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

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN020026

Date: 19 September 2025

Dear Sir/ Madam

Planning Act 2008 – section 88 and 89 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rules 4, 6, 9 and 13

Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) for an order granting development consent for the South East Anglia Link (Sea Link) Project

Appointment of the Examining Authority, invitation to the preliminary meeting and notification of hearings

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the lead member of the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an examination of the above application I am writing to introduce myself and the other members of the ExA. My name is Sarah Holmes and the other members of the ExA are Richard Hunt, Luke Regan, Steven Rennie and Nancy Thomas. On 27 May 2025 the panel appointed were as listed above with Simon Warder in place of Luke Regan [\[PD-004\]](#). On 12 September 2025 official notification of the amendment to the panel following Simon Warder's resignation was published [\[PD-009\]](#).

We would like to thank those of you who submitted relevant representations. These representations have assisted us when considering how we will examine this application.

We understand there is considerable interest in this project. We have therefore made a procedural decision to hold several open floor hearing sessions in Suffolk and Kent, immediately following the preliminary meeting (which is detailed below).

Open floor hearings are hearings where interested parties (IP) who are individuals, groups and organisations can raise any matters that they consider are important and relevant to the consideration of the application.



Please be assured that the ExA has read every relevant representation so your submissions at the open floor hearings should not repeat what you have previously submitted in writing but instead provide further detail or explanation to help inform the ExA.

To allow everyone to have a fair opportunity to be heard we will apply time limits to those speaking and give those representing groups more time than individuals. **Annex F** provides the dates and times of the open floor hearings and explains how to register if you would like to speak.

Due to the geographical aspects of this project, to ensure an efficient and effective examination, it is likely that hearings later in the timetable will be held in a central location or virtually rather than in Suffolk or Kent.

Invitation to the preliminary meeting

As a recipient of this letter you are invited to the preliminary meeting to discuss **the procedure** for the examination of the above application.

Date	Start time	Joining details
Wednesday 5 November 2025	Registration process from: 09:30 Preliminary meeting starts: 10:00	This preliminary meeting will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 8 October 2025 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

Please note that by speaking at the event you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage. A transcript of the event will also be published on the [project webpage](#) of our website after the event.

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting then you do not need to register as you will be able to watch a livestream of the event. A link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin. You will also be able to watch the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#) shortly after the event has finished.

Purpose of the preliminary meeting

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to enable views to be put to us about how the application should be examined. The ExA will therefore limit the scope of the preliminary



meeting to consideration of **how the application will be examined**. See **annex B** to this letter and 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 preliminary meeting is not an opportunity for you to give your views about what you like or do not like about the application. The merits or disadvantages of the application will only be considered once the examination starts, which is after the preliminary meeting has closed. All relevant and important matters will be taken into account when we make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will take the final decision in this case.

The agenda for the preliminary meeting is at **annex A** to this letter. This has been set following our initial assessment of principal issues arising from our reading of the application documents and the relevant representations received. The initial assessment of principal issues is set out in **annex C** to this letter.

Written submissions about how the application should be examined

The Planning Act 2008 establishes a principally written process for the examination of applications for development consent orders and **representations made in writing carry equal weight to oral representations at all stages of the process**.

We are now requesting written submissions from recipients of this letter about how the application should be examined. We particularly wish to hear from you if either:

- you consider changes need to be made to the draft examination timetable set out at **annex D** to this letter
- you wish to comment about the arrangements for future examination hearings, including the use of virtual methods

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application is to be examined by **procedural deadline A, 8 October 2025** (see **annex D** to this letter).

We request that all submissions are made using the '[Have your say](#)' page on the project webpage. **Annex I** to this letter provides further information about using the '[Have your say](#)' page.

Requests to participate at the preliminary meeting

Please note that **you are not required to attend, or make written submissions to, the preliminary meeting in order to participate in the examination**. If you are an interested party, you can make a written representation and comment on the written representations made by other interested parties during the examination. You will also be able to participate in any hearings that are arranged.



If you wish to participate at the preliminary meeting, you are required to notify the ExA in writing on or before **8 October 2025** (see **procedural deadline A**).

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting **must include** the following information:

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- The agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A**.

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

Format of examination events – preliminary meeting and 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.

Both blended (part in-person and part virtual) and fully virtual events form part of the Planning Inspectorate's operating model. We remain flexible and will confirm the format of any hearings to be held during the examination stage when we provide formal notification of each hearing in advance of it taking place.

We are providing formal notification that the **preliminary meeting and issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) (referred to in annex F to the letter) will be virtual only events and that the open floor hearings (OFH) also referred to in annex F will be blended events (held both in-person and virtually).**

After the preliminary meeting

As soon as practical following the preliminary meeting we will issue a letter (known as the Rule 8 Letter) setting out the finalised examination timetable. A note of the meeting will also be published on the [project webpage](#).



Notification of initial hearings

We have made a procedural decision to hold the following initial hearings:

- **Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1)** will be held over several sessions in Suffolk between Wednesday 5 November and Friday 7 November 2025, see annex F for details of the session timings.
- **Issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1)** held virtually on Tuesday 11 November 2025 from 10:00
- **Open floor hearing 2 (OFH2)** will be held over several sessions in Kent between Tuesday 11 November and Thursday 13 November 2025, see annex F for details of the session timings

Important information about these hearings is contained in **annex F** to this letter, including what details need to be provided with a request to be heard at a hearing and the procedure that will be followed.

Change notification

The applicant's response to the ExA's section 89(3) request [PD-008] included a change notification. Table 1 of the notification [[AS-138](#)] provides an overview of the five proposed changes. The ExA are considering this notification and will provide advice in due course.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

We have made some further procedural decisions which are set out in detail at **annex G** to this letter. They are summarised as follows:

- The applicant to make electronic displays of plans and drawings available at the hearings.
- Statements of common ground (SoCG).
- Principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS)
- Request for suggested locations for an accompanied site inspection (ASI).
- Deadline for written representations (WR) and local impact reports (LIR).
- Notification by statutory parties of their wish to be considered as an IP.
- Responses to relevant representations.
- Diligent enquiry into land interests.
- Errata.

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 required 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.

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 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 I** to this letter.

There is also a function on the left-hand side of the project webpage called '[Get updates](#)'. This provides you with an opportunity 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 nationally significant infrastructure projects (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

Information, including representations, submitted in respect of this examination (if accepted by the ExA) 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

Sarah Holmes

Lead Member of the Examining Authority

Annexes

- A** Agenda for the preliminary meeting
- B** Introduction to the preliminary meeting
- C** Initial assessment of principal issues
- D** Draft examination timetable
- E** The applicant's updates
- F** Notification of initial hearings
- G** Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
- H** Examination documents
- I** Information about the 'Have your say' section of the project webpage

This communication does not constitute legal advice.

