



## Preliminary meeting note

**Application:** South East Anglia Link  
**Reference:** EN020026  
**Time and date:** 10:00 am 5 November 2025  
**Venue:** Microsoft Teams

*This meeting note is not a full transcript of the preliminary meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.*

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

Sarah Holmes (SH), welcomed those present and introduced herself as the lead member of the panel of Examining Inspectors. Richard Hunt, Luke Regan, Steven Rennie and Nancy Thomas (NT) also introduced themselves as panel members to examine the South East Anglia Link application.

SH explained the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero on 27 May 2025.

SH explained that the ExA would be examining the application made by National Grid Electricity Transmission ('the applicant') before making a recommendation to the SoS who will decide whether an order granting development consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

SH explained the purpose of the preliminary meeting (PM) and noted that the examination will commence after the PM closes.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

### 2. Audio recording

The video recording of this PM is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed here: [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).

### 3. General Data Protection Regulation

The ExA explained The Planning Inspectorate's duties under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Further information relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's ['Privacy Note'](#).

#### 4. Examination process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), further information can be found:

- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event'](#)
- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Registering to speak at, or attend, an event'](#)

#### 5. Initial assessment of principal issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the initial assessment of principal issues (section 88 of the PA2008) (IAP), which can be found in [annex C](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 19 September 2025 and asked for any observations on them.

- James Burton on behalf of Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) brought up a concern regarding the costs of the development and the need to ensure costs are correctly understood in terms of the benefits and disbenefits in the planning balance. He stated this was due to different figures for costings that came out of the applicant's request to Ofgem for early construction funding.
- Marianne Fellowes, an Aldeburgh resident, raised the following concerns:
  - She queried that the IAP had six headings, and whether these were enough to allow the ExA to examine all matters thoroughly.
  - The length of the PM, and if it would be long enough to cover every issue.
  - Landscape and visual effects and the impact on the national landscapes, and whether this should have its own issue specific hearing (ISH).
  - Traffic and transport and public rights of way issues are not just a construction matter and should be considered in terms of operation, decommissioning and cumulative effects with other projects, due to their wider community impact.
  - Concern that the IAP would not be revised and re published.
- Jeremy Bloom representing National Highways had concerns there may be a substantial impact from construction traffic on the strategic road network (SRN) in Suffolk. He also raised a query that the description of the issues under the construction impacts was not entirely clear about traffic impacts, particularly the SRN.
- Michael Bedford on behalf of Suffolk County Council (SCC) queried why certain issues are highlighted in the IAP when they are already covered in the National Policy Statements (NPS). He also queried if site-specific impacts should be explicitly identified. Finally, he also expressed concern regarding the ExA's statutory duties in respect of national landscapes under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- Morgan Haringman on behalf on the Environment Agency had concerns about how pollution prevention during operation, such as at substations, are addressed within the IAP section that currently focuses on biodiversity impacts like birds, lighting, and noise.

- Francis Tyrrell representing London Gateway Port had concerns that important issues like shipping and navigation may appear to have lesser status because they are not listed in the IAPI, even though they are covered in the NPS, and notes that other similar examinations have included these issues explicitly.
- Julia Ewart on behalf of Peter Ewart who represented the IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme queried about the collaboration opportunities and urges consideration of a broader approach beyond the current plan.
- James Burton for SEAS suggested that in view of the confusion about the IAPI a further list of principal issues could be published.

NT explained that these comments would be taken into consideration, and that the examination would take account of all the representations and evidence submitted to the ExA. NT also explained that all matters that are important and relevant will be thoroughly examined, whether or not they were identified in the IAPI. NT confirmed that the IAPI would not be republished.

## **6. Examination Timetable**

The ExA noted requests already received in writing to amend the draft examination timetable contained in [annex D](#) of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further suggestions from the parties in attendance.

