Planning Inspectorate

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

Our Ref: EN0110020

Date: 18 November 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

Planning Act 2008 – Section 89 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rule 8 and 9.

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

Examination timetable and procedure

This letter (the Rule 8 Letter) provides important information about the examination of this application. The letter includes:

- The examination timetable
- An invitation to submit written representations
- Other procedural decisions made by the ExA
- Information about hearings and accompanied site inspections
- Information about the availability of examination documents
- Guidance on the use of the 'Have your say' tab on the project webpage

All documentation associated with this examination, including a note of the preliminary meeting and the recording of that meeting, can be viewed on the documents page on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website (project webpage).

The examination timetable

We have made a procedural decision about the way the application will be examined. The final examination timetable is attached at **annex A** to this letter.

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The examination timetable replaces the draft timetable that was included in our Rule 6 Letter. In finalising the examination timetable, we have sought to accommodate requests and suggestions made orally or in writing to the preliminary meeting. A list of the main changes we made to the draft examination timetable is set out at **annex B** to this letter.

Please note that the examination timetable contains a number of deadlines for receipt of information by The Planning Inspectorate. All deadlines are at 23:59 on the date specified. Please ensure submissions arrive by the deadline. If you do not make your submissions by the dates specified in the timetable, we may disregard them.

We request that all interested parties make their submissions using the 'Have Your Say' page on the project webpage on or before the applicable deadline. **Annex E** to this letter provides further information about using the 'Have your say' page.

If we consider it necessary to vary the examination timetable during the examination, notification will be sent to interested parties, statutory parties and other persons invited to the preliminary meeting. The changes will be published on the project webpage.

Written representations

All interested parties are now invited to submit written representations and any comments on the relevant representations already submitted. These should be submitted by **deadline 1** in the examination timetable.

Written representations can cover any relevant matter and are not restricted to the matters set out in our initial assessment of principal issues within the Rule 6 Letter or to the content of our written questions (see next heading below).

Any person, other than the applicant, who submits a written representation must identify those parts of the application with which they agree and those parts with which they do not agree, explaining the reasons why. Interested parties should also provide with their written representations any data, methodology and assumptions used to support their submissions to avoid delays in the examination (see paragraph 009 of the government's guidance on the examination stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects for further information about written representations).

We have requested further types of written submissions at various points in the examination (see **annex A**).

Any written representations and any further written submissions requested during the examination, that exceed 1500 words, should also be accompanied by a summary which should not exceed 10% of the original text. The summary should set out the key facts of the written submission and must be representative of the submission made.

Representations **must not include hyperlinks** to documents/ evidence hosted on third party websites. See The Planning Inspectorate's Advice for members of the public: Advice for submitting representations or comments for important information about making written submissions.

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Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

Annex B to this letter contains important details and clarifications about other procedural decisions we made at, or following, the preliminary meeting. These include:

- Alteration to the deadline for the applicant's draft itinerary for accompanied site inspections
- Alteration to the date for Deadlines 3 and 4.
- Alteration to the date for the ExA's second written questions and schedule of changes to the dDCO

Format of examination events

Both blended (part in-person and part virtual) and fully virtual events will form part of the operating model. We remain flexible and will confirm the format of any hearings when we provide formal notification of each hearing in advance of it taking place.

Hearings and site inspections

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

The Planning Inspectorate's advice for members of the public also provides important information about hearing procedures:

- What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event
- Registering to speak at, or attend, a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event

On this basis the examination timetable at **annex A** to this letter includes periods of time reserved for any hearings to be held, and we will notify all interested parties of any hearings scheduled as part of the examination in advance of them taking place. That notification will include a deadline for interested parties to inform the Planning Inspectorate if they wish to participate at the notified hearing(s).

We will also undertake site inspections. Where we are able to view the site from public land we are likely to do this unaccompanied and a note of the site inspection will be published on the project webpage. The examination timetable also reserves time for us to undertake an accompanied site inspection (ASI) at a time to be confirmed. We will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis. We will also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of an unaccompanied site inspection on an access required basis.

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Annex C provides details about what interested parties should include in a request to be heard at a hearing, and the procedure that will be followed at hearings. It also provides important information about the accompanied site inspection and attendance at the inspection.

Managing examination correspondence

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

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

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

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

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

Your status in the examination

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

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

Awards of costs

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

Management of information

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

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

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

Yours faithfully

Rebecca Norman

Lead Member of the Examining Authority

Annexes

A Examination timetable
B Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
C Requests to appear and procedure to be followed at hearings
D Examination documents
E Information about the 'Have your say' tab

This communication does not constitute legal advice.
Please view our Privacy Notice before sending information to The Planning Inspectorate.

Examination Timetable

The examination of the application primarily takes the form of the consideration of written submissions. The ExA will also consider any oral representations made at hearings.