Please view our [Privacy Notice](#) before sending information to The Planning Inspectorate.



Agenda for the preliminary meeting

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 8 October 2025 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

Please note that by speaking at the event you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#). A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting then you do not need to register as you will be able to watch a livestream of the event. A link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin. You will also be able to watch the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#) shortly after the event has finished.

On the day of the preliminary meeting please join the virtual lobby promptly at **09:30** using the instructions that will be sent to you. The event will start at **10:00** irrespective of any late arrivals, for whom access may not be possible.

It may take some time to admit participants from the virtual lobby, your patience whilst you are waiting is appreciated.

The agenda for the preliminary meeting may be subject to change at the discretion of the Examining Authority (ExA), although in making changes the ExA will be mindful of the need to provide opportunities for fair involvement to all Interested Parties (IPs).

Any requests to participate in the preliminary meeting, **must include** the following information:

- name and unique reference number (found at the top of your letter or email from the Planning Inspectorate);
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number;
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable);
- confirmation of the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points that you wish to make.

Date: **Wednesday 5 November**

Registration process: **from 09:30**

Meeting start time: **10:00**

Venue: **Virtual event (Microsoft Teams)**
Full instructions on how to join online or by phone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

Attendees: **Invited parties who have pre-registered**

Agenda for the preliminary meeting	
09:30	Virtual registration process Please enter the virtual lobby at 9.30am using the instructions that will be sent to you. From here you will be admitted to the arrangements conference by the Case Team and given further instructions.
10:00 Item 1	Preliminary meeting The preliminary meeting will formally open at 10.00am . The Examining Authority will join, welcome participants and lead introductions.
Item 2	The Examining Authority's remarks about the examination process
Item 3	Initial assessment of principal issues – annex C to Rule 6 Letter
Item 4	Draft examination timetable – annex D to Rule 6 Letter
Item 5	Procedural decisions – annex G to Rule 6 Letter
Item 6	Any other matters
Close of the preliminary meeting	

Introduction to the preliminary meeting

Background

The preliminary meeting (PM) will take place virtually, using Microsoft Teams.

The Examining Authority (ExA) is conscious of videoconferencing fatigue and will aim to keep the proceedings focussed and as efficient as possible.

This annex provides advance access to information that would usually be included in the ExA's introductory remarks. Please read this carefully. The ExA will only present a summary of the key points set out here in order to ensure that the time available for participants to speak is maximised.

The Examining Authority and the Case Team

The ExA will introduce themselves at the start of the PM.

The ExA will be supported by The Planning Inspectorate Case Team. During the registration process a member of the Case Team will welcome and admit participants from the virtual lobby, and will be available to answer questions by email before and after the PM. The contact email address is:

SouthEastAngliaLink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The purpose of the preliminary meeting

The PM is being held to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application for a development consent order (DCO) for the Sea Link project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and which will generally be referred to in the PM and examination as 'the proposed development'. The application has been made by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), which will be referred to as 'the applicant'.

You will find information about the application and, in due course, documents produced for the examination on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)). The project webpage has links to the examination timetable, relevant representations and examination documents and examination procedure.

You are encouraged to look at the [project webpage](#) if you haven't already done so, because it will be used to communicate with you and to provide access to documents throughout the examination.

The main purpose of the PM is to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application. It focuses on the process only, and it will not be looking at the substance of the proposals: Questions, discussions and representations about the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development are for the examination itself which will begin after the close of the PM.

The PM will be your opportunity to influence the process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached to this Rule 6 Letter at **annex A**. It is important to have the letter and the agenda in front of you and to refer to them during the course of the PM. You may wish to print these in advance of the PM for reference.

Government guidance and policy

The application is a NSIP under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) as a consequence of a direction made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero under section 35(1) of PA2008 because the proposed project is of national significance, taking into account that it is a large-scale linear electricity transmission reinforcement project of approximately 130km in length and that it has a two gigawatt (GW) capacity to transmit electricity. The following designated National Policy Statements (NPS) apply to this examination and to decision-making relating to this application:

- NPS EN-1 - overarching NPS for energy
- NPS EN-3 - the NPS for renewable energy infrastructure
- NPS EN-5 - the NPS for electricity networks infrastructure

The ExA will consider the proposed development in accordance with the NPSs listed above and any other applicable policy or considerations the ExA deems to be important and relevant. The PA2008 makes it clear that, in making a decision, the relevant Secretary of State (SoS) “must decide the application in accordance with any relevant NPS” (s104(3)), subject to certain provisos. Essentially, the provisos are that the application must not breach legal or treaty obligations, and that any adverse impact of the proposed development would not outweigh its benefits.

The SoS is entitled to disregard any representations that relate to the merits of the designated National Policy Statement (NPS). In practice, this means that the ExA will not spend time examining representations that challenge policy set out in NPSs, or the validity of NPSs themselves (PA2008 [s94\(8\)](#)). The focus will be on the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development, tested to the appropriate extent using the tests set out in relevant designated NPSs that are in force.

Other important and relevant planning policies that the ExA may consider include policies in the relevant local authorities’ development plans. However, if these conflict with policy in a NPS, then the NPS will take precedence.

In summary, the PM will establish the procedures and timetable for the examination of the proposed development. It will set a framework for the ExA to enable the SoS to consider and decide the application. In doing so, the ExA will have regard to:

- the positions and representations of all interested parties (IP)
- any local impact reports (LIR) prepared and provided by relevant local authorities
- other prescribed matters

- any other matters that appear to be both relevant and important to the relevant SoS's decision

Preliminary meeting invitees

The applicant is invited to the PM and is generally given the opportunity to reply to any representations made.

Everyone who has made a valid relevant representation has been registered as an IP and has been invited to the PM. All IPs are entitled to involvement in the examination.

Each person or organisation with an interest in land or rights that are affected by a compulsory acquisition request in this application is an affected person (AP) and has been invited to the PM. In addition to a general entitlement to involvement in the examination, APs have a right to be heard in relation to any objection about the effects of compulsory acquisition on their interests in land, and a right to be notified of any compulsory acquisition hearing. All APs are IPs, whether or not they have made a valid relevant representation.

