network via Abigail Koch. Can just interrupt

00:36:45:02 - 00:36:53:13

you there? Can I can I just interrupt? We're finding it very difficult to hear some of your points. I think the the signal is not particularly good.

00:36:55:11 - 00:36:57:08
I don't know if you're traveling at the moment.

00:36:57:20 - 00:37:00:07
No. I'm... Can you hear me now? Alright.

00:37:00:26 - 00:37:05:18
I can hear I can hear you now. Perhaps you could carry on, but just to make you aware that...

00:37:08:10 - 00:37:12:10
I think the the start of your second point, were finding it difficult to hear.

00:37:13:04 - 00:37:19:18
Okay. Did you did you hear the the first question? Would you like me to repeat anything?

00:37:20:05 - 00:37:27:03
I could hear the question first and I could see that the applicant's team could also hear that. So perhaps if you could start the second question again?

00:37:27:13 - 00:37:58:12
Yeah, of course, madam. Question two, so concurrent route of viability. If both developments proceed concurrently, what practical measures will ensure the existing circular riding network via PROW forward slash c forward slash sixty seven remains safe, unobstructed, and usable throughout construction? Question three, contingency access.

00:37:58:24 - 00:38:43:13
How will riders from the equestrian establishments in the area around Carlene and the wider community safely access the riding network if either Pennyhill Lane or Carlene is temporarily closed or restricted. And point four, forcible mitigation. Precisely where in the DCO documents are the arrangements securing continued recreational equestrian access recorded, and which body will be legally responsible for monitoring and establishing them, including mitigation against the combined effects of turbine shadows, flicker, and solar glint and glare.

00:38:46:13 - 00:39:00:04
Another point is, what evidence would support the applicant's conclusion that the combined visual effects of existing wind turbines at Carlene and post solar array will not

00:39:02:10 - 00:39:33:22
increase the risk to horses and riders rather. Because it... We've heard, not today, but in in plans, they've sort of... There's been the suggestion, I suppose, speculative because they they seem quite at good speculating Whitestone, that glint and glares won't be a problem, which it might not be a problem to walkers or to drivers or to cyclists, but I can assure you, from an equestrian background, glint and glare will pose a risk to horses.

00:39:34:14 - 00:39:36:14
Thank you.

00:39:37:29 - 00:39:41:17
Thank you. And I think we could hear the remainder of that.

00:39:43:11 - 00:39:45:04
If Mr. Walker, you'd like to come back.

00:39:45:06 - 00:39:58:05
Thank you. Angus Walker for the applicant. First of all, I can confirm that the development that Ms. Cole referred to is already in our current long list for cumulative impact assessment, which is APP one hundred fifty four.

00:40:00:03 - 00:40:10:15
I can't really respond on the specific questions, but this is a typical example of that we will need to coordinate any simultaneous working, including

00:40:12:02 - 00:40:19:06
any effects on public rights of way. We already have a plan for handling public rights of way.

00:40:22:07 - 00:40:23:03
And

00:40:25:26 - 00:40:38:27
I think I can't say more than that, but if my colleagues can come back when we respond in writing at deadline one on any specific points that were just raised, I hope that will suffice.

00:40:47:15 - 00:40:49:15
Thank you for that. I

00:40:51:20 - 00:41:03:19
think we've discussed some helpful points here this afternoon, and it does appear that there are some positive steps to take things forward with

00:41:05:18 - 00:41:34:29
some of the objectives at this point, and we await your further updates in due course. I think in the discussions we've just had, particularly with the solicitors for ERG and and with Harmony, it has answered the questions that I had and whether there's any other points at this stage that any other interested parties wanted to make.

00:41:38:17 - 00:41:46:09
Can't see any... Anything. In which case, I will pass to missus Norman to continue with the next topic on the agenda.

00:41:48:06 - 00:41:54:04
Thank you. So we're moving on to three point three. I would just give the applicant's team time to move around if required.

00:41:56:20 - 00:42:02:13
Thank you, Madam. Angus Walker for the applicant. I'm not quite as lonely this time.

00:42:03:29 - 00:42:23:29
This will be can I ask just a question about the ten minute presentation in this case? Because the title of the agenda item has the word need in it, but the four A, B, C and D don't seem to cover need. Would you like us to address need as well?

00:42:26:06 - 00:42:28:18
If you've got something prepared to address need, would be helpful.

00:42:28:20 - 00:42:29:07
We do.

00:42:29:14 - 00:42:31:05
Sorry, my apologies for the initial.

00:42:31:07 - 00:42:31:26
Not at all.

00:42:35:00 - 00:42:46:18
Okay. So my two colleagues who will be joining me on this, I'm going to say some of the make some of the contributions. On my left is Mr. Sai Gillett.

00:42:48:05 - 00:43:00:10
And two to my right, you've already had him, is Mr. Ewan Snedden. So if I could start with Mr. Gillett on the subject of need, please.

00:43:06:02 - 00:43:08:29
Afternoon, madam. Simon Gillett for the applicant. Just

00:43:10:14 - 00:43:15:28
wanted to provide a bit of context for the reason that the proposed development is coming forward.

00:43:17:21 - 00:43:36:24
sure it's I'm no surprise to anyone to know that we are living on a world which is warming. And the context is that warming will continue as carbon emissions also continue, and it will continue until those carbon emissions are significantly reduced.

00:43:38:21 - 00:44:13:08

Over and above that, international supplies of energy are causing harms to international relations, to international tensions and also to consumer pockets. And the proposed development is coming forward as part of the government's plan or to support the delivery of the government's objectives, which are to ensure this is from NPS EN1, paragraph 2.3.3, to ensure that the supply of energy always remains secure, reliable, affordable and consistent with meeting the U.

00:44:13:10 - 00:44:20:19
K. Legally binding target to cut greenhouse gas emissions to zero by two thousand and fifty.

