



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Longmarsh Green Energy Park
Case reference	EN0110048
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	05 October 2026
Meeting with	Meeting with EPL Norfolk 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 the Find a National Infrastructure Project website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008. Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which the applicant, or others, could rely.

The proposed development

A Development Consent Order (DCO) will be sought by EPL Norfolk Limited, a subsidiary of Evolution Power Limited, for a combined energy and digital infrastructure project located in West Norfolk with a generating capacity in excess of 100MW (the proposed development). The proposed development is expected to include solar photovoltaic ('PV') panels, Battery Energy Storage System ('BESS') and an integrated Data Centre Campus, along with other infrastructure, such as on-site cabling, inverter stations, on-site substations and grid connection infrastructure. The applicant intends to seek a direction under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008 for the data centre element of the development to be consented as part of the DCO application. The Inspectorate encouraged the applicant to provide regular updates on the progress of the section 35 application.

The indicative site boundary consists of approximately 1,900 hectares of predominantly arable agricultural land within the administrative boundaries of Norfolk County Council and the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. The proposed development benefits from a Gate 2 connection to the National Grid Walpole substation.

The Inspectorate queried whether the landscape and visual assessment had included overhead lines from existing developments in the cumulative assessment.

The applicant confirmed that this will be something the assessment will have regard to and will be reflected in the design choice. The environmental effects of further overhead lines will be considered in reference to whether underground lines may be more suitable. The

Inspectorate highlighted the need to assess impacts on ecological receptors such as collision risk on birds with overhead line. The applicant confirmed that potential impacts on ecological and human receptors would be assessed.

The Inspectorate queried water requirements of the data centre, including cooling systems, use of waste heat, proposed technology and relevant water assessments. The applicant has engaged a lead consultant on the application who has advised the adoption of a closed loop water system to limit the impact on local water supply in the area. The liquid being used for the cooling system could be water or other liquids. The applicant is going to engage with the local water authority, Anglian Water, to start discussions on this topic.

Opportunities are being sought for uses of waste heat. The applicant explained that the rural location of the proposed development limits opportunities for use of waste heat. The applicant is exploring options for waste heat use which could include greenhouses and food production.

There is currently not a specific end user of the proposed data centre campus. It is being promoted in the context of critical national need for data centres.

Consenting programme and engagement

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

- Planning Inspectorate Inception Meeting – October 2026
- Stakeholder engagement – July 2026 to February 2027
- Public consultation – October 2026 to November 2026
- Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') Scoping – October 2026 to November 2026
- Section 35 Direction – October 2026 to November 2026
- Project update meeting with the Inspectorate ahead of submission – Spring 2027
- Submission of the DCO application – April 2027

The applicant confirmed it would commence non-statutory consultation at the same time the Scoping Report is sent to the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate highlighted a risk of confusion from the public with the two processes being run simultaneously. The applicant confirmed that the consultation has been designed with the changes to the regulatory landscape in mind.

A community friendly consultation brochure has been prepared that explains the project, the related process of the EIA scoping and provides content accessibly. The community consultation is aimed for those living locally and directly affected by the project. There will be a mail drop with a postcard emphasising the website location and highlighting that the consultation brochure will be published on the applicant's website.

The Inspectorate highlighted the importance of clear links between engagement and explanation of the design process. It helps to identify potential issues and how they can be mitigated. The Inspectorate advised referring to the advice notes on design principles and encouraged evidencing the design evolution following the consultation process.

The applicant has had initial discussions with stakeholders to date including the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. The applicant has engaged with the archaeologist at Norfolk County Council in relation to the approach to below ground historic environment. The applicant has had an initial meeting with the Borough and County Council to introduce and provide an overview of the proposed project. The approach to surveys has been agreed with Natural England and is being discussed with the Host Authorities.

There have been discussions with the Environment Agency regarding site mapping. Part of the site is in Flood Zone 3 due to the risk of tidal flooding.

The applicant confirmed that contact with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) had been initiated but no response has been received. The Inspectorate advised that it could contact the MMO to encourage engagement. The applicant indicated that the only element of the project that may require input from the MMO is an overhead cable which would span the River Ouse.

The applicant has had conversation with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council with some engagement on the EIA scoping topics. The applicant highlighted the conservation officer at Kings Lynn is due to leave in October so the applicant will send an early draft of the heritage report to mitigate the anticipated staffing gap.