Certain bodies are statutory parties and they have been invited to the PM. Statutory parties can elect to become IPs without having made a valid relevant representation by notifying the ExA in writing.

The ExA has the power to involve people who are not IPs in the examination as though they are IPs, including by inviting them to the PM. However, this is only done in exceptional circumstances, for example if it was clear that the application would materially affect a person, they are not automatically an IP or eligible to elect to become an IP and they had been unable to take the necessary action to register as an IP.

The ExA has decided to invite the following other persons to the PM:

- NatureScot
- Riveroak Strategic Partners Ltd, the authorised undertaker for 'The Manston Airport Development Consent 2022'.
- The occupier(s) of the caravan located on land to the north of the A256, at the southern end of Ebbsfleet Lane, Sevenscore, Kent.
- The occupier(s) of the caravan located on land to the south of the A256, at the northern end of Ebbsfleet Lane, Ebbsfleet, Kent.

Further information on your status can be found at:

[What is My Status in the Examination?](#)

Conduct of the preliminary meeting

The ExA estimates that the PM will take up to two hours to complete.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. In recognition of the fatigue associated with on-screen communication, the ExA will provide breaks during the PM as appropriate.

A digital recording of the PM will be made available on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable following the close of the PM. The recording allows any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed at the PM. The making and publication of these recordings are a means by which the ExA meets the legal requirement to hold the PM (and any other hearings) in public. In this regard, **anyone speaking at the PM will need to introduce themselves each time they speak**, to ensure that someone listening to the recording after the event is clear who was speaking. A written note of the PM will be produced and published as soon as practicable following the close of the PM.

As the recordings are retained and published, they form a public record that can contain personal information to which The UK General Data Protection Regulation applies. Participants must do their best to avoid providing any information which should otherwise be kept private and confidential. If there is a need to refer to such information, it should be in written form. Although this will also be published, personal and private content can be redacted or removed before it is made publicly available. Any person who is unclear on this point should ask the Case Team for guidance before they place personal and private information into the public domain.

The Planning Inspectorate's practice is to publish the recordings and retain them for a period of 5 years from the Secretary of State's decision on the DCO. If you actively participate in the PM, it is important that you understand that you will be recorded and that the recording will be made available in the public domain. Please see our [Privacy Notice](#) for more information about how we handle your data.

Following the ExA's introductions, each participant who has been registered to speak will be asked to introduce themselves, including any organisations or groups that they represent. The ExA will then conduct the meeting in accordance with the agenda (provided in **annex A**). If you prefer not to have your image recorded, you can switch off your camera at any point.

The examination process

The starting point is that the relevant legislation, section 87 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), states that *"it is for the Examining Authority to decide how to examine the application"*.

Examining Inspectors are employed by the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This is an application for Development Consent. For the examination of NSIPs the ExA produces an independent and impartial report with a

recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State. In the case of this project this is the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. **It is the Secretary of State who will make the decision on the application, not the ExA.**

The examination of NSIPs follows different processes from those, for example, of a public inquiry into a planning appeal following the refusal of planning permission. The main differences are that the examination of NSIPs are primarily a written process and hearings take on an inquisitorial approach as opposed to an adversarial one.

This means that the ExA will probe, test and assess the evidence primarily using written questions. While some hearings are held to provide supplementary evidence, questions to the applicant or to witnesses will come from the ExA. Questioning or cross-examination of witnesses by other parties will not generally be allowed.

In terms of opportunities to provide evidence in writing, the draft examination timetable makes provision for the following written processes:

- Local authorities can submit local impact reports (LIR)s if they wish. Whilst these are voluntary, the PA2008 provides that if they are provided, they must be considered by the Secretary of State in reaching a decision. Consequently, LIRs are a very important method for local authorities to communicate issues of concern to the ExA, the Secretary of State and their residents
- IPs can make written representations (WR) and comment on WRs made by other parties
- IPs can respond to the ExA's written questions (ExQs) and comment on responses to these written questions provided by others
- IPs may be asked to contribute to the making of statements of common ground (SoCG) if it appears that there are matters on which they and the applicant agrees, and if it would be useful for this to be clarified.
- IPs may also be asked to submit principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS) to identify matters on which major and principal areas of concern arise, to provide clear focus for the examination.

The draft examination timetable includes a series of numbered deadlines for receipt of written submissions. Timely submissions received by the relevant deadline and that address its purpose will be accepted. **Documents received after the relevant deadline are only accepted at the discretion of the ExA and may not be accepted to ensure fairness to all parties.** Circumstances where documents are submitted late without good reason, causing inconvenience or delay to other parties can amount to unreasonable behaviour.

These written processes will be the principal means used by the ExA to gather information, evidence and views about the application. However, the examination will only be effective if all parties resolve to give timely, full, frank, clear and evidenced answers to every question that is relevant to their interests and to engage fully with any other related processes such as the completion of WRs and SoCGs.

There is no merit in withholding or delaying information, or in failing to co-operate, and should it occur, any unreasonable behaviour that caused another party to incur wasted expenditure could lead to an award of costs against the offending party.

The ExA has discretion to make amendments to the examination timetable for the wider benefit of the examination. If possible, events will be arranged for times when all relevant parties are available, but the ExA is under a duty to complete the examination by the end of the six-month period beginning with the day after the close of the PM. This requirement is set by legislation, and while the ExA will try to rearrange event dates to accommodate all relevant parties, in practice there will be limited scope to alter dates set out in the draft examination timetable.

The statutory time limit for the examination means that where there are matters that still need to be discussed and agreed between the applicant and IPs, it will be very helpful to the ExA if these could be progressed as early as possible.

Hearings

The draft examination timetable (see **annex D**) includes provision for hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties.

The Rule 6 Letter provides notification of two **open floor hearings** (OFH)s and an **issue specific hearing** (ISH).

Any registered IP may request an OFH to make oral representations about the application if they believe this to be preferable to relying on their written representation, though both carry equal weight. **Oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing, but they should not simply repeat matters previously covered in the written submission.** Rather, they should focus on specific detail and explanation to help inform the ExA. There should be no new or unexpected material in oral representations. A written summary note with any supporting evidence or references will be requested of each speaker following the OFH.

As with all examination events, OFHs are subject to the powers of control of the ExA, as set out in the PA2008 and supporting legislation. Participants must register in advance by the deadline shown in the examination timetable and in accordance with the instructions. It is common practice for the ExA to set a time limit for each speaker and speakers with common points are asked to come together to nominate a spokesperson or representative speakers to cover specific topics, so as to avoid repetition. Speakers representing public authorities, community and membership organisations or multiple IPs are normally provided with an additional time allowance, recognising their representative role.

