



Inception Meeting note

Project name	SDC M40 Campus
Case reference	EN0110030
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	14 November 2025
Meeting with	Slough Holdings UK Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the inception meeting note could be delayed by up to 6 months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

The proposed development

Detailed description of the proposed development

Slough Holdings UK Limited, supported by SDC Capital Partners, intends to seek a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the energy centre element of the SDC M40 Campus in South Buckinghamshire, between Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross.

The energy centre will generate approximately 300–350 MW of electricity using an existing on-site gas pipeline (capacity ~900 MW) to supply power to the future data centre campus until grid upgrades are available post-2030.

Presently, the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project that meets the threshold of the PA2008 is the proposed “energy centre”. A component to the scheme is a separate at present Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) application is being progressed for the data centre campus. It is the applicant's intention to seek a section 35 direction, should the Infrastructure Planning (Business or Commercial Projects) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 be updated to include data centres.

The facility will occupy around 25,000 m² and include either Combined Cycle Gas Turbines (CCGTs) or Open Cycle Gas Turbines (OCGTs), associated stacks (subject to modelling), a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), and supporting infrastructure. Associated works will include substations, security measures, site access, car parking, drainage and utilities, fibre connectivity, lighting, landscaping/ecology enhancements (including Biodiversity Net Gain), and potential realignment of public rights of way.

Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application programme document

The applicant advised on key dates, as described within their Programme Document. The Inspectorate noted that the applicant would need to ensure that a public facing version of their Programme Document will need to be made available i.e. via applicant project page. It was also noted that the Programme Document should be shared with relevant statutory parties, so they could provide any comments to the programme if necessary.

Early engagement with statutory bodies and local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date

The Applicant is taking a proactive approach to stakeholder engagement, seeking responses on its draft Statement of Community Consultation from Buckinghamshire Council in September 2025 and awaiting comments. Applicant, also confirmed that it is negotiating PPAs with host local authorities and engaging with the Environment Agency and Natural England to establish Discretionary Advice Service agreements. The Inspectorate again, noted that the Programme Document should be shared with these parties, to seek their input on the applicants programme.

Environmental constraints and issues

The applicant described the key environmental constraints associated with the site and proposed development. The site is a former mineral extraction and landfill, which has been capped. There is an existing energy centre on site, which is fuelled by landfill gas.

There is a traveller site adjacent to the site and several public rights of way in and around the site. The applicant stated that the site is in Flood Zone 1. It is not located within a nationally designated landscapes but could give rise to indirect effects to the Chilterns National Landscape. There is also potential for setting impacts to several statutory heritage assets. It is close to ancient woodland and other areas of woodland and priority habitat. The applicant stated that the site is outside the zone of influence of Chiltern Beechwoods and Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping

The applicant stated that it intends to submit a request for an EIA scoping opinion to the Inspectorate in January 2026. The Inspectorate advised that the GIS shapefile should be submitted 10 working days in advance of the request; therefore, if the request is to be made in early January, a shapefile would be required in mid-December 2025. The Inspectorate advised that its [advice note seven](#) sets out guidance about scoping requests and the technical specification for the GIS shapefile.

The Inspectorate sought clarification as to the project for which the applicant would be seeking an EIA scoping opinion. The applicant stated that the request would relate to the whole project, comprising the proposed data centre and energy centre, and that it would not separate out the description of likely significant effects as related to each component.

The Inspectorate advised that it would provide an EIA scoping opinion for the proposed development that comprised the NSIP, which at this stage is the energy centre only. It may not be able to treat the request as valid if it is not possible to ascertain the likely significant effects arising from the proposed energy centre. The Inspectorate noted the example of Eastern Green Links 4 and 5, which spanned two consenting regimes. The applicant for this proposed development sought an EIA scoping opinion from the Inspectorate for the NSIP project only.

The Inspectorate advised that if the applicant sought an EIA scoping opinion for the proposed energy centre and subsequently received a s35 direction that directed the proposed data centre into the NSIP regime, this may result in a materially different development. In this scenario, the applicant may have to consider undertaking a new scoping process.