00:44:22:19 - 00:44:29:04
So paragraphs 4.2.16 to 4.2.17 of

00:44:30:20 - 00:45:12:29
NPS EN1 include the government's conclusion that there is a critical national priority for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure, which includes large scale solar farms and includes the proposed development. There's a combination of many or all types of such infrastructure is urgently required for both energy security and to achieve net zero. And I won't go through all of the statements of need, madam, APP forty one, but the applicant provides further information and support of those of the contribution that the proposed development will make to those aims within that document.

00:45:14:07 - 00:45:30:10
A couple of points that I do need to call out are firstly contained within Section three point seven of statements of need, which discusses the Connections action plan from twenty twenty three.

00:45:31:26 - 00:46:12:15
And that Connections action plan is what has driven or informed some of the clean power prioritizations that we may also talk about today and also the connections reforms, which are around reprioritizing the delivery of projects onto the national grid. And Section three point seven of that connections action plan explains that the efficient use of grid capacity, both existing and planned grid capacity, is necessary to deliver the government's aims on a timely basis.

00:46:13:19 - 00:46:52:27
And the reforms that I mentioned have been designed and are in track to try and ensure that an efficient use is made. And in that regard, what the proposed development or rather what the applicant has designed the proposed development to do is to make the greatest possible use of the available grid connection, which is seven fifty megawatts to the new Long Lane substation, such that the available land in this location can make the greatest possible contribution to achieving the government's aims.

00:46:54:10 - 00:47:02:05
Could you then move on to Part A? Assume we'd finish on need. The identification of site requirements and best considerations.

00:47:05:16 - 00:47:28:14
Madam, I think you're aware I understand that you're aware that our planning expert is not able to attend today. I can provide some overarching comments around site selection. But just to forewarn

this, if there's anything you ask that is on more a technical planning basis, then we'll need to come back in writing.

00:47:28:26 - 00:47:29:29
That's fine. Thank you.

00:47:31:10 - 00:47:42:11
And so I'm going to the applicant still talking. But and therefore, if there's anything which doesn't add to the examination, please feel free to interject and

00:47:45:10 - 00:47:45:27
cut me off.

00:47:52:17 - 00:47:56:09
Apologies for finding my place in my notes.

00:47:58:00 - 00:47:58:17
So

00:48:00:05 - 00:48:27:00
the applicant has identified South Yorkshire region. So I'll start at the sort of the high levels of why is the applicant looking in this region for a location as a suitable location for this scheme. The applicants identified the South Yorkshire region as being suitable from a topographic and an irradiance perspective. And also, as I've previously mentioned, there is available grid connection capacity.

00:48:29:12 - 00:48:46:05
Those three points are clarified as part of EN3 Paris twenty ten-eleven to twenty ten-eighteen, which sets out the important factors for site selection. And there are other factors as well. But the

00:48:48:09 - 00:49:09:16
key considerations are irradiance, topography and available land and grid connection. Section four point three of the site selection report, which is Appendix one to the planning statement, that's the updated planning statement is AS015,

00:49:11:16 - 00:49:24:01
explains that Stage 1A of the site selection process identified South Yorkshire as having those essential characteristics to inform a search.

00:49:25:16 - 00:50:02:01
Figure seven point two so I'm going move around a little bit just to provide the evidence, the examination. Figure seven point two of the statements of need, that's APP forty one, provides evidence on local irradiance levels that are suitable for large scale solar. And Chapter eight of APP forty one provides evidence that the local grid work is so the local grid network is suitable for that connection.

00:50:04:19 - 00:50:19:01

Madam, both the grid connection statement, which I think is APP040, but perhaps my colleague

00:50:19:03 - 00:50:21:26
can It's APP156.

00:50:21:28 - 00:50:23:29
Sorry, APP156.

00:50:25:10 - 00:50:31:22
I'm sorry, it's been updated. So it's AS062. Sorry about all these references flying around.

00:50:33:03 - 00:50:49:04
My bad. I thought I had this, and I didn't. The grid connection statement explains the chronology of the grid connection offer, and that is also summarized in the site selection assessment.

00:50:54:20 - 00:51:15:16
In terms of so that relates, I guess, to the site selection for the main part or the main solar scheme. If it would be helpful for you to for me to explain some of the rationale behind the inclusion of BESS, I can provide some of the pointers on that.

00:51:15:23 - 00:51:18:05
Yes, yes, that would be helpful. Thank you.

00:51:18:07 - 00:51:22:10
So BESS is the battery energy storage system.

00:51:24:13 - 00:51:33:04
I'll call it BESS from now on. National policy supports BESS as associated development to

00:51:35:07 - 00:52:18:24
NSIP schemes to enhance the benefits of those schemes. In particular, NPS EN1, which is paragraphs three-three twenty five to three-three thirty one explains that there is a role for energy storage in the future energy mix. Storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility. Paragraph three point three point two six of EN1 explains further that storage is needed to reduce the costs of the electricity system and increase reliability by storing surplus energy in times of low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher.

00:52:20:08 - 00:52:53:28
And paragraph 2.10.8 of NPS EN three explains that associated infrastructure may also be proposed and may be treated on a case by case basis as associated development, such as energy storage. It's also, I think, important to point out that national policy does not the limit amount of new infrastructure that can be consented. And that is important in relation

00:52:56:01 - 00:52:59:00
to this development. But in essence,

00:53:01:17 - 00:53:35:02
the applicant's environmental statement concludes that the BES is acceptable in a planning sense in the location at which it has been proposed and within the parameters that control that development. National policy explains that BESS is needed and explains that it's beneficial to supporting and delivering the government's aims. And national policy is supportive of BES and co located BES may be proposed.

00:53:35:19 - 00:53:54:00
And those high level points, I guess, support the inclusion of BESS's associated development to support the operation of the main solar scheme and increase the efficient use of the grid connection infrastructure, which is available to the proposed development.

00:53:55:12 - 00:54:02:08
Thank you very much. I now move on to Item B, generating capacity and the approach to overplanting. And Mr. Sneddon, please.