The applicant's draft Development Consent Order (DCO) provides for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights, and the temporary possession of land. APs (meaning those whose land or rights over land are affected) have a right to request and be heard at a **compulsory acquisition hearing** (CAH). If one or more APs request to be heard then a CAH must be held. Provisional dates for CAHs are

included in the draft examination timetable along with deadlines by which requests to be heard must be submitted.

The ExA has the discretion to hold **issue specific hearings** (ISH)s if it would aid in the examination and there is a specific reason this would be more helpful than reliance on written evidence only. The lack of an ISH on one or more topics does not suggest that that topic is less important than others which are subject to a hearing. Rather, it is an indication that the ExA is satisfied that the issues can be fully considered through written submissions and responses to its written questions and that each party has had a fair opportunity to put its case.

The draft examination timetable includes a number of dates reserved for ISHs and IPs may make suggestions for topics to be discussed at an ISH in their written or oral representations to the PM.

It may be necessary for the ExA to hold more than one ISH on the draft DCO. This is normal practice, and they are held on a without prejudice basis. Parties can suggest modifications and amendments to the draft DCO provided by the applicant with the application, without prejudicing their overall position on the application.

Holding such hearings does not imply that the ExA has reached any judgements on the merits of the application. Whatever the ultimate recommendation is, the ExA must make sure that the draft DCO is fit for purpose if the Secretary of State decides to grant consent, as any consent will be subject to requirements (similar to planning conditions) set out in the draft DCO.

At hearings it will not normally be necessary for parties to make long and detailed submissions that require, for example, PowerPoint presentations. Any supporting detail or information can be provided in writing following the event by the relevant deadline.

The draft examination timetable includes a deadline (**Tuesday, 18 November 2025**) for participants to notify the ExA that they wish to speak at an OFH or a CAH.

Site inspections

The ExA undertook a number of unaccompanied site inspections (USI) during the week commencing 23 June 2025. The notes of these visits can be found in the [examination library](#) [EV1-001 to EV1-009]. As a result of these visits the ExA considers that it has a good understanding of the site and surroundings but will be reviewing whether further USIs may be required throughout the examination. The ExA may 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 a USI on an access required basis (ARSI)

The ExA may not wish or need to hold an Accompanied Site Inspection (ASI). Nevertheless, the draft Examination Timetable in **annex D** makes provision for one to be held. At **deadline 1 (Tuesday, 18 November 2025)**, the ExA requests the submission of suggestions for sites/ locations which may need to be visited on an accompanied basis should an ASI be considered necessary. Before submitting

suggestions, IPs should first read the USI notes **[EV1-001 to EV1-009]**. The ExA is unlikely to need to revisit sites already seen without very good reason for doing so. **Please note that it is not possible at an ASI to make further oral representations.**

If after considering these requests the ExA consider that an ASI is necessary, then the draft examination timetable includes a date (**week commencing 2 February 2026**) when this could be held.

Initial assessment of principal issues

This is the initial assessment of principal issues (IAP) prepared as required under section 88(1) of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). It has been prepared by the Examining Authority (ExA) following its reading of:

- the application documents
- the relevant representations received in respect of the application
- its consideration of any other important and relevant matters

This initial assessment has guided the ExA in forming a provisional view as to how the application is to be examined. It is not a comprehensive or exclusive list of the issues that will be subject to examination and inevitably some issues will overlap or interrelate. The ExA will have regard to all important and relevant matters during the examination and when it writes its recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero after the examination has concluded.

The policy and consenting requirements and documents associated with the PA2008 are an integral part of the examination and are therefore not listed separately as principal issues. Regarding national policy, the following National Policy Statements (NPS) have effect, and the issues contained therein will be an integral part of the examination:

- The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy ([NPS EN-1](#)), including, for example, matters relating to the need case, assessment principles and generic impacts as relevant (including for example, air quality and emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and geological conservation, coastal change, navigation, dust, artificial light, land use, socio-economics, the historic environment, flood risk and the water environment, noise and vibration and landscape and visual) and cumulative effects.
- NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure ([NPS EN-3](#)), particularly section 2.8 relating to offshore wind, for example effects on other offshore infrastructure and activities, offshore-onshore network connection, marine protected areas, flexibility, micro-routing, ecological conservation, physical environment, intertidal, subtidal and coastal habitats and species, marine mammals, birds, fish and shellfish, navigation, commercial fisheries, marine historic environment.
- NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure ([NPS EN-5](#)), for example matters relating to climate change, biodiversity net gain, landscape and visual impact, archaeological and heritage assets, agricultural land and soils and specific matters such as sulphur hexafluoride and electromagnetic fields (EMF).

It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equalities duties are not listed as main issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind. Likewise, matters concerning the draft Development Consent Order and compulsory acquisition are taken as read as being important and relevant issues in the examination and are again not listed below.

There are a number of matters that will be taken into account as overarching or integral components of the IAPI. These include:

- the need for and the benefits of the proposed development
- the consideration of alternatives
- Habitats Regulations, Marine Conservation Zone and Water Framework Directive assessments
- the achievement of good design
- the achievement of sustainable development
- intra-project cumulative effects, cumulative effects arising from interactions with other projects and co-ordination with other energy projects
- whether the proposal offers sufficient and enforceable mitigation measures

The ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind.

The order of the following project specific issues listed below is alphabetic and does not imply any order of prioritisation or importance.

Agriculture and Soils

- The effects, including cumulative effects, on the availability of best and most versatile agricultural land.

Construction Effects

- Construction working hours, including the implications of 7 day/24 hour working for human and ecological receptors.
- Construction traffic effects including the cumulative effects from other projects and the implications of the proposed construction route incorporating Benhall Bridge in Suffolk.
- Landfall effects including the feasibility and potential effects of trenchless crossing techniques on the physical environment (including the Coralline Crag), hydrogeology, statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites, and protected or important habitats and protected species.
- The effect of construction on socio-economics, including the potential implications to the local tourism industry in both Kent and Suffolk.
- The effect of construction on health and wellbeing, including those who might be considered as being particularly sensitive receptors.
- The implications of importation of construction fill at Minster Marshes.

Design, Landscape, Heritage and Visual Effects

- The level of effect, including cumulative effects, upon landscape character and visual amenity caused by the proposed construction of substations, converter stations, River Fromus bridge and overhead lines. To include the effects on the Suffolk and Coastal Heaths National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the Suffolk Heritage Coast.