The applicant stated that it would give further consideration to its approach to EIA scoping and requested a pre-application meeting with the Inspectorate in mid-December 2025.

Environmental surveys

The applicant commenced baseline survey work in 2025, including for ecology, traffic, noise and air quality monitoring. Survey work is ongoing. Ground investigation is proposed to determine the extent of landfill cells.

Post-meeting note: the applicant provided the Inspectorate with a document summarising the key environmental features for consideration and associated survey work.

Land and rights: Scope of compulsory acquisition etc powers sought and potential constraints and issues

The Applicant confirmed they will not need to use compulsory acquisition for the main site, as it is already on their ownership. They may require access to some land owned by Buckinghamshire Council. In the future, if a third building is constructed, compulsory acquisition may become necessary. The applicant noted that the site is located within the Green Belt, and Buckinghamshire's new local plan is currently being developed.

Consultation (statutory and non-statutory)

The applicant has started engagement with a variety of statutory parties and local councils.

Submission date

The applicant advised the Inspectorate that it intended to submit the Development Consent Order (DCO) in September 2026

The service tier requested by the applicant, including justification

The applicant explained that due to unique nature of the project and being the first of its kind in the UK should the Data Centre component be granted under a section 35 direction, it was of the view that a request for an enhanced tier service would be needed. The Inspectorate noted that presently as the "energy centre" was the only component meeting the threshold of the PA2008, it believed that the standard tier would be adequate support for the proposed application. The Inspectorate, would however reconsider this initial view, should matters change in the future and took the applicants point of possibly needing inspector support during pre-application, given the uniqueness of the overall scheme.

The fast track procedure

The applicant is considering the "fast track" route, however is not actively pursuing this approach at this stage. The Inspectorate reminded the applicant that there are specific components that would need to be delivered during the pre-application stage and the applicant should refer to the prospectus on these matters. However, it would still ultimately be the decision by the Inspectorate whether an application qualified to proceed as a fast track application for Examination.

The position of affected statutory bodies in relation to the requested service tier

The applicant has not discussed the requested service tier with affected statutory bodies.

Use of supplementary components (and availability of templates)

Supplementary components are available in the pre-application prospectus and the applicant can email the project mailbox if they plan to interact with any.

Draft documents review service

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to provide a full draft Development Consent Order when submitting their draft application documents which will be key to seeing how the DCO is structured with the associated developments.

Risks, including change requests

The applicant is currently progressing the project via two consenting regimes, with the proposed data centre through the Town and Country Planning Act and the proposed energy centre through the PA2008 regime. If the draft Infrastructure Planning (Business or Commercial Projects) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 laid before Parliament in October 2025 come into effect, the applicant would seek a s35 direction to direct the proposed data centre into the NSIP regime. If a s35 direction is provided, the applicant would progress a single application for development consent.

Practical Arrangements

The contacts for this proposed application will be Spencer Barrowman as the Case Manager.

The Inspectorate would confirm the pre-application service tier by December 2025. The Inspectorate would create the planning inspectorate mailbox for the project following the meeting and launch the National Infrastructure Project website in due course. The Inspectorate confirmed that it would also inform the applicant once a project mailbox was created, so that all correspondence could be made thereto.

Next steps

The applicant will implement a structured engagement strategy, including formalising a section 35 request to confirm the DCO pathway, ongoing liaison with statutory and non-statutory consultees and early engagement with local representatives, stakeholders, and landowners.

A package of supporting documents will be prepared by the applicant to accompany the DCO and Planning application, with scope and format agreed after this meeting and shared for officer feedback.

This will progress to statutory consultation under the Planning Act 2008 and comprehensive public consultation, incorporating drop-in events, online engagement, parish briefings, and feedback mechanisms, guided by advice given by Buckinghamshire Council and the Planning Inspectorate.

The next steps are to arrange a pre-application meeting in mid-December 2025 for the applicant to provide an update on its approach to the EIA scoping request, and the Inspectorate to provide advice accordingly.