Environmental constraints and issues

The green infrastructure and mitigation strategy, including biodiversity net gain (BNG), are to be developed. The surveys and biodiversity mapping will be used to inform the BNG strategy.

The western site and cable route is partially located in Flood Zone 3 due to potential tidal risk. The baseline flood risks models are being agreed with the Environment Agency. There will be ongoing engagement with the LLFA and IDBs to agree hydrology, climate change allowances, infiltration testing and the sustainable drainage strategy.

There is a potential effect from landscape and visual impacts on residents, road users and Public Rights of Way ('PRoW') users. The design mitigation will introduce screening to further reduce impacts. The applicant is seeking engagement with King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council to refine the mitigation approach.

There are no designated heritage assets within the indicative site boundary, but there are potential impacts outside the boundary. The applicant is engaging with Historic England, Norfolk County Council (archaeology) and King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (built heritage) to seek to agree asset list and approach. Geophysical surveys have been undertaken. It was agreed with the county archaeologist for the applicant to undertake trial trenching in relation to the data centre and western substation area. The applicant will continue to work with the archaeologist to identify further areas of potential archaeology and conduct geo physical surveys.

There are potential traffic impacts on highways and PRoW users. The A47 and A1122 are expected to be used as the primary construction and decommissioning traffic routes.

Surveys and assessments of local routes are ongoing in order to inform traffic flows and site access points. Traffic management plans will be submitted as part of the application.

Impacts on land use and agriculture including best and most versatile land will be included in the Environment Statement.

The Inspectorate queried glint and glare in the context of RAF Marham located nearby the proposed development. The applicant has engaged a glint and glare specialist and aviation specialist which has resulted in some design changes to the solar panel orientation to avoid glint and glare that would arise at certain times of the day or year. The applicant is due to engage with RAF Marham in the near future.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant to consider the Planning Inspectorate's Technical Advice Page for Scoping Solar Development and to also consider the potential impacts from rainwater runoff from solar panels on the below ground environment.

EIA scoping

The proposed submission of EIA scoping is 15 October. The applicant shared the GIS Shapefile with the Inspectorate.

Environmental surveys

The Inspectorate requested further information on the mitigation area shown on the indicative master plan. The applicant confirmed that Islington Heronry SSSI is located in the mitigation area and a 100m buffer would be provided between the SSSI and the wider site. Discussions will be held with the county ecologist to understand the best approach for enhancing that site. The applicant emphasised that this will not be the only improvement to biodiversity across the proposed development. The applicant further explained their commitment to a 30-metre offset from any residential receptor, which provides further areas for BNG.

Bird surveys began in 2025 and will continue to cover two wintering seasons. An extended phase 1 habitat survey has been completed.

Surveys are being undertaken to identify heritage receptors.

Preparing the draft development consent order, including any novel approaches to drafting

The draft DCO is not expected to contain any unusual aspects and will likely be guided by existing drafts and templates.

The Inspectorate advised the applicant of the transition to lawmaker, which the applicant confirmed the download of the relevant software. Feedback on the process can be fed back to the Inspectorate.

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

The applicant will be seeking compulsory acquisition powers over the full Order Limits as submitted, excluding any Crown Land (The River Great Ouse) where engagement with the Crown Estate will be progressed and a section 135 consent will be sought. The applicant has agreed voluntary property rights over the site area excluding the cable routes. The applicant will engage with cable route landowners to seek voluntary agreement for easement rights. The Inspectorate confirmed that early engagement is advised, particularly regarding Crown Land and voluntary agreements.

The Inspectorate queried the reference in the programme document regarding 1-2-1 meetings with landowners 'when justified' and how this would be determined. The applicant clarified that these meetings will be arranged where necessary or when requested. The applicant is looking to ensure agreements are being sought as their first assumption and making sure to have these conversations where possible.

Submission date

The applicant intends to submit its DCO application to the Inspectorate in April 2027.

The pre-application service offer

The applicant advised that it proposes to proceed with the basic level of pre-application service offered by the Inspectorate, in accordance with the 2024 Pre-application Prospectus. This reflects the applicant's view that the scale and characteristics of the project can be appropriately progressed within the parameters of the basic level of service.

Annex A

Meeting attendees

Organisation	Role
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Lead
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Lead
Planning Inspectorate	Case Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Case Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Senior EIA Advisor
Planning Inspectorate	Case Officer
QUOD	Senior Director
Evolution Power	Director of EPL Norfolk Ltd
HSF Kramer	Of Counsel
Logika Group	Technical Director, EIA Advisor