00:54:03:00 - 00:54:34:03
Thank you, Mr. Walker. Ewen Sneddon on behalf of the applicant. I'd like to speak a little bit about overplanting and the generating capacity. I know we had some questions yesterday from our interested parties as to why the land area reduced, but the generating capacity remained the same. It's standard on this type of DCO NSIP project to refer to the generating capacity as the grid connection agreement capacity, in this case, fifty megawatts.

00:54:34:23 - 00:55:04:02
Seven fifty megawatts is the amount of power that our grid connection allows us to export at long lane substation at any instantaneous moment. When designing solar farms, the best use of that grid connection is to oversize the capacity of the panels that are connected to it. The reason for that is that on days when it's not as beautiful and sunny as it is today,

00:55:05:26 - 00:55:16:00
the solar farm can still generate a higher volume of power than it would do on a brilliant sunny day.

00:55:17:21 - 00:55:51:05
So in terms of maximizing that is what one of the primary reasons for over planting a solar farm. Within the solar DCO comparing to other solar schemes, typical over planting ratios at the time of application are between one point two up to one point six times the grid connection capacity of panels installed. The higher you push the overplanting value, obviously, you take more land.

00:55:51:24 - 00:56:23:01
You also do come up to a limit where eventually you'll start to have a loss of energy on really sunny days, but not enough solar can be exported through that grid connection. In terms of what we've done on this application is when we initially started our consultation and our first master plan. We had a reasonably high over planting ratio, not enough to cause this clipping of AC power.

00:56:23:10 - 00:56:53:28

And we were at about one point four over sizing. And then through the consultation with locals, it became evident that we needed to put larger setbacks, reduce the land take in the area. So we've reduced the over planting ratio down towards a one point one. This basically allows us to compromise with the different land use requirements in the area and the different considerations of the scheme.

00:56:56:19 - 00:57:10:03
A solar scheme at that sort of over planting ratio is still perfectly viable. You're still able to make use of that full seven fifty megawatts on a clear summer sunny day.

00:57:15:23 - 00:57:59:23
In terms of other ways to retain the grid and the over planting ratio is to adjust the design of the solar farm. So in terms of this over the course of the consultations, we will be compressing the rows as much as we realistically can to maintain the amount of energy that is generated but reducing the land peak that we would typically see. And just to explain further how solar panels have evolved over the time that I've been in the industry in fifteen years, we've gone from kind of module efficiencies that you'll hear of around sixteen percent originally.

00:58:00:10 - 00:58:10:00
And now you can buy modules that are twenty four percent efficient. So that effectively means that we can get more generation out of a given land area.

00:58:11:16 - 00:58:46:23
At the moment, we're basing that one point one over sizing on currently available modules. We would anticipate by the time that we come to install and construct that given the trend that we've seen in the past fifteen years that the module output will be increased more, but still just moving us into that range, that kind of optimum one point two to one point four range that a lot of DCOs utilize for their overplanting ratio. In our case, probably down towards the lower end of that range, the one point two.

00:58:49:12 - 00:59:19:17
Basically, one of the reasons to do this is to we are all paying for the great grid upgrade, whether we like it or not. It's going on our bills or out of our tax burden. That substation is being built. It makes sense for to us use that grid connection as much as we physically can because the amount of power we put through it doesn't really change the cost of it. So making the best use of it allows us to supply cheaper electricity overall,

00:59:21:07 - 00:59:26:18
hopefully helping reduce the overall electricity cost within the country.

00:59:36:12 - 00:59:37:20
All

00:59:40:10 - 01:00:13:02
I have on overplanking. All right. Let's move on to Item C, the approach to the consideration of alternatives. Now alternatives has a wide meaning. So I'm going to ask Mr. Gillett to talk about alternative technologies to solar and the use of rooftop and Councilor Reynolds will be interested to

know the use of brownfield land. Then Mr. Sneddon will talk about given solar the alternative layouts we could have had including tracking panels and that sort of thing.

01:00:13:09 - 01:00:34:01
And finally, I will round up about why the well, it is in the absence of our planning witness. So I will summarize the site selection strategy of what having established solar in this location, why we have chosen the order limits we have chosen. Mr. Gillett first.

01:00:37:08 - 01:01:00:24
Simon Gillett for the applicant. The first point that Mr. Walker put on the agenda, if you like, is around alternative technologies. So if I can refer to Table three point one the of statements of need. I don't think that table needs to be shown unless, madam, you would like it to be shown. But it shows the Clean Power two thousand and thirty capacity ranges, which are effectively

01:01:04:12 - 01:01:29:19
the amount of capacity that the government considers could be and would need to be delivered to help the country get on the way to a path to clean power and a clean electricity system and then to grow that clean electricity system to be able to support power demand as is expected to be at least double in two thousand and fifty what it is today.

01:01:34:18 - 01:02:14:07
The paragraph EN1, paragraph 3.3.10 explains that government proposes a prudent approach to planning infrastructure. And that prudent approach has fed through to the Clean Power two thousand and thirty capacity ranges where the government has retained an optionality within those ranges to say, we will review these in the future to see what different reprioritizations we need to apply according to where we need to get to and how far we have come in the deployment of low carbon technologies.

01:02:15:05 - 01:02:25:27
So the critical point is that alternative technologies are not really alternatives because they are all needed and there are unprecedented capacities

01:02:27:17 - 01:02:56:15
of new low carbon schemes across all low carbon technologies set out in those clean power capacity ranges. I'm purposefully not calling those targets because they're not targets. When we get there, we're not done. There is more to go. So they're like headlights on the road taking us from where we are now to clean power system. However, in terms of those specific technologies and their application,

01:02:58:07 - 01:03:03:18
in at the site, if you like.

01:03:05:15 - 01:03:38:24
Firstly, the applicant considers that it's only solar and onshore wind technologies, could which viably connect at scale to use the grid connection capacity, which is available to the proposed development. That's because offshore wind, although there are offshore wind connections in Yorkshire, those

substations are clearly much closer to the coast for obvious reasons. There are no large scale nuclear sites in the vicinity of the grid connection.

