

## SDC M40 Campus

### Section 51 Advice Log Version: 12 June 2026

There is a statutory duty under ['section 51 \(s51\) of the Planning Act 2008'](#) for The Planning Inspectorate to record the advice that it gives in relation to an application or potential application, and to make this publicly available.

This document comprises a record of the advice that has been provided by The Planning Inspectorate to the applicant (Slough Holdings UK Limited) and their consultants during the pre-application stage. It will be updated by The Planning Inspectorate after every interaction with the applicant during which s51 has been provided. The applicant will always be given the opportunity to comment on The Planning Inspectorate's draft record of advice before it is published.

The applicant will use this advice log as the basis for demonstrating regard to s51 advice within the application.

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**SDC M40 Campus - s51 Advice Library**

Topic	Advice date: 21 January 2026
Email Advice	<p>It's good to see progress is being made with regards to the design aspects of the proposal. Given the circumstances outlined in your earlier correspondence, we believe that your present approach is acceptable, we would also encourage you to review (if not already) the PINS advice note on Good Design: <a href="#">Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Good Design - GOV.UK</a></p>
Topic	Meeting date: 21 January 2026
EIA scoping	<p>The applicant explained its proposed approach to the EIA scoping request and its position on why it would be acceptable under the EIA Regulations to seek an EIA scoping opinion for the whole project, even where the energy centre is an NSIP but the data centre is not (and is being progressed under the TCPA regime).</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that it would be able to process a request for an EIA scoping opinion relating to the energy centre on that basis, and would consider the data centre component in terms of cumulative effects. It requested the applicant to provide a summary table in the request that differentiated the likely significant effect pathways of the energy centre and data centre.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that, on the basis the request presented the components as a whole project, it did not consider that the issuing of a s35 direction by the Secretary of State (bringing the data centre into the NSIP regime) after the adoption of an EIA scoping opinion would result in the development being materially different and requiring a new EIA scoping opinion.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that there was nothing in the EIA Regulations that would preclude it from coordinating scoping consultation with the host local authority but that logistically this would be difficult, and could result in confusion for consultation bodies.</p>
Statutory Consultation	<p>The applicant plans to hold statutory consultation during April 2026, as per their programme document. The applicant discussed co-ordination with the planning inspectorate regarding the statutory consultation stage of pre-application for the project.</p>

Section 35 request	The applicant confirmed that the Section 35 qualifying request is to be sent as soon as practicable by the Applicant to the Secretary of state (MHCLG) following the meeting.
DCO submission timeline	The applicant is considering the current DCO submission date to the planning inspectorate, but it is currently being aimed for September 2026.
Next steps	The Planning Inspectorate discussed next steps with the applicant in terms of forthcoming project update meetings.
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Meeting date: 27 February 2026</b>
Consultation	The Applicant explained it was progressing its proposals for statutory consultation in line with the current legislative framework, whilst also monitoring timescales for implementation of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (PIA). The Inspectorate advised that it understands from Government that the secondary legislation and guidance would not be published before June 2026. The Inspectorate expects for transitional arrangements established by Government to allow for applications prepared under the current legislative framework to be capable of being assessed under any new acceptance test after the PIA provisions commence.
Draft order limits	The applicant explained that the current draft order limits may change (and extend) as the design is refined. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to ensure that any amendments to the draft order limits relative to the boundary used in the EIA scoping should be explained in the environmental statement (ES). The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should submit a revised GIS shapefile if the boundary is subject to change prior to the applicant's scoping request. In accordance with the Inspectorate's <a href="#">advice note 7</a> , it would require the shapefile 10 working days in advance of the scoping request.
Future meetings and logistics	<p>The Inspectorate advised that ordinarily it does not hold applicant project update meetings whilst the EIA scoping opinion is under preparation. However, if required by the applicant's programme, it could host a meeting provided that the agenda does not have items related to the EIA and scoping process. As such, a meeting could be held to discuss the draft statement of consultation.</p> <p>The Inspectorate also advised the Applicant to, if granted, send the section 35 direction as soon as possible.</p> <p>Finally, the Inspectorate advised the Applicant to progress the necessary logistical arrangements, as this will support the timely publication of the project website.</p>

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Meeting date: 22 May 2026</b>
Examples of good practice	The applicant referred to examples of good practice, and the Inspectorate advised that the Planning Inspectorate NSIP project webpage provides examples of projects which address overlapping planning and permitting considerations. The Inspectorate advised that relevant projects can be shared with the applicant as examples where helpful.
Decarbonisation Readiness	The applicant queried the level of information expected within the application to demonstrate compliance with emerging decarbonisation readiness requirements for environmental permitting and associated guidance. The Inspectorate advised that further discussions with the applicant would be appropriate following adoption of the EIA scoping opinion.
Landscape, heritage and design	The Inspectorate advised that the Examining Authority is likely to require assessment of long-distance viewpoints. It noted that no specific requirements are set, but early consideration is advised.
Order limits and utilities	The Inspectorate advised that it would expect a connection statement to be provided. It confirmed that it can review draft documents if the applicant wishes to share examples. The Inspectorate advised that relevant guidance on utility connections should be considered by the applicant.
Compulsory acquisition and land interests	The applicant provided an update on progress in negotiations with landowners. The Inspectorate advised that land and compulsory acquisition matters should be progressed at an early stage to reduce risk to the programme.
Consultations and local engagement	<p>The applicant outlined its approach to consultation and pre-application engagement, including whether, in light of anticipated timings around commencement of Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 reforms, it intends to continue with its plans for a statutory consultation and preliminary environmental information report (PEIR). The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should consider the implications for its programme and, where possible, continue to adopt a front-loaded approach to consultation. It advised that early and ongoing engagement with stakeholders should be maintained. The Inspectorate advised that the production of principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS) can be helpful in identifying and progressing key issues. It also advised that an updated issues tracker submitted alongside the application would support clarity on outstanding matters.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that consultation should be inclusive and ensure that participants are able to provide feedback in a way that is accessible and comfortable for</p>

	<p>them. The Inspectorate noted that new guidance following recent reforms is anticipated over the summer and advised that consultation materials and information provided should be proportionate. It advised that the applicant should avoid consultation fatigue by ensuring materials are clear, concise and not overly burdensome.</p> <p>The applicant sought advice regarding which Secretary of State (SoS) would determine the application noting that it is a combined project.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should engage with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on this matter. It noted that this remains subject to ongoing consideration, and consideration will be given as to whether the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology should also be engaged.</p>
Policy	<p>The Inspectorate queried whether consideration had been given to whether sections 104 and 105 of the Planning Act 2008 will be engaged and the relevance of the emerging national policy statements (NPS) for data centres. The applicant confirmed that until an NPS for data centres is designated, it will proceed on the basis that the application will be considered under section 104 to the extent that energy NPSs have effect and section 105 in relation to the data centre. This is being kept under review pending progress on preparation of the NPS for data centres.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that while a draft national policy statement for data centres is being prepared, there are no defined timelines for its publication and subsequent designation. It advised that where a NPS is designated, information on transitional arrangements would be provided.</p>
Tier Service	<p>The applicant explained that it proposes to proceed on the basis of the standard tier at this stage.</p> <p>The Inspectorate advised that, should the applicant wish to move to an enhanced tier, they should confirm this in writing to the Inspectorate.</p>