- The interaction of the project with extant consents in relation to Friston substation and the implications for previously secured mitigation measures.
- The effect of tree loss including ancient and veteran trees and hedge loss caused by the construction of the cable routes; and the adequacy of mitigation.
- The effect on the setting of heritage assets, such as the listed building Hurts Hall in Suffolk and the Scheduled Monument 'Saxon Shore fort, Roman port and associated remains at Richborough' in Kent.

Public Rights of Way

- The effect on public rights of way including on wellbeing, tourism and recreation due to the change in character and setting of these routes.

Terrestrial and Marine Ecology and Biodiversity

- Effects on statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites, and protected or important habitats and protected species, for example within the Suffolk Sandlings area and the Minster Marshes and Pegwell Bay area.
- The operational effects from converter stations, substations and overhead lines including collision risk for birds, lighting and noise.
- The adequacy of mitigation including for impacts on land functionally linked to European designated sites.
- The effect on marine designated sites including Goodwin Sands Marine Conservation Zone, Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area (particularly red-throated diver) and on European sites with marine mammal qualifying features.

Water Environment

- The effect on Minster Marshes and the implications for flood risk at surrounding locations.
- The historic flood risk at Friston and the effect of the proposals at the proposed Friston substation.
- Flood risk at the proposed bridge over the River Fromus.
- The adequacy of water supply for construction and operational activity in Suffolk including effects of abstractions.

Draft examination timetable

The Examining Authority (ExA) is under a duty to **complete** the examination of the application within a period of no longer than **6 months** beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting.

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	Procedural deadline A Deadline for receipt by the ExA of: • Responses to the Rule 6 letter including any written submissions on the examination procedure and draft examination timetable. • Requests to be heard orally at the preliminary meeting including which agenda items you wish to speak on, points you wish to make and why these need to be made orally rather than in writing. • Requests by interested parties to be heard orally at the open floor hearing (OFH1) commencing on Wednesday 5 November 2025. • Requests by interested parties to be heard orally at the open floor hearing (OFH2) commencing on Tuesday 11 November 2025. • Suggested locations for site inspections (Accompanied (ASI) or Unaccompanied (USI)), including justification, for consideration by the ExA.	Wednesday 8 October 2025
2	Preliminary meeting	Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 10:00
3	Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1)	Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 14:00
4	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Thursday 6 November 2025 at 10:00
5	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Friday 7 November 2025 at 10:00

Item	Matters	Date
6	Issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) on the scope of the development	Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 10:00
7	Open floor hearing 2 (OFH2)	Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 14:00
8	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Wednesday 12 November 2025 at 10:00
9	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Thursday 13 November 2025 at 10:00
10	Issue by the ExA of: Examination Timetable	As soon as practicable after the close of the Preliminary Meeting
11	Deadline 1 For receipt by ExA of: - Local impact reports (LIR) from any local authorities. - Notification by statutory parties of their wish to be considered as an IP by the ExA. - The applicant's updates – refer to annex E - Comments on relevant representations (RR). - Written representations (WR) and summaries for any that exceed 1500 words. - Applicant's draft itinerary for ASI (if required). - Requests by interested parties to be heard at any further OFHs. - Requests by affected persons (defined in section 59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at a compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH). - Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010.	Tuesday 18 November 2025

12	Deadline 1A For receipt by ExA of: Written summaries of oral submissions made at hearings held during w/c 6 and w/c 11 November 2025.	Wednesday 26 November 2025
13	Deadline 2 For receipt by the ExA of: - Comments on WRs. - Comments on the LIRs. - Comments on the applicant's draft itinerary for the ASI. - Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. - Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 1 and deadline 1A.	Tuesday 9 December 2025
14	Publication by the ExA of: ExA's First Written Questions (ExQ1).	Wednesday 17 December 2025
15	Deadline 3 For receipt by the ExA of: - Responses to ExQ1. - The applicant's updates – refer to annex E - Updated versions of principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS). - Notification of a wish to attend the ISH, CAH and OFH (if requested) on the w/c 26 January 2026. - Notification of a wish to attend the ASI (if required) on the w/c 2 February 2026. - Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. - Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 2.	Wednesday 7 January 2026

16	Dates reserved for hearings: • Issue specific hearings (ISH) (if required) • Compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) (if required) • Further open floor hearings (OFH) (if required)	w/c 26 January 2026
17	Dates reserved for ASIs (if required)	w/c 2 February 2026
18	Deadline 4 For receipt by the ExA of: • Written post hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings the w/c 26 January 2026 (if held). • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. • Comments on any further information/ submissions received by deadline 3.	Tuesday 10 February 2026
19	Publication by the ExA of: • Report on the implications for European sites (RIES) and any associated questions (if required).	Tuesday 17 February 2026
20	Dates reserved for hearings and/or ExQ2 (if required): • Further issue specific hearings (ISH) (if required). • Further compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) (if required). • ExQ2 (if required).	w/c 23 February 2026
21	Publication by the ExA of: • ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the draft development consent order (dDCO) (if required).	Tuesday 3 March 2026

22	Deadline 5 For receipt by the ExA of: • Written post hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings the w/c 23 February 2026 (if held). • Responses to ExQ2 (if required). • The applicant's updates – refer to annex E • Updated versions of principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS). • Comments on the RIES (if issued) and responses to any associated questions. • Comments on the ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the draft development consent order (dDCO) (if issued) • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. • Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 4.	Tuesday 10 March 2026
23	Dates reserved for hearings and/or ExQ3 (if required): • Further issue specific hearings (ISH) (if required). • Further compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) (if required). • ExQ3 (if required).	w/c 23 March 2026
24	Deadline 6 For receipt by the ExA of: • Written post hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings the w/c 23 March 2026 (if held). • Responses to ExQ3 (if required). • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. • Comments on any further information/submissions received by deadline 5.	Wednesday 8 April 2026

25	Deadline 7 For receipt by the ExA of: • Summary statements from parties regarding matters that they have previously raised during the Examination and that have not been resolved to their satisfaction. • Final versions of principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS). • Comments on the ExA's dDCO schedule of changes (if required). • The applicant's closing summary statement. • The applicant's final updates – refer to annex E. • Comments on the deadline 6 submissions and any other information requested by the ExA for deadline 7. • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010.	Thursday 23 April 2026
26	The ExA must complete the examination of the application within six months. Please note that the ExA may close the examination before the end of the six-month period if it is satisfied that all relevant matters have been addressed and discussed.	Tuesday 5 May 2026

Submission times for Deadlines

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is **23:59** on the relevant 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.