01:03:39:16 - 01:04:15:29
And there are no designated local smaller nuclear sites either. Small modular reactors are being developed by a number of organizations around the world. They're still a long way away. We hope they aren't, but practically, they are. And indeed, just yesterday, Ontario Power Group, who are developing the first SMR within the G7 group in Canada, announced that their two thousand and thirty, two thousand and thirty one unit operation has been delayed and costs are higher than they expected.

01:04:16:01 - 01:04:49:02
But they haven't what said the delay is or what the cost implication is yet. So SMRs are not they are not a comparable alternative to solar at this site. The same applies for carbon capture and storage and hydrogen facilities, which could allow for, for example, a retrofit of a combined cycle gas turbine into a combined cycle hydrogen turbine or a carbon capture and storage

01:04:50:17 - 01:05:12:03
gas turbine, which would essentially mean that we're burning the same stuff we've always burned, but we're capturing the carbon, and so it's therefore low carbon. Those technologies are also being developed, but there are no large scale proven operational schemes in this area or in Western Europe or at the scale globally.

01:05:13:23 - 01:05:43:12
So it leaves just onshore wind as a viable alternative technology. Onshore wind schemes, there was a planning moratorium, effective moratorium put in place around twenty fifteen. That moratorium was lifted last year. Onshore wind is starting to develop as a in England and Wales. I should say it's a moratorium in England and Wales. But clearly, restarting those supply chains, those development

01:05:45:17 - 01:06:14:04
pipelines leads to a longer development time than solar, which is an established technology. And I guess, finally, in terms of kind of alternative technologies, which is more in support of why solar the applicant is a solar developer, and this is where the applicant's skills lie. If I can talk then that neatly comes on to Brownfield and Rooftop. If I can start with Brownfield.

01:06:15:19 - 01:06:20:20
NPS EN three paragraph two point one zero point two one

01:06:22:17 - 01:07:09:08
sets out how the applicant needs to consider or could consider brownfield and industrial land. And that is addressed in paragraphs 4.5.10 to 4.5.18 of the planning statement, and that's AS015. And there's further information on the brownfield selection or brownfield assessment, I should say, in those paragraphs. In summary, the applicant found that on reviewing sites that are on the local brownfield registered, which are listed registers sorry, which are listed in Table two of the planning statement, are either too small or are being promoted for alternative uses.

01:07:09:28 - 01:07:42:01
The applicant notes that since site selection, Liberty Steel plants in Brinsworth and Rotherham have closed, but the applicant understands from the ministerial statements around those closures that they're intended to be redeveloped for other employment purposes. And that means that there's no suitable brownfield development in the area as alternative to the scheme. Relevant representations have also raised Sheffield Airport as an alternative.

01:07:43:19 - 01:08:28:00
And the Doncaster Sheffield Airport is located approximately twenty four kilometers from the substation. So that falls well outside the defined search area of twelve kilometers and was, therefore, discounted from consideration. The final point I wanted to make was on rooftop. The applicant supports rooftop solar. And consistent with EN1 paragraph 3.3.12, the applicant sees or understands rooftop solar to be an additional but not an alternative way of delivering to the country's future clean energy needs.

01:08:29:24 - 01:09:02:10
Rooftop solar is beneficial and but it does not replace the need for large scale solar. That's because large scale solar has bulk transmission benefits, has transparency benefits to the national energy system operator. And also, its rooftop schemes on their own are not assessed to be deliverable the capacity of required and the time frames required to meet the clean power capacity ranges.

01:09:02:12 - 01:09:17:22
And indeed, it's important to clarify that those capacity ranges expect there to be growth in rooftop solar on top of the ranges that have been specified in Table three point one of the statements of need.

01:09:18:24 - 01:09:23:22
Thank you, Mr. Gillett. Mr. Sneaden, if you could briefly talk about alternative layouts and tracking.

01:09:25:15 - 01:09:27:24
Thank you. Ewen Steaden for

01:09:27:26 - 01:09:28:11
the

01:09:28:13 - 01:10:00:20
applicant. One of the other alternatives that we were looking at is to look at different module orientations and layouts. It's quite common for solar DCOs to propose flexibility between fixed south facing that we have here and single axis trackers that rotate to keep the module facing towards the sun. There's definitely a benefit to single access trackers in terms of their yields that you get out per megawatt that you install.

01:10:01:02 - 01:10:32:22
There are drawbacks. One of the drawbacks is that typically, because they're a single panel, the spacing means that you end up with a larger land take per megawatt. They're also less flexible when it comes to undulating terrain. And I think as Mr. Northcote stated in one of his earlier representations that the land, particularly in quite soon to west of the motorway, not particularly flat.

01:10:32:24 - 01:11:13:26
It's therefore not conducive to single axis trackers. It is, however, still possible to install fixed south facing on slopes like that. I've done it on different solar farms, steeper than the ones that are there with no real issues. A south facing slope, in fact, allows you to push the rows closer together because it mitigates and reduces inter row shading. So you can get even higher density of panels within a given land area, again, reducing the land take compared to a flat or slight north facing slope.

01:11:13:28 - 01:11:27:24
It's even a larger land take that you would need per megawatt. In terms of that land take, there is guidance from the government to aim for between five to six acres per megawatt installed.

01:11:29:12 - 01:12:00:00
Our scheme is currently designed around two point four acres per megawatt. So it is very much on the dense side for solar schemes. So it's not clear what they want to use as their area. So two point four acres per megawatt is when we're looking the at area that we're developing with solar infrastructure and permanent infrastructure to support the solar, such as the bass and the substation.

01:12:00:17 - 01:12:22:01
If we then just go to the full DCO boundary area, we're sitting at four point two acres per megawatt, including all the cable routes that wouldn't have infrastructure on them, which again is still better than the target that we've been set within the updated NPSs of, I believe, five to six acres per megawatt.

01:12:24:13 - 01:12:31:05
Think that will be good for now. Finally, on this sub item, I'll try and be brief because I'm taking quite a long time on this.