Item	Matters	Date
1.	**Preliminary meeting** **Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1)** **Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1)** **Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2)**	**Tuesday 10 November 2026** **Wednesday 11 November 2026** **Thursday 12 November 2026**
2.	**Issue by the ExA of:** • the examination timetable	**As soon as practicable following the Preliminary Meeting**
3.	**Deadline 1** For receipt by the ExA of: • comments on relevant representations (RRs) • summaries of all RRs exceeding 1500 words • written representations (WRs) and summaries of any WR which exceed 1500 words • post hearings submissions, including written submissions of any oral cases heard at OFH1, ISH1 and ISH2 • local impact reports (LIR) from local authorities • suggestions for locations for the accompanied site inspection (ASI) (if any) from any other party together with **reasoning** • **requests to be heard at an open floor hearing (OFH)** Requests by interested parties to be heard at a further OFH2 – please note that the attendance registration form for this hearing will be made available no later than 28 days prior to any future hearings that are required, and will also need to be completed	**Tuesday 24 November 2026**

	• **requests to be heard at a compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH)** Requests by affected persons (defined in section 59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at a CAH - please note that the attendance registration form for this hearing will be made available no later than 28 days prior to any future hearings that are required, and will also need to be completed • **any further information requested by ExA** Any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 ('the examination rules') • comments on any further information/ submissions accepted by the ExA • draft Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) • updated documents from the applicant	
4.	**Deadline 2** For receipt by the ExA of: • comments on the WRs • comments on responses to RRs • comments on the LIRs • the applicant's draft itinerary for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) (if required) • comments on any additional submissions received by Deadline 1 and accepted by the ExA (if required) • comments on draft SoCG • comments from affected persons on applicant's updated land and rights negotiation tracker • the applicant's revised dDCO and other updates from the applicant • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	**Tuesday 15 December 2026**

5.	**Publication by the ExA of:** • the ExA's first written questions (ExQ1)	**Tuesday 22 December 2026**
6.	**Deadline 3** For receipt by the ExA of: • responses to ExQ1 • comments on any updated or additional documents submitted by the applicant at **deadline 2** • updates from the applicant • any further information requested by ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by **deadline 2** • comments on the applicant's draft itinerary for the ASI	**Friday 22 January 2027**
7.	**Publication by the ExA of:** • the ExA's final itinerary for the ASI (if required)	**Tuesday 2 February 2027**
8.	**Week reserved for hearings:** • further Issue Specific Hearings on Environmental Matters (ISH3) and the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) (ISH4) • compulsory Acquisition Hearing (CAH) • further Open Floor Hearing (OFH2) (if required) • potential ASI (if required)	**Tuesday 9 – Thursday 11 February 2027**
9.	**Deadline 4** For receipt by the ExA of: • post hearing submissions, including written summaries of any oral cases made at hearings held during 9 – 11 February 2027 • updates from the applicant, including the applicant's revised Explanatory Memorandum, updated Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker, Updated BoR, schedule of changes to the BoR, Statement of Reasons and Land Plans, updated	**Tuesday 23 February 2027**

	outline control documents, progress regarding Protective Provisions and progress on securing other consents.	
10.	**Publication by the ExA of:** • the ExA's Second Written Questions (ExQ2) (if required) • the ExA's proposed dDCO (schedule of changes)	**Thursday 4 March 2027**
11.	**Deadline 5** For receipt by the ExA of: • responses to ExQ2 • responses to the ExAs proposed dDCO • comments on the applicant's revised dDCO • updates from the applicant, including the applicant's revised Explanatory Memorandum, updated Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker, Updated BoR, schedule of changes to the BoR, Statement of Reasons and Land Plans, updated outline control documents, progress regarding Protective Provisions and progress on securing other consents. • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	**Tuesday 23 March 2027**
12.	**Deadline 6** For receipt by the ExA, from the applicant, of: • **the final draft DCO.** Final draft DCO to be submitted by the applicant in the SI template. Applicant to provide the email notification from https://publishing.legislation.gov.uk/validation confirming the document has successfully passed validation, and the PDF version of the SI validation report obtained from the link in the notification email. The applicant should also provide a clean (all tracking removed) standalone MS Word version of the draft DCO, with no header or cover page • **the final updated BoR** Final BoR and schedule of changes to BoR • **final SoCGs** • **final Statement of Commonality of SoCG**	**Tuesday 6 April 2027**

	• **list of matters not agreed where SoCG could not be finalised** • **final Navigation Document/ Guide to the Application** • **final Status of Negotiations CA Schedule** • **final Status of Negotiations with Statutory Undertakers** • **final NPS Tracker** • **any further information requested by ExA** Any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 • **comments on any further information received** Comments on any additional information/submissions received by **deadline 5** • **final signed and dated section 106 (if required)** • **Closing Statement** For receipt by the ExA, from any IP, of: • **comments on any further information received** Comments on any additional information/submissions received by **deadline 5** • **any further information requested by ExA** Any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	
13.	**Close of the examination** the ExA intends to close the examination on this date. See 'Note about the close of examination date'.	**Friday 9 April 2027**

Note about the close of examination date

The ExA is under a duty to complete the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting. The ExA may however decide to close the examination earlier and on the date specified in the timetable if it considers that the application and relevant matters have been examined adequately.