Hearing agendas

Please note that for ISHs and CAHs the ExA will publish a high-level agenda alongside the notification of the hearing to help inform your decision about whether to register to participate. A detailed draft agenda will be made available on the [project webpage](#) 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, agendas may not be published.

Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES)

Where an applicant has provided a No Significant Effects Report or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report with the application, the ExA may decide to issue a RIES during the examination. The RIES is a factual account of the information and evidence provided to the ExA on HRA matters during the examination up to the date of the publication of the RIES, for the purposes of enabling the Secretary of State, as competent authority, to undertake its HRA. It is not the ExA's opinion on HRA matters. Comments on the RIES will be taken into account as part of the ExA's recommendation to the Secretary of State. The ExA may also raise questions in the RIES to confirm or clarify matters that remain outstanding.

The Secretary of State may rely on the consultation on the RIES to meet its obligations under Regulation 63(3) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and/or Regulation 28 of The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The applicant's updates

The draft examination timetable in **annex D** includes deadlines for the applicant to provide updates to the examination. The deadlines are set at points in the timetable where it will help with the smooth running of the examination for the ExA to have the up-to-date information at that time. This annex sets out the ExA's request for the matters to be included in those updates.

Statements of common ground (SoCG)

Annex G sets out the SoCG between the applicant and various interested parties that are requested by the ExA, and the matters to be covered.

Statement of commonality of SoCG

The statement of commonality of SoCG is a 'living' document that provides a table showing commonality on specific points between the various SoCG. The purpose of this document is to provide the ExA with an overview of the position between the applicant and the relevant parties.

The statement of commonality should provide an overview of the position of each SoCG at the relevant deadline, for example noting where discussions are ongoing and where a final, signed SoCG has been submitted. It would also assist the ExA to have summaries of commonality in respect of the main topics in the examination. This material should be presented in a tabular, colour-coded format wherever possible.

Guide to the application

The guide to the application is a 'living' document which should capture all updates/ revisions to the application documents along with any new documents submitted into the examination by the applicant. The ExA suggests that appendix A (Application Document Tracker) of document 1.3 Navigation Document [[APP-003](#)] as a standalone document could be used for this purpose.

Land rights tracker (LRT)

As set out in its procedural decision letters of 8 July 2025 [[PD-005](#)], 5 August 2025 [[PD-006](#)] and 5 September 2025 [[PD-008](#)] the ExA took the decision to request that the applicant completes and maintains a LRT.

The applicant can avoid submitting updates to the LRT if there are no changes to the previous version.

Schedule of negotiation of Compulsory Acquisition

The Schedule of Negotiation of Compulsory Acquisition provides the most up to date information regarding the status of negotiations on voluntary agreements with affected persons (AP)s in respect of compulsory acquisition (CA) and temporary

possession (TP). The Schedule of Negotiation of Compulsory Acquisition should provide further detail of ongoing negotiations between the applicant and those APs objecting which has not been provided within the LRT.

To include:

- Identification of all APs objecting to powers sought by the applicant and each AP with whom discussions have been held. In each case identifying the APs' interests in each plot, the powers sought by the applicant; the purpose(s) for which they are sought; and the anticipated duration of any TP. To include CA, TP, restrictive covenants, and any other powers in relation to the creation, suspension or extinguishment of, or interference with, interests in or rights over land.
- A summary of any objections by an AP to the powers being sought by the applicant, and the applicant's responses. The examination library references of all submissions made by APs in relation to land rights, including any objections that they have made to the proposed development, and the applicant's responses.
- Identification of whether voluntary agreement has been reached.
- Identification of any plots where the applicant has not yet been able to identify persons having an interest in land, including any rights over unregistered land, and where it has been able to identify interests since the application was made.
- An update in relation to the progress in acquiring temporary use of, and permanent rights on, special land in accordance with sections 130, 131 and 132 and crown land in accordance with section 135 of the PA2008 for the proposed development
- A summary of the progress made since the last update, any outstanding matters, the next steps to be taken, and the progress anticipated by the next deadline and by the close of the examination.

The above information will be published on the project webpage, so commercial and/or confidential details need not be given.

Status of negotiations with Statutory Undertakers (SU)

The status of negotiations with SU should provide further detail of ongoing discussions between the applicant and those SUs with outstanding concerns which have not been provided within the LRT, including:

- A schedule of progress in relation to each Statutory Undertaker where s127 and/ or s138 of the PA2008 applies and that sets out:
 - An up-to-date list of SUs.
 - The nature of their undertakings.
 - The SU's land, rights or apparatus that would be affected and how it would be affected.

- The progress made in discussions with SUs since the last update in relation to the tests set out in s127(3)(a) or (b), s127(6)(a) or (b) and s138(4) of the PA2008.
- Any agreement or differences between the applicant and the SU about whether the tests have been met.
- A summary of the progress made since the last update, any outstanding matters, the next steps to be taken, and the progress anticipated by the close of the examination.
- A schedule of progress in relation to the protective provisions included in the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO), and any related side agreements, setting out:
 - The name of each organisation that each protective provision applies to where this is not identified in the dDCO.
 - The scope and purpose of any relevant side agreements with each organisation.
 - Whether the protective provisions and any side agreements have been agreed with each organisation, providing written evidence from each party of any agreement. If written confirmation is not received by all relevant parties before the close of the examination, then the ExA may be minded to recommend to the Secretary of State that it does not make a decision until it has satisfied itself that the protective provisions and any relevant side agreements have been agreed.
 - A summary of the progress made since the last update, any outstanding matters, the next steps to be taken, and the progress anticipated by the close of the examination.

The above information will be published on the project webpage, so commercial and/or confidential details need not be given.

Updates to the Book of Reference, Statement of Reasons and Land Plans

The latest, fully up-to-date versions of Book of Reference (BoR), Statement of Reasons, Land Plans, and any related updates to the dDCO.

Where the applicant submits an amended BoR at any deadline, the submission should include a new version number identifying that the submitted BoR is an amended version. The ExA requests that this is accompanied by a consolidated table of changes listing all changes to the BoR since the application version, when (including the version number) and for what purpose each change was introduced.

Updates to the dDCO and Explanatory Memorandum

To include:

- The latest, fully up-to-date versions of the dDCO and Explanatory Memorandum.
- Clean copies and copies showing tracked changes to the previous versions.