01:12:33:10 - 01:13:07:06
We've established we're starting at from previous speakers, starting at Brinsworth substation or Long Lane substation. We then looked for a search area. The further away from the substation you start putting the panels, the longer the cables have to be and the more environmental impacts that would be associated with those. And given we're also constrained by urban development to the west and we saw high grade agricultural land to the east, so that means a north south orientation.

01:13:10:12 - 01:13:34:21
We eventually lighted upon a twelve kilometer search area, which is a wider area than some other solar projects have used. Paragraph 4.3.21 in the site selection appended to the planning statement gives a list of search areas of other solar projects. Some of them are quite small.

01:13:36:06 - 01:13:42:28
Regrettably, this even with this large search area, this still means that the land is within the green belt.

01:13:45:05 - 01:14:40:19
For it to avoid the green belt, the panels would have to all be at least fifteen kilometers away to the north or south. And that would be too much impact on all the land in between and from where the panels were as well. Given the sensitivity of the issue of the green belt, we have a whole Appendix

two attached to the planning statement on justification for the project being within the green belt. So having settled on the twelve kilometer search area using the mitigation hierarchy, the potential solar areas suitable solar areas were identified having regard to factors like proximity or distance from dwellings and public rights of way, security and lighting issues, agricultural land classifications, other projects in the area, flood risk and environmental designations.

01:14:41:19 - 01:14:47:02
So that whittled it down to certain land areas. Only then were landowners approached.

01:14:49:04 - 01:14:53:23
And then through further assessment, consultation and engagement,

01:14:56:11 - 01:15:00:21
order limits were refined to the ones that eventually became the application.

01:15:02:16 - 01:15:09:29
Right. Final bit is on cumulative impacts. And I'll ask Mr. Hampson to cover that one, if I may. Thank you.

01:15:11:21 - 01:15:23:21
You. Alex Hampson on behalf of the applicant. I will be as efficient as possible. As part of production of the environmental statements, the applicant followed the planning and spectra guidance, which

01:15:23:23 - 01:15:24:08
is

01:15:24:10 - 01:15:57:27
titled Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects Advice on Cumulative Effects Assessment. This guidance requires a four stage process that was followed. Stage one requires creating a long list of projects and determining if they fall within defined zones of influence for each EIA topic. This was undertaken by the applicant in consultation with the local authorities, And the output of that is Appendix seven point two, the long list, APP one hundred fifty four.

01:15:57:29 - 01:16:36:22
I'll return to that later. Stage two requires those projects on the long list to then be determined whether they fall within each environmental topic's zone of influence using a range of criteria such as temporal overlap, scale and nature of the cumulative project and other factors such as the nature and capacity of the receiving environment and whether a potential source pathway from the applicant's proposed development to those receptors could result in a cumulative effect.

01:16:38:27 - 01:17:12:12
Those considerations form threshold criteria for each environmental discipline, allows a shorter list of cumulative developments to be taken forward for assessment in the relevant EIA chapter. Stage three of the process involves gathering information on those other cumulative developments from publicly available information. That includes information on those projects' designs, location, program, construction measures, operational measures and such like.

01:17:12:18 - 01:17:24:02
And also, importantly, to gather information on the environmental assessments, baseline and mitigation proposed by those cumulative projects as well.

01:17:25:18 - 01:17:58:12
Stage four then results in the assessment of cumulative effect being undertaken, combining the proposed developments and environmental information alongside the cumulative environmental information of the other projects. The assessment has been carried out using a precautionary approach. For example, if it is uncertain or possible that construction of a project would overlap, then the assessment assumes that there would be overlap in construction unless there's reasonable evidence to the contrary.

01:18:00:00 - 01:18:31:08
I think it's been noted already, but the applicant is aware from relevant representations and indeed conversations in the last two days that there are at least two or three projects that have been raised that were not on the long list application. And I believe we have already confirmed that those projects will be added to our long list and assessments undertaken across the relevant EIA topics ready for to be submitted at deadline two.

01:18:33:25 - 01:18:39:10
Thank you very much. I'm sorry that took longer than ten minutes, but I hope it was useful nevertheless.

01:18:39:22 - 01:18:45:27
Thank you. That was useful actually. It's just answered probably four of my questions that I had. So yes, very useful. Thank you very much.

01:18:47:23 - 01:18:55:06
So if we turn to the local authorities, Mr Gully, Ms Beckett, did you want to come in on this item?

01:18:55:18 - 01:19:11:13
Thank you, madam. Rob Gully for Doncaster and Wuthering Councils. I will speak to need case, site selection and alternatives, and my colleague, Jane Beckett, will talk to cumulative effects. I think in respect of what the applicant has said on need,

01:19:13:08 - 01:19:49:19
We recognize the national policy statements say what they say. I think the key point we'd make is, obviously, when a decision is made under Section one hundred four of the Planning Act, there are various other considerations and exclusions that are applied, including adverse impacts, outweighing benefits and other various matters. So I think we wouldn't say much more on that at this point in time. We'll just respond in written reps on those aspects. We don't intend to say anything further in orally on alternative technologies today. We would like to focus very much on alternatives and site selection where we have a number of concerns.

01:19:51:21 - 01:19:59:20

In the interest of time, we're not going to touch on every single point we want to make. We will make some in writing, but we'll focus on the key topics.

01:20:01:10 - 01:20:33:25
In terms of the phraseology, and Mr. Walker touched on this, it's slightly confusing. So we're going to refer to alternatives and site selection as being the process that the applicant undertook to get to their master plan number one, which is, I believe, the master plan used for the first public consultation and everything beyond that, which takes them from their master plan one through to master plan four as design evolution, which is mainly covered in the design approach document, and that gives some clarity.

01:20:38:08 - 01:21:19:17
We note that at paragraph four point two sorry, 4.6.11 of Chapter four of the applicant's environmental statement, the applicant states that they, and I quote, sought to develop a five hundred to seven fifty megawatt scheme. And if I just am interpreting Mr. Gillett's numbers correctly I'm sorry, Mr. Sneddon's numbers correctly on over planting, My math is correct. I believe that at the multiply, he stated at the current point in time, the applicant would be about eight twenty five megawatts to achieve a seven fifty megawatt peak comfortable output.

