



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Humberhead Solar Farm
Case reference	EN0110032
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	17 March 2026
Meeting with	Meeting with Humberhead Solar 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 proposed development

A Development Consent Order (DCO) will be sought by Humberhead Solar Limited (the applicant), a Special Purpose Vehicle owned by Island Green Power Limited, for a large-scale solar generating station in England (the proposed development) with a 60-year operational lifespan and an approximate capacity output of 500 megawatts (MW), along with a co-located Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).

The proposed development will comprise of ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) panels, onsite substations, conversion units, cabling connecting the PV panels to the onsite substations, site access and access tracks, fencing and security equipment, landscaping, ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancement areas, highway improvement areas, grid connection infrastructure comprising underground connection cables via a Cable Route Corridor (CRC) (to connect the proposed development to the national grid) and any other associated works needed to enable the construction and operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of the proposed development..

The proposed development will connect into National Grid's 400kV 'Thornton Substation' as the 'Point of Connection', under a connection agreement between the applicant and National Grid for the export of renewable energy to the national electricity network. The National Grid Thornton Substation is located approximately 1.36 km south-west of the nearest point of the proposed development.

The proposed development is to be located on four main parcels of land for the solar array areas (named Humberhead Sites 1, 2, 3 and 4), covering approximately 1,595 hectares (ha) of mainly agricultural land in addition to the CRC (together, 'the Site'). The Site is situated approximately 3 km to the south-west of Market Weighton and 1 km to the south-east of Pocklington, and approximately 14 km to the south-east of York and 23 km to the north-west of Hull, within the administrative area of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

In answer to questions from the Inspectorate, the applicant said that it was seeking some flexibility on its proposals at the Scoping Stage in respect of locating the BESS (currently considering Humberhead Site 1), as well as the CRC (to be indicated under a broad Cable Route Search Corridor in the applicant's Scoping Report). However, the applicant was aware of the National Policy Statement's requirements for the efficient use of land for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and would be seeking to refine the Scoping boundary to inform draft Order limits informed by the outcome of technical and environmental assessments, landowner negotiations, and consultation feedback during the pre-application stage and ahead of submitting the final application for acceptance. The applicant added that no substantive works are expected to be required to enable the proposed development to connect to the National Grid Thornton Substation, noting that an extension to the west of the substation was completed in 2025.

Consenting programme and engagement

The applicant is working to the indicative pre-application timescale below, subject to any changes needed:

- Planning Inspectorate Inception Meeting, initial meetings with host authority, and Project Launch – March 2026
- Initial consultation (with near neighbours, landowners, politicians, parish councils, and other key stakeholders) – Commencing in April 2026
- Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report to the Planning Inspectorate – May 2026
- Planning Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion – June / July 2026
- Ongoing engagement (continued and ongoing engagement with technical stakeholders, prescribed consultees and other relevant stakeholders) – March 2026 to August 2027
- Consultation for the public and other stakeholders – November/December 2026
- Preparation of the DCO application – March to July 2027
- Submission of the DCO application – August 2027.

The applicant discussed its proposed approach to consultation. In light of ongoing legislative changes, the applicant stated that it would maintain effective principles for engagement with the local community and other stakeholders during the pre-application stage, in which to inform parties about the proposed development and seek feedback on its proposals, and would ensure compliance with the relevant legislation at all times.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to ensure that it provides a suitable degree of information to allow parties to meaningfully input on its design proposals. The applicant should also use its Programme Document to clearly explain the main issues arising from the proposed development and the activities it will be undertaking to resolve them,

including reaching agreements with relevant statutory parties on methodologies and survey / assessments requirements before submitting its application.

The applicant replied that it would be using the Commitments Register and its Principles for Design to inform the consultation material alongside the development of the application. The applicant stated that it would use “four main pillars” for guiding its engagement and consultation with stakeholders: “early and ongoing”; “appropriate”; “open and transparent”; and “timely”.

Environmental Constraints

The applicant covered the main environmental constraints within proximity of the Site to inform the design of the proposed development:

- emerging Yorkshire Wolds National Landscape and the Yorkshire Wolds Way National Trail (to the north-east of Site 2)
- Grade II* Londesborough Park Registered Park and Garden (near Site 2)
- designated heritage assets
- the Lower Derwent Valley Special Protection Area (SPA), River Derwent Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Brighton Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Humber Estuary Ramsar site (to the west and south of the Site)
- Pocklington Canal SSSI (adjoining the western boundary of Site 1)
- South Cliffe Common SSSI (adjoining the western boundary of Site 4)
- Site predominantly Flood Zone 1 with some Flood Zone 2 and 3; and
- some designated heritage assets within the Cable Route Search and a ‘Moated site 170m north of Wholesea Farm’ Scheduled Monument adjacent to the southern extent.