Submission times for deadlines

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is 23:59 on the relevant deadline date, unless instructed otherwise by the ExA.

Publication dates

All information received will be published on the project webpage as soon as practicable after the deadlines for submissions.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority (ExA)

We have made a number of procedural decisions following the preliminary meeting:

1. Examination timetable

We are grateful for comments made at the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and representations made at Procedural Deadline A. The ExA has made the following changes to the timetable:

- **Suggested locations for accompanied and unaccompanied site inspections:** As the original timetable in the Rule 6 letter included ASI suggestions at deadline 1 and Procedural Deadline A, we have extended the deadline for the applicants draft ASI itinerary to **deadline 2.**
- **Deadline 3:**
  We noted the requests to move the deadline for the publication of the ExA's first written questions forward to account for the Christmas break. However, this would result in insufficient time between deadline 2 and the publication of the written questions to fully consider the submissions received at deadline 2. As such, **deadline 3** has therefore been moved back to **Friday 22 January 2027** to allow for extra time following the break.
- **Deadline 4:**
  We noted the comments on deadline 4 due to the February half-term break and have moved **deadline 4** back until **Tuesday 23 February 2027.** This has necessitated also moving the deadline for the ExA's second written questions and schedule of changes to the dDCO to **Thursday 4 March 2027.**

More generally, we have considered the comments made at the Preliminary Meeting and in written submissions about the **length of the examination.** We do not consider it to be necessary to amend the timetable which has been set in line with examinations for similar nationally significant solar farm proposals. At this point we consider this period is sufficient to enable the application to be thoroughly assessed. However, we are mindful of the comments made by members of the public about the pressures of dealing with large volumes of information within the examination period. Should matters arise which justify extending this period, we will consider making amendments to the timetable.

Hearings and time for an ASI have been scheduled for the week of **9 – 11 February 2027.** Once the ExA has considered the suggested ASI locations and the applicant's itinerary, and if the hearings are likely to occupy a considerable portion of this week, there may be a need to add in a separate opportunity for the ASI at an alternative time.

2. Statements of common ground (SoCG)

The applicant is taking the lead in the preparation of SoCGs and it will aid the smooth running of the examination if all interested parties who are participating in the preparation of SoCGs liaise and co-operate with the applicant in respect of their production. We set out in **annex F** of our Rule 6 Letter the SoCGs we request are submitted during the examination of this application. Final signed versions of the SoCGs listed below are requested to be submitted **by the applicant** to **deadline 6 Tuesday 6 April 2027**:

1. SoCG between the applicant and City of Doncaster Council
2. SoCG between the applicant and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
3. SoCG between the applicant and North East Derbyshire Council
4. SoCG between the applicant and Natural England
5. SoCG between the applicant and Environment Agency
6. SoCG between the applicant and Historic England
7. SoCG between the applicant and National Highways
8. SoCG between the applicant and National Grid Electricity Transmission
9. SoCG between the applicant and Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd
10. SoCG between the applicant and Northern Powergrid (Yorkshire) PLC
11. SoCG between the applicant and Cadent Gas Ltd
12. SoCG between the applicant and ERG UK Holding Limited
13. SoCG between the applicant and JJS1 Ltd
14. SoCG between the applicant and Harmony Energy Ltd
15. SoCG between the applicant and Canal and River Trust
16. SoCG between the applicant and Sheffield Aero Club Ltd

All of the SoCGs listed above should cover the articles and requirements in the draft DCO. Any interested party seeking that an article or requirement is reworded should provide the form of words which are being sought.

The content of SoCGs will help to inform us about the need to hold any issue specific hearings during the examination, and to enable us and the applicant to give notice of such hearings in advance of them taking place.

3. Local impact reports (LIR)

A LIR is a report in writing giving details of the likely impact of a proposed development on a local authority's area (or any part of that area). For more information about the importance and content of LIRs see The Planning Inspectorate's Advice for local authorities.

Local authorities, defined in section 56A of the Planning Act 2008, are invited to submit LIRs by **deadline 1**.

4. Changes to land interests

When the applicant becomes aware that there has been a change in ownership, or a new interest, in relevant land the applicant is requested to make the relevant person aware that they can make a request to the ExA to become an interested party under section 102A of the PA2008. They should inform them that information about how to do this can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's advice for members of the public: Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process.