01:21:19:19 - 01:21:52:23
And he said it was still perfectly viable that the full seven fifty megawatts would be achieved on a clear day. And I believe with improvements in solar technology, he was suggesting an improvement to one point two overplanting, which would leave the applicant with in the order of nine hundred megawatts of solar capacity, in both cases, making maximum use of seven fifty megawatts and that grid connection. So the applicant sought to develop, and it's important to note, a five hundred to seven fifty megawatt scheme.

01:21:52:25 - 01:22:13:01
The aim was not outright a seven fifty megawatt scheme. They declared a range. We also note that at paragraph 4.6.15 of the same environmental statement chapter that the applicant also states that they sought a generating output, and I quote, over one hundred megawatts to maximize the available grid connection.

01:22:19:23 - 01:22:47:26
We note that the grid connection statement submitted with the application refers to an agreement being in place for the maximum target of a seven fifty megawatt export connection. But we also note the statement from Anston Parish Council yesterday of their understanding that the applicant had removed large areas of panels, but the no megawatt capacity have been lost. And that's obviously been explained by the representations there that they have been lowering their overplanting capacity.

01:22:51:14 - 01:23:13:08
It therefore appears to the councils that the project can still viably meet the applicant's top end renewable energy capacity in target the current scheme, which is both at the top end of their target but also well above their five hundred megawatt target and well above the one hundred megawatt grid connection capacity statement they made.

01:23:15:22 - 01:24:04:27
We believe it is this range that needs to be explored to better mitigate the effects from the scheme. Alternative site selection and design evolution are inextricably linked to the mitigation hierarchy, which Mr. Walker mentioned. Genuinely and properly following the mitigation hierarchy is a key step before applying the critical national priority policy presumptions that exist in national policy statement EN one. Paragraph 4.2.20 of National Policy Statement EN1 states that critical national policy priority policy applies following the normal consideration of need case, the impacts of the project, and the application of the mitigation hierarchy.

01:24:06:08 - 01:24:27:00
Paragraph 4.2.24 of the same statement states that applicants must apply the mitigation hierarchy and demonstrate that it has been applied. It further says applicants should demonstrate that all residual impacts are those that cannot be avoided.

01:24:28:28 - 01:25:00:04
Therefore, a key focus of the councils is to secure confidence and evidence from the applicant that, a, alternatives were adequately explored b, the mitigation hierarchy has been genuinely and properly applied and c, therefore, starting from the very first search area for sites, that the residual impacts now remaining in the application are those that are genuinely and properly cannot be avoided.

01:25:04:28 - 01:25:38:01
The council currently have substantial doubts and concerns about the defensibility and credibility of the approach taken by the applicant in respect of the above. A failure to achieve the above would mean that critical national priority presumptions in paragraph 4.2.30 of National Policy Statement EM1, including relating to matters such as Greenbelt, do not apply. I will now explain the specific concerns that the council have on-site selection alternatives and then on design evolution.

01:25:39:12 - 01:26:10:21
At the outset, it is worth acknowledging that the applicant's four stage alternatives process, starting with stage one identification of a search area, is a familiar and understandable alternatives process. However, the process is not key. It is the assumptions, decisions and defensibility of each stage within that process that are critical. Since the outputs of one stage lead into assumptions and the starting point of the next, it is a sequential process.

01:26:12:08 - 01:26:43:05
Furthermore, since there will rarely, and I would say never, be a single constraint that defines the obvious location and entire boundary for a project such as this, the applicant inevitably has to make, firstly, key assumptions about where and how far to cast their initial search as they have done and secondly, to make assumptions on the weight of different considerations such as environmental, land, commercial, policy, and stakeholder matters.

01:26:45:29 - 01:27:22:24
Whilst policy and statutory designations will often be a guide on the relative importance of some matters, it is ultimately a decision for the applicant to decide and a necessity to demonstrate how they have approached this to the examining authority and interested parties. Our observations and concerns on the alternatives and site selection phase specifically are as follows. The council's relevant

representation queried the decision to apply a twelve kilometer search area at stage one of the alternative process from the applicant's initial point of connection.

01:27:24:02 - 01:27:49:23
In response, the applicant has reiterated previous high level justification that the twelve kilometer search area from Brinsworth substation was selected, and I quote, as the maximum distance viable for the proposed development, acknowledging the environmental constraints and cumulative impacts beyond this radius and that the construction of the cable route can lead to significant costs that increase with length.

01:27:53:25 - 01:28:24:21
Those may be valid points, but they are not binary, and they are not all encompassing. Stating that the scheme is viable at twelve kilometers but entirely unviable at twelve point one kilometers, say, does not hold water. The reality is that there will be a creeping impact on viability and deliverability for a given size amongst a myriad of other considerations. The twelve kilometer search area is clearly arbitrary, and we are...

01:28:24:23 - 01:29:02:00
We acknowledge that in the absence of any natural absolute constraint, the applicant has to pick some distance to use. However, a normal approach would be to conduct a level of sensitivity testing to see the implications of a variation around the arbitrary distance. The councils would like to see evidence of such sensitivity testing. And also note the table that was referred to which compares other solar farms and distances of search, we would like to see that with reference to the size of those solar farms and their megawatt capacities to have a more relevant comparison.

01:29:02:29 - 01:29:06:12
Notwithstanding that, all sites need to be considered individually.

01:29:08:01 - 01:29:49:28
The applicant refers to considering sites beyond fifteen kilometers since these would lie outside the green belt, from which they conclude that a nearest parcel at fifteen kilometers would not be appropriate or viable. That is not sensitivity testing. That is a binary eitheror comparison. What is required is assurance that incremental increase in the search area would not have opened up suitable or preferable opportunities to avoid or reduce effects. This might include more appropriate areas inside or outside the green belt or a combination of both, coming forward where other impacts are avoided, reduced or can be mitigated more effectively.