- A clean copy of the dDCO in Microsoft Word (**at deadlines 5 and 7 only**).
- A report validating that the dDCO is in the Statutory Instrument template (obtained from the publishing section of the [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) website) (**at deadline 7 only**).
- A table showing the amendments made to the dDCO in each update and the reasons for the changes made.

Notification of initial hearings

The Examining Authority (ExA) provides notice of the following initial hearings:

Date	Hearing	Start time	Joining details
Wednesday 5 November 2025	Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 13:30 Virtual registration process from: 13:30 Hearing starts: 14:00	Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk IP17 1SP and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 5 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 17:00 Virtual registration process from: 17:00 Hearing starts: 17:30	Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk IP17 1SP and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Thursday 6 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:30 Virtual registration process from: 09:30 Hearing starts: 10:00	Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk IP17 1SP and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

Date	Hearing	Start time	Joining details
Thursday 6 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 13:30 Virtual registration process from: 13:30 Hearing starts: 14:00	Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk IP17 1SP and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Thursday 6 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 17:00 Virtual registration process from: 17:00 Hearing starts: 17:30	Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk IP17 1SP and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Friday 7 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:30 Virtual registration process from: 09:30 Hearing starts: 10:00	Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk IP17 1SP and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Tuesday 11 November 2025	Issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) on the scope of the development	Virtual registration process from: 09:30 Hearing starts: 10:00	By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

Date	Hearing	Start time	Joining details
Tuesday 11 November 2025	Open floor hearing 2 (OFH2)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 13:30 Virtual registration process from: 13:30 Hearing starts: 14:00	Discovery Park Vistors Centre, Innovation House, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9FF and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Tuesday 11 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 17:00 Virtual registration process from: 17:00 Hearing starts: 17:30	Discovery Park Vistors Centre, Innovation House, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9FF and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 12 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:30 Virtual registration process from: 09:30 Hearing starts: 10:00	Discovery Park Vistors Centre, Innovation House, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9FF and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

Date	Hearing	Start time	Joining details
Wednesday 12 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 13:30 Virtual registration process from: 13:30 Hearing starts: 14:00	Discovery Park Vistors Centre, Innovation House, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9FF and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre- registered
Wednesday 12 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 17:00 Virtual registration process from: 17:00 Hearing starts: 17:30	Discovery Park Vistors Centre, Innovation House, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9FF and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre- registered
Thursday 13 November 2025	Continuation of open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (if required)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:30 Virtual registration process from: 09:30 Hearing starts: 10:00	Discovery Park Vistors Centre, Innovation House, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9FF and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre- registered
NOTE: If any of the above hearings are no longer required then notification that a particular date is no longer required will be published as soon as practicable on the project webpage , providing reasonable notice to interested parties of the decision to cancel them.			

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 8 October 2025 if you intend to participate in any of the hearings and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe any of the hearings then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical hearing (for the OFHs only) at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **8 October 2025** using the [event participation form](#). Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **8 October 2025**.

Any request to participate in a hearing **must include** the following information:

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top of any letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate).
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number.
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable).
- For the OFHs state your preferred session(s). Whilst we cannot guarantee you will get your preferred day/time to attend we will do our best to take this into account when producing the agendas.
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person.
- Confirmation of the hearing(s) you wish to participate in, the agenda item(s) on which you wish to speak and/ or brief details of the topic(s) that you would like to raise.
- The [examination library](#) reference number (with paragraph/ page number where appropriate) of any documents you wish to refer to.

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A (Wednesday 8 October 2025)**.

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

Hearing agendas

For the OFHs, agendas will be published confirming a speaking order and time slots for registered participants to make their oral submissions. For the ISH the ExA will publish a detailed agenda of the matters they wish to be covered. The ExA will publish the draft agendas on the [project webpage](#) at least five working days before the events.

The actual agenda on the day of each hearing may be subject to change at the discretion of the ExA.

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 Planning Inspectorate's Advice for members of the public 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](#)

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.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

The Examining Authority (ExA) has made the following procedural decisions:

1. Visuals for the hearings

The ExA may wish to refer to plans and drawings to assist in discussion points in Hearings. The applicant is therefore requested to make provisions for the electronic display of such plans and documents. The ExA will provide details in advance of which plans and drawings will be required.

For interested parties (IPs) joining virtually, the ExA considers the most appropriate way of participation would be for persons to have access to the [examination library](#) (EL). As each plan or drawing is uploaded, the ExA will notify those persons attending virtually of the EL reference number (eg APP-001) and IPs will then be able to upload the document themselves. The ExA consider this to be preferable to the alternative of low-resolution plans and drawings being prepared and screened on Microsoft Teams by the applicant which, despite best intentions, are often difficult to see and navigate for online users.

2. Statements of common ground (SoCG)

The applicant, in the Statement of Commonality table 2.1 [\[APP-322\]](#), has identified several stakeholders that it will develop SoCG with.

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter establishes **deadline 1 (Tuesday, 18 November 2025)** for submission of initial draft SoCG.

The aim of a SoCG is to agree factual information and to inform the ExA and all other parties by identifying where there is agreement and where the differences lie at an early stage in the examination process. It should provide a focus and save time by identifying matters which are not in dispute or need not be the subject of further evidence. It can also usefully state where and why there may be disagreement about the interpretation and relevance of the information. Unless otherwise stated or agreed, the SoCG should be agreed between the applicant and the other relevant IP(s), and submitted **by the applicant**. The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter therefore establishes the deadlines in which drafts and final submissions are expected.

All of the SoCGs listed above should cover the Articles and Requirements in the dDCO. Any IP 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 the ExA about the need to hold any ISHs during the examination, and to enable the ExA and the applicant to give notice of such hearings at least 21 days in advance of them taking place.

3. Principal areas of disagreement summary statements (PADSS)

As set out in its procedural decision letter of 8 July 2025 [[PD-005](#)], the ExA took the decision to request PADSSs from a number of IPs. The ExA requested that the IPs identify matters on which major and principal areas of concern arise, to provide clear focus for the examination. PADSS should be revised and resubmitted at the deadlines as detailed in the examination timetable (**annex D**).

4. Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter includes dates reserved for an accompanied site inspections (ASI)s in the week commencing 2 February 2026.

The ExA requests that IPs submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **procedural deadline A (8 October 2025)**. The request must include:

- sufficient information to identify the location
- the issues to be observed at the location
- information on whether the site can be accessed via public land
- the reason why the location has been suggested

IPs should be aware that ASIs are not an opportunity to make any oral representations to the ExA about the proposed development. However, participants may be invited by the ExA to indicate specific features or sites of interest.