In answer to a question from the Inspectorate, the applicant confirmed that the proposed development did not involve the crossing of any major rivers at the point which they are tidal and therefore the applicant would not be required to consult the Marine Management Organisation.

The applicant stated that it was currently undertaking various environmental and technical surveys, including topographical surveys (to be completed by April 2026), Agricultural Land Classification (February to April 2026), ecological surveys such as wintering birds this year and site surveys from March to October 2026 and continued into 2027, landscape and visual impact (with summer and winter photography scheduled in 2026 and 2027), arboricultural (with walkovers scheduled for Spring 2026 and follow-up targeted surveys in the Summer 2026), geophysical surveys (to be completed in April 2026), access and traffic (April and May 2026), noise (April and May 2026), and walkovers for ground conditions, water environment, and cultural heritage.

Scoping

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to agree discretionary advisory services (DAS) with relevant statutory parties before Scoping takes place, to ensure that meaningful / technical feedback is received. The applicant confirmed that it was working towards this aim and was progressing initial discussions with Natural England on ecological matters, the Environment Agency on flood risk matters and with Historic England on cultural heritage matters. The applicant confirmed that initial contact had been made with statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) and the host authority, East

Riding of Yorkshire Council, with subsequent meetings to be arranged to discuss key receptors, survey requirements and methodologies to inform scoping.

The applicant stated that its design principles had been developed, and the Scoping boundary confirmed, ahead of submitting its Scoping Report in May 2026. The content of the applicant's Scoping Report will include: the approach to EIA and proposed assessment methodology, scheme description, environmental aspects to be scoped in and out, and proposed approach to cumulative effects.

Draft Development Consent Order and Land Rights

The lawyer acting for the applicant explained that the DCO is not expected to contain any novel or particularly complex drafting and would constitute six broad parts in line with the precedent of made solar DCOs. The DCO will cover the powers needed for, amongst other things: enabling street works and alterations to streets (where required); temporary restrictions on the use of Public Rights of Way (where applicable); Traffic Regulation Measures; removal of hedgerows and works to trees subject to Tree Protection Orders (if applicable); and for compulsory acquisition of land, temporary possession, and rights over land consistent with the Planning Act 2008 (where voluntary agreements cannot be reached).

The applicant added that option agreements for most of the Humberhead Sites with relevant landowners had been reached, with ongoing negotiations underway in respect of the Cable Route Corridor. The applicant would also be progressing discussions with statutory undertakers and other special category land interests to develop suitable protective provisions and other agreements that may be needed relevant to the DCO process.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to keep an updated land rights tracker and to provide a summary of progress on its land negotiations, and any risks arising from land right issues, at each project update meeting.

Pre-application service

The applicant advised that it wishes to proceed with the basic level of pre-application service offered by the Inspectorate, owing to the knowledge and experience of the applicant and its consultants with sponsoring other solar NSIPs. It advised that owing to the measures taken by the project team, it did not envisage requiring any higher level of service. The Inspectorate said that it would consider these matters and confirm the service tier shortly following the meeting.

The Inspectorate also advised that a Case Manager and the project reference code and project email address would be set up and shared in due course, with the project website page to be launched ahead of scoping.

Feedback on the Applicant's initial Programme Document (post meeting note)

The applicant supplied the Inspectorate with its initial Programme Document before the inception meeting in line with our request under the 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. Having reviewed the document, the Inspectorate considers that it mostly covers the expected content as set out in the government’s pre-application guidance at paragraph 10. In particular, the Programme Document provides enough detail about the proposed development, its pre-application timetable, the applicant’s approach to early engagement with statutory consultees and other parties, as well as a comprehensive list of other possible licences or non-planning consents that may be required.

However, the applicant needs to clearly set out a section outlining its view of the main issues arising from the proposed development, at the outset, and the activities needed to resolve them (the applicant may wish to review the Programme Document produced for Kingfisher Solar- now known as Clean Air Solar Farm).

The applicant should also set out its identification of risks to achievement, in addition to how these risks will be tracked and managed.

It would also be helpful if the applicant could state the expected generating capacity of the proposed development, a location map, and expected land take, as well as whether the applicant intends to submit a Design Approach Document with its application.

Annex A

Meeting attendees

Organisation	Role
Planning Inspectorate	Operational Lead – National Infrastructure Team
Planning Inspectorate	Operational Lead – Environmental Services
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Manager – National Infrastructure Team
Planning Inspectorate	Case Officer
Island Green Power	Project Development Coordinator
Island Green Power	Project Development Coordinator

Island Green Power	Land Manager
AECOM	Technical Director
AECOM	Associate Director
Luminate	Managing Director
Luminate	Account Manager
Pinsent Masons	Associate