01:29:51:00 - 01:29:58:08
This might also draw in suitable previously development land, which we do not feel has been sufficiently comprehensively addressed.

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We recognize what national policy statement EM1 says about the extent of alternatives exploration but remains substantially unconvinced that the twelve kilometer buffer is justifiable as a definitive starting point to complete later stages of the alternatives process.

01:30:19:15 - 01:30:47:04
Proting Mr. Cook Northcote for the three joint parishes yesterday, he stated that the north to south distance across the scheme measures approximately eighteen kilometers. A radius of twelve kilometers gives you a diameter of twenty four kilometers and is only thirty percent larger than the distance across the entire solar farm. That reinforces our position that regardless of what search areas other DCO schemes may or may not have used,

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a twenty four kilometer diameter rate is not sufficient or proportionate.

01:30:56:13 - 01:31:42:04
There appears to be no comparative or transparent alternative site assessment based on actual criteria or scoring, including how the land within and around the order limits within the search radius performed in line with the applicant's own search parameters. No mapping figures or tables are apparent that provide outcomes of typical constraints mapping and weighted overlay considerations to identify other areas that could be assessed in detail or ruled out due to availability. We continue to hold the position that it is essential that the applicants provide an assessment of alternative greenbelt land within a defensible radius assessed on the contribution on a parcel by parcel basis to the purposes of the greenbelt and openness.

01:31:44:19 - 01:31:48:19
I'll move on to the second phase, which is the design evolution phase.

01:31:54:29 - 01:32:10:21
Section seven point seven of the applicant's consultation report states that a total reduction of thirty seven percent of the developable solar area was achieved compared to the original master plan presented for the non statutory consultation.

01:32:12:20 - 01:32:16:08
From the megawatt observations I set out a little earlier,

01:32:18:05 - 01:32:56:15
we note that the applicant is still at the upper end of their five hundred to seven fifty megawatt target with an expectation that they will achieve typical overplanting levels. This is despite losing nearly forty percent of their area. We are unconvinced that the project changes presented by Mr. Griffiths yesterday, where he referred frequently to the design approach document, were genuine and proper mitigation or rather were areas that, taking account of typical or obvious constraints, should not have been included in the boundary in the first place, following the alternatives and site selection process.

01:32:58:05 - 01:33:32:16
It would give us examples of changes from master plan one to two and three at areas such as Woodall, Ali and Highmore, among others, as examples where the consultation response and other considerations were entirely predictable and foreseeable to the extent that those areas or similar would likely have been removed in any event due to proximity to residences and anticipated feedback. A substantial number of changes were due to engagement residents around with views from their properties or removing areas in the absence of engagement with those residents.

01:33:33:13 - 01:34:07:14
Thirty seven percent is a very substantial reduction to be applied where the project and its understanding of effects are normally well advanced and a full alternative process with consideration of all key constraints and obvious effects has already been undertaken. It suggests that large areas that were unsuitable or inappropriate were included in the project at that time that should not have made it through the alternative process and that genuine and proper avoidance and reduction opportunities to mitigate remaining effects still remain to be undertaken.

01:34:09:04 - 01:34:45:03
The council's conclusion at present is that the alternative site selection and design evolution process together led to a fait accompli of the project being sited across a specific large Greenbelt area with significant effects that the applicant would claim cannot be avoided. It is our position that a properly applied mitigation hierarchy can avoid further effects. The key question that the council wishes to answer is therefore whether the applicant has properly and generally applied the mitigation hierarchy from Benincken to end.

01:34:45:22 - 01:35:32:18
On this basis, the council's summary position on this matter is as follows. Removing solar panel generation is a balanced decision. The council recognizes that the each removal to avoid, reduce or mitigate effects has the potential to reduce the renewable energy generating benefits of the project. That is no doubt a difficult judgment for the applicant to make, including how much headroom they leave for overplanting. However, the applicant appears to have significant scope to remain within their target megawatt capacity of five hundred to seven fifty megawatts, while still addressing residual effects such that they can rather than cannot be addressed in terms of what the application shows at the current time.

01:35:34:15 - 01:36:06:02
To allay the council's fears over evidencing genuine and proper application of alternatives and the mitigation hierarchy in accordance with NPS EN1, we would recommend that the examining authority asks for, and we would like to see, the applicant submit an additional mitigation hierarchy document pulling together the process that is currently spread across multiple documents, such as alternatives, planning statement, design approach document. And such a document sets out as a minimum

01:36:07:17 - 01:36:30:12
sensitivity testing of opportunities that would have been opened up had the arbitrary search area been adopted more proportional to the substantial scale of the site that the applicant was seeking. Constraints mapping and appropriate weighted consideration of the various constraints that fed into the discounting of all other plots within a defensible search radius.

01:36:32:02 - 01:36:55:10
For each area removed, each reiteration of the master plan, how much loss of renewable energy in megawatts, if any, or headroom is over planting was attributed to each change? And most importantly, what could a megawatt capacity at the lower bound applicant target of five hundred megawatts

achieve in terms of further mitigation of residual effects that currently arise from the submitted application?

01:36:57:02 - 01:37:27:18
In parallel, we would like confirmation as to whether the seven fifty megawatt grid connection capacity will be reduced or otherwise, what headroom is remaining over and above the five hundred megawatt target. In the event that the applicant cannot demonstrate through the above proper and defensible application of alternatives, site selection and the mitigation hierarchy, it is the council's view that the beneficial presumptions under critical national priority status should not apply.

01:37:29:08 - 01:37:30:02
Thank you.

01:37:36:17 - 01:37:39:13
If I just turn to the cumulative effects now.

01:37:41:05 - 01:38:15:03
We can confirm, obviously, the applicant have liaised with both sorry, it's Jane Beckett on behalf of Rotterdam and Doncaster Council, just touching on cumulative effects. We can confirm the applicant has liaised with us at pre examination stage on the longlist, which was welcomed. And we again welcome that the long list will be updated at deadline two. I think you also confirmed that there would be an update to various ES chapters as a result of that. And given what we've heard the last couple of days, there is a significant amount of documentation that has...