The examination timetable includes various deadlines for the submission of an updated book of reference and schedule of changes to the book of reference, which should include confirmation that relevant persons have been informed of their rights under section 102A.

5. Status of the Applicant's Examination Documents

We request that the applicant provides, at each deadline, an updated 'Status of the Applicant's examination documents' document which provides a list of the most up-to-date status of the documents submitted, including which copies have been superseded in whole or in part. A final version must be submitted before the close of the examination. All examination documents submitted should include a version number and date.

Arrangements for hearings

Our examination will be principally undertaken through the exchange of written submissions however the examination timetable reserves periods of time for hearings to be held (if required).

Requests to participate at hearings

Interested parties have been asked to notify the Examining Authority (ExA) in writing of their interest in taking part in an open floor hearing (OFH) or compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) on or before **Tuesday 24 November 2026** (see **deadline 1**).

It would be helpful for any request to participate in a hearing to include the following information:

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top of any letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate),
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person,
- Confirmation of the hearing(s) you wish to participate in,
- For CAHs, the plot number(s) of the relevant land provided in the Book of Reference and the Land Plans.

The ExA will provide reasonable notice of the time, date and place of any hearings to all interested parties.

Requests to participate should be made using an **event participation form** which will be provided with the notification of the hearing.

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

If no written requests to take part in an OFH or CAH are received by the above deadline, we are not required to hold such a hearing, although we may choose to do so nonetheless.

We may also choose to hold issue specific hearings (ISH) about topics that we think need to be explored orally. The decision to hold an ISH about a particular topic is not connected to how relevant or important we consider an issue or topic to be.

Hearing agendas

For ISHs and CAHs the ExA will publish a detailed draft agenda on the project website at least five working days in advance of the hearing date. However, the actual agenda on the day of each hearing may be subject to change at the discretion of the ExA. For OFHs an agenda may not be published.

Procedure at hearings

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

The procedure to be followed at hearings is set out in rule 14 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. The ExA is responsible for the oral questioning of a person giving evidence and the process affords very limited scope to allow cross-questioning between parties.

Hearing livestream and recording

A link to a livestream for each hearing will be made available on the project webpage shortly before any hearing is due to open. The livestream is available to anybody who wishes to observe a hearing in real time.

All hearings are recorded, and the recordings will be made available on the project webpage as soon as practicable after the close of the hearing. The recordings allow any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed.

Examination documents

The application documents and relevant representations can be inspected on the project webpage.

How to stay up to date

All further documents submitted in the course of the examination will also be published on the documents page of the project webpage.

You can also sign up to get email updates.

If you have any questions about the process, examination events or how to access the documents, you can email whitestonesolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or contact us on 0303 444 5000 or via the following address:

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69 Buckingham Avenue
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The Examination Library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the Examination Library (EL) which is accessible by clicking the blue link at the top of the documents page. The EL is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The EL records and provides a hyperlink to:

- each application document
- each representation and submission made to the examination
- each procedural decision made by the Examining Authority

Each document is given a unique reference number which will be fixed for the duration of the examination. **Please quote the unique reference number from the EL when referring to any examination documents in any future submissions that you make**.

Information about the 'Have your say' page

The 'Have your say' page is available on the project webpage.

You will need to enter your unique reference number ('Your ref' found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate). If you are making a submission on behalf of another person or organisation, and do have not your own unique reference number, then you should enter the unique reference number of the person or organisation you are representing. If you are not a registered interested party then it is at the discretion of the Examining Authority whether or not your submission is accepted.

Submissions will be published on the project webpage as soon as practicable following the close of the relevant deadline. For further information about publishing submissions please view our Privacy Notice.

You will be able to submit a document (upload file), make a text representation or both. It is possible to upload multiple files for each individual submission item. Electronic attachments should be clearly labelled with the subject title and not exceed 50MB.

Submissions **must not include hyperlinks** to documents/ evidence hosted on a third party website, for example technical reports, media articles and so on. See The Planning Inspectorate's Advice for members of the public: Advice for submitting representations or comments for important information about making written submissions. All submissions must be made in a format that can be viewed in full on the National Infrastructure Planning website. Any submissions that exceed 1500 words should also be accompanied by a summary; this summary should not exceed 10% of the original text.

You should select the relevant deadline for your submission and then, on the next webpage, select the appropriate submission item as described in the examination timetable at **annex A** to this letter. Please ensure you make a separate submission for each submission item and **do not duplicate your submission**. If you consider that your submission does not fit the description of any of the submission items then please select the submission item 'Other' and ensure that it is titled appropriately.

If you experience any issues when using the 'Have your say' page, please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter and they will assist.