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Customer
Services: 0303 444 5000
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All interested parties and statutory parties

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN020027

Date: 13 January 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

Planning Act 2008 – section 88, 89, 91, 92 and 93 and the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – rules 6, 9, 13 and 15

Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission for an order granting development consent for the Norwich to Tilbury project

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 Susan Hunt and the other members of the ExA are Christopher Butler, Jonathan Hockley, Matthew Sims and Ken Stone. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed under the documents tab on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)).

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

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	Venue and joining details
Tuesday 10 February 2026	Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:00 Virtual registration process from: 09:00 Preliminary meeting starts: 10:00	Sir Bobby Robson Suite at Ipswich Town Football Club Portman Rd Ipswich IP1 2DA 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

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 the ExA makes 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 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 and additional submissions 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**.

Written submissions are now invited from recipients of this letter about how the application should be examined. The ExA particularly wish to hear from you if either:



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

All submissions should include reasons for your comments. They are to be made using the '[Have your say' page](#) on the project webpage on or before **procedural deadline A (27 January 2026)**. Annex H 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 via the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A (27 January 2026)**. Please note that it may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by this date.

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting, then **you do not need to register**.

See **annex A** of this letter for more information about how to register to participate in or observe the preliminary meeting.

Format of events – preliminary meeting and hearings

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings and you are advised to refer to 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.

Events may be either blended (part in-person and part virtual) or fully virtual. Views on formats will be considered by the ExA, who will confirm the format of any hearings to be held during the latter stages of the examination in advance of each event taking place. The ExA is providing formal notification in this letter that the preliminary meeting will be a blended event.

After the preliminary meeting

After the preliminary meeting we will issue a letter setting out the finalised timetable for the examination. A note of the meeting will also be published on the [project webpage](#).



Notification of initial hearings

The ExA has made a procedural decision to hold the following initial hearings, which will all be blended events, taking place both in-person and virtually:

- Open floor hearings: OFH1 (Suffolk) on **Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 February 2026**, OFH2 (Essex) on **Thursday 12 February 2026**, and OFH3 (Norfolk) on **Thursday 12 February 2026** (note OFH2 and OFH3 are concurrent)
- Compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH1) on **Wednesday 11 February 2026**
- Issue specific hearing (ISH1) on **Friday 13 February 2026**

Important information about these hearings is contained in **annex E** 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.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

The ExA has made further procedural decisions which are set out in detail at **annex F** to this letter:

1. Use of artificial intelligence in submissions
2. Interrelationship with other projects
3. Statements of common ground
4. Compulsory acquisition and land rights
5. Accompanied site inspection
6. Comments on relevant representations
7. Deadline for submission of written representations and local impact reports
8. Notification by statutory parties of wish to be considered as an interested party
9. Requests for an Open Floor Hearing
10. Requests for a Compulsory Acquisition Hearing
11. Request for regular updated documents throughout the examination
12. Draft development consent order
13. Policy compliance document tracker
14. Approach to errata
15. Additional submissions

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 requested 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 Planning Act 2008. The applicant should inform them that information about how to do this can be found here: [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 the applicant should provide 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.

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 H** to this letter.

You can also use the **Get updates** button on the project webpage to register to receive automatic e-mail updates at key stages during the examination.