01:38:15:18 - 01:38:38:20
That is stated to be updated or resubmitted. It would be helpful to get a list of what documentation will be submitted when if I'm to you know, that you can give us now just to give us a heads up basically on future and how we assess and how update a chapter seventeen on cumulative effects, is APP sixty nine, I believe,

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when that is expected to be updated. Given that there are the potential for cumulative effects on various environmental matters stated in that chapter, Whilst the applicant states that there isn't significant effects, we'll come on to the detail of that within each individual topic and our written comments going forward. However, in light of the long list being updated, it would be really useful to get a short list of topics within that chapter seventeen so that the cross reference and the schemes related to in light of each topic can be easily distinguished and it's really clear and transparent as to what projects are being related to within under each topic.

01:39:31:09 - 01:40:04:07
And then in terms of cumulative effects from various projects, I think we've also put in written representations and I will continue to liaise on the detailed wording with the applicant in terms of statement of common grounds provisions and so forth. We feel there needs to be a lot more detailed mitigation details and tighter mitigation, sorry, more detail on the impacts on cumulative effects and how those are assessed at the various stages of development, be it construction.

01:40:04:09 - 01:40:25:07
And obviously, decommissioning has come up today. The outline management control documents, there isn't anything about assessment of cumulative effects and developments at that stage. And we'd obviously welcome input into that before the decommissioning space going forward. Thank you.

01:40:27:24 - 01:40:34:21
Thank you very much. That was very helpful. Mr Walker, I appreciate you haven't got your planning with us with you here.

01:40:35:10 - 01:40:51:13
Can turn back And I'll just walk off the application for the applicant. Well, given the importance of Mr. Gulley's presentations and our lack of planning witness, I think they merit a full response in writing, which we will do by deadline one.

01:41:07:12 - 01:41:14:06
Mr. Hampson will address the cumulative the points on the cumulative effects now, if that's okay.

01:41:15:02 - 01:41:31:06
Alex Henderson, on behalf of the applicant, yes, I just thought it'd be useful to respond to those points. And they fully accord with my understanding of the relevant representation. So yes, you made reference to the long list and chapter seventeen being updated. Both of that is correct.

01:41:32:27 - 01:42:08:20
You'll notice from chapter seventeen, it does provide almost kind of a summary of the detailed cumulative assessments that each individual topic has. As part of that list that we provide you, we will let you know which specific EIA chapter requires more in their cumulative assessment because of the projects that are being added. It won't be all, but there will be a number from looking at the zone of influence process I mentioned earlier. The two or three that we particularly referenced do fall within the zone of influence of a number of chapters.

01:42:08:22 - 01:42:29:15
So it will be both Chapter seventeen and some individual chapters as well. So I thought that's worth a clarification. Yes, you asked for a short list of projects per topic to be included in the Chapter seventeen summary, and that's absolutely fine. We noted that from the relevant representations, and that will be done in the updated Chapter seventeen that gets submitted.

01:42:31:11 - 01:42:38:17
And yes, we noted your point on kind of cumulative mitigation in the securing documents, so we'll take that one away.

01:42:39:18 - 01:42:47:09
And also, Mr. Gillett would like to come back on the five hundred to seven fifty megawatt point. Now...

01:42:48:07 - 01:42:55:28

Madam, just to provide some Simon Gillett for the applicant, just to provide some context again around the need.

01:42:58:15 - 01:43:17:21
Given the urgent need for an unprecedented capacity of new low carbon generation, it is for project proposals to maximize the benefits that their schemes will bring rather than eCOVER a hurdle

01:43:19:14 - 01:43:36:11
and say, I've done the minimum possible. That's not consistent with national policy. And indeed, hopefully, it's clear from the application that the applicant has sought to maximize its use of the generation capacity through this scheme. One

01:43:37:26 - 01:43:39:14
word was left out of

01:43:41:00 - 01:43:50:19
the citation from design evolution document paragraph 4.6.11, which was the word minimum. So if I

01:43:52:12 - 01:43:55:20
can find that point and

01:43:58:14 - 01:44:01:03
read it. Thank you. Yes, in determining

01:44:03:10 - 01:44:24:09
beauty of laptops. In determining a suitable location for the proposed development, the applicant sought to develop a single new NSIP generating a minimum of five hundred to seven fifty megawatts, which implies some sort of lower level above which the applicant is seeking to

01:44:25:01 - 01:44:25:16
deliver.

01:44:28:13 - 01:44:31:24
And clearly, and I think this

01:44:33:19 - 01:45:03:29
could be a point where the application document could have been a little bit clearer. The one hundred megawatts cited in 4.6.15, I understand is to refer to the fact that it would be an NSIP scheme and therefore reach the NSIP threshold. But I agree that a one hundred megawatts capacity scheme would not satisfy the grid connection.

01:45:04:01 - 01:45:10:01
So clearly, there's a logical disconnect there. And hopefully, those are useful points for the examination, madam.

01:45:11:29 - 01:45:14:16
Thank you. That's our response for the moment.

01:45:16:06 - 01:45:17:00
Thank you.

01:45:18:26 - 01:45:24:09
If we turn now then to Angelina Lambert, do you have any comments on this topic?

01:45:28:19 - 01:45:50:19
Thank you, madam. I'm Jelena Lambert representing Northeast Derbyshire District Council. Just regards to the cumulative effects in terms of we welcome the long list. And as we receive new applications or EIA scoping request, we'll endeavor to update the...

01:45:52:05 - 01:46:10:01
When we receive the new... If we receive a new applications or EIA scoping request within the zone of influence, we'll endeavor to update the applicant team so that they can keep their long list updated. Thank you. No further comment. Thank you.

01:46:10:03 - 01:46:29:15
Thank you. That's helpful. Thank you. We've reached four o'clock so we've been sitting for almost two hours. Did people want to have a short break now before we move on to parish councils and interested parties? Take fifteen minutes. Is that enough for everyone? Yes, okay. So we will resume at quarter past four. Thank you very much.