The applicant is requested to prepare a draft itinerary for the ASI to be submitted by **deadline 1**. This should include:

- relevant locations referred to in the relevant representations received
- any other locations at which the applicant has predicted likely significant environmental effects
- the locations suggested by IPs submitted by **procedural deadline A**

Comments by IPs on the applicant's draft itinerary must be submitted by **deadline 2**.

The ExA will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine whether it has already visited the relevant location and if not, whether it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis. The ExA 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.

The ExA will publish its final itinerary at least five working days before the date of the ASI.

5. Deadline for the submission of written representations and local impact reports

In order to maximise the time available to examine the application the ExA has made the procedural decision to request written representations (WRs) and local impact reports (LIRs) at **deadline 1 (Tuesday 18 November 2025)**. For the avoidance of doubt, the ExA wishes to make it clear that WRs and LIRs are two separate documents and must be submitted separately and independently of each other.

For the purposes of Rule 10(2) of the Examination Procedure Rules, the 'period of 21 days' with reference to which the ExA must provide notice for the submission of WRs commences on 28 October 2025. This is a date before the start of the examination. However, as the deadline for submission of WRs is set at **deadline 1 (Tuesday 18 November 2025)** is more than the 21 days' notice, the ExA is satisfied that IPs have been permitted sufficient time in which to draft and submit WRs.

By providing early notice, the ExA is ensuring that all IPs will have a reasonable time period in which to draft their WRs, before the deadline for submission.

6. Notification by statutory parties, or certain local authorities of their wish to be considered as an IP

The ExA has made the procedural decision that, in order to facilitate a timely start the examination, statutory parties and certain local authorities who have not yet done so should decide whether they wish to be considered as an IP. They need to notify the Planning Inspectorate of their decision by **deadline 1 (Tuesday 18 November 2025)**.

7. Responses to relevant representations

The ExA has made the procedural decision that when the applicant provides comments on the relevant representations they should:

- specify the names of the parties making the representation and the relevant examination library reference in order to demonstrate that all relevant representations have been responded to; and
- where a detailed or tabular representation has been submitted, present responses in a comparable manner in order to ensure that all points are responded to in similar terms.

8. Diligent enquiry into land interests

In relation to due diligence into land interests and particularly in light of the two caravans the ExA identified during their unaccompanied site inspections [\[EV1-002\]](#) and [\[EV1-003\]](#) the ExA requests that the applicant provide:

- An explanation as to what was done to identify any other similar caravans within or near to the order limits and when this work was undertaken.
- Detail the location of any further caravans which have been identified and explain what is being done to determine if they are in scope for compulsory acquisition and how you are ensuring they can contribute fully to the examination.
- Explanation regarding any further work that will be done in this respect.
- An updated Book of Reference if any other land interests have been identified.

9. Errata

The ExA has identified additional errata as detailed below.

Environmental statement chapter 6 agriculture and soils

In table 6.13 of 6 part 2, Suffolk chapter 6 agriculture and soils [\[APP-053\]](#) the total land required permanently adds up to 11.59 hectares (ha) not 11.49ha and the total area of BMV land does not add up to 11.45ha when grade 3b and other/non-agricultural land are subtracted from 11.49ha.

In table 6.14 of part 3, Kent chapter 6 agriculture and soils [\[APP-066\]](#) the total land required permanently adds up to 12.38ha not 12.27ha and the basis for the total area of BMV land required permanently is therefore not clear.

The ExA requests that the calculations within these chapters are checked and clarified, and any amendments/updates made by **procedural deadline A (Wednesday 8 October)**.

Book of reference and land plans

Statement of Reasons appendix A [\[AS-071\]](#) includes amendments by the applicant to include plots within Kent. It appears that the insertion of Kent plots may have been duplicated within the document.

Statement of Reasons appendix A [\[AS-071\]](#) does not include plot number 6/1 and the Works Plans for Kent [\[APP-022\]](#) also do not include the Works numbers for this plot.

There are discrepancies between the Book of Reference [\[APP-016\]](#) and the Land Plans [\[APP-019\]](#) including:

- the Book of Reference [APP-016] identifies Kent plot number 2/140 for Class 8 “temporary use for construction, mitigation, maintenance and dismantling of redundant infrastructure,” however, the Land Plans [APP-019] show this plot shaded blue for Class 7 “compulsory acquisition of rights – mitigation”
- the Book of Reference [APP-016] identifies Kent plot number 3/96 for Class 5 “compulsory acquisition of rights – access,” however, the Land Plans [APP-019] show this plot shaded blue for Class 9 “temporary use for access”

The ExA requests that these documents are fully checked for any further discrepancies, and any amendments/updates made by **procedural deadline A (Wednesday 8 October)**.

Environmental statement chapter 2 ecology and biodiversity

Table 2.8 of part 2, chapter 2 [APP-049] sets out beneficial and adverse significance criteria. It is noted that moderate beneficial effects use temporary addition as a descriptor, whilst minor beneficial effects use permanent addition. In contrast temporary damage is used as a minor adverse effect descriptor and permanent damage is used as a moderate adverse descriptor. Confirm whether the descriptors should actually be permanent addition for moderate beneficial effects and temporary addition for minor beneficial effects? Provide updated assessments where relevant.

Paragraph 2.9.108 of part 2, chapter 2 [APP-049] suggests that three trees with potential roost features (PRF) would be removed to facilitate the scheme (trees 1-2, 162-2 and 423-2). However, ES Appendix 2.2.H Bat Tree Survey Report paragraph 1.5.2 also lists trees 152-19 and 162-4/5 that would be removed. Clarify which trees with PRF would be removed.

Bird survey reports

Annex 2.b.3 of the Suffolk wintering bird survey [APP-100] and annex 2.c.3 of the Suffolk breeding bird survey [APP-101] provide a list of BTO bird codes used in the surveys. The list omits the codes for golden plover and curlew and does not provide the common or scientific names for a number of codes used in the figures such as BH, FF, CM and HG. The applicant should provide an updated list of codes checking that all codes used in the survey figures are provided.

The ExA requests that these documents are checked and clarified, and any amendments/updates made by **procedural deadline A (Wednesday 8 October)**.

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 under the [documents tab](#) of the project webpage.

You can also sign up to get email updates by clicking the green 'Get Updates' button on the [project website](#).

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

The examination library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [examination library](#) (EL) which is accessible by clicking the blue button under the [documents tab](#). The EL is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The EL records and provides a hyperlink to:

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

Each document is given a unique reference 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 not have 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 Find a National Infrastructure Project 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 D** 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.