- The applicant had concerns about deadlines over Christmas and New Year and requested bringing forward written questions or adding extra days for responses.
- Michael Bedford on behalf of SCC highlighted Christmas deadline pressures and asked for coordination with other overlapping NSIP examinations like Norwich to Tilbury.
- Mark Westmoreland Smith KC on behalf of East Suffolk Council requested more time around Christmas for responding to first written questions.
- Michael Mahoney on behalf of Friston Parish Council and Substation Action Save East Suffolk (SASES) asked for clarity on Lion Link consultation dates and how they will be considered in the timetable. He asked for better co-ordination between overlapping National Grid projects. He also requested confirmation of whether the applicant would continue to progress its Environmental Impact Assessment Scenario two.
- Geraldine Barker on behalf of Saxmundham Town Council warned that Lion Link consultation and other projects will clash with January and February hearing dates, making responses by the timetable deadlines difficult. She also noted issues with formal notifications for consultations.
- James Burton on behalf of SEAS said responses by deadline 1 is too tight and asked for a few extra working days. He also asked for more definite timeframes to organise resources.

- Emma Waller on behalf of Kent Wildlife Trust objected to deadline 1 being before the applicant's change application, risking submissions based on outdated information. She also stated that she had not been informed about targeted consultation for proposed change requests.
- Francis Tyrrell representing London Gateway Port sought clarification on how shipping and navigation issues will be handled between hearing and written deadlines.
- Marianne Fellowes opposed any early closure of examination and raised confusion over deadlines for site inspection requests. She also highlighted the importance of the Development Consent Order (DCO) for controlling impacts and asked for the draft development consent order (dDCO) to be updated on the website every time it is changed.
- Morgan Haringman on behalf of the Environment Agency said deadline three is unrealistic due to workload and other NSIPs, and requested extra time.
- Richard Thompson on behalf of The Countryside Charity (CPRE) supported extending deadlines around Christmas to avoid the disadvantages from the late change application.
- Julia Ewart on behalf of Peter Ewart (IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme) criticised poor communication and said Christmas timing leaves fewer than ten effective days for volunteer groups.
- Robin Sanders on behalf of Woodbridge Town Council asked to avoid early January deadlines because parish councils are busy setting budgets.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA who confirmed that considerations would be reflected in the rule 8 letter.

The examination timetable can be found in the [rule 8](#) letter published on 10 November 2025.

## **7. Hearings and site inspections**

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue specific hearings
- Compulsory acquisition hearings
- Open floor hearings
- Accompanied site inspections
- Unaccompanied site inspections

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events.

- Julia Ewart on behalf of Peter Ewart (IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme) – requested accompanied site inspection to include three key locations, especially Kelsale, Yoxford and the Benhall/Sternfield area.

- Marianne Fellowes asked for hard-copy maps and visuals for hearings and improvements to document submission formats for easier public participation. She also suggested colour-coding documents by region (Suffolk/Kent) and adding page numbers for clarity. Finally she urged early publication of ISH dates and topics to allow preparation, even if later cancelled.
- Theresa Thorne on behalf of Whitearch Residential Retirement Park requested an accompanied site inspection for Whitearch Residential Park to assess access issues.
- Carol O'Shea, a Kent Resident, supported Marianne Fellowes comments and the need for better public communication and asked for 3D or visual models showing the full development layout for easier understanding.
- James Burton on behalf of SEAS requested that the panel look at other sites and use virtual methods such as google maps.

These were duly noted and considered by the ExA.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found:

- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event'](#)
- ['Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Registering to speak at, or attend, an event'](#)

## **8. Procedural decisions**

The ExA clarified the procedural decisions made under section 89(3) of the PA2008 and asked for any observations.

Procedural decisions can be found in [annex G](#) of the Rule 6 Letter.

## **9. Any Other Business (AOB)**

- James Burton on behalf of SEAS requests cumulative visualisations including Lion Link from the applicant. He also emphasises the panel to take their suggestions of issues to be discussed at the issue specific hearings.
- Peter Lorenzo raised concerns about missing part of the meeting due to technical issues and lack of notification about the applicant's change request.

## **10. Close**

The ExA closed the preliminary meeting at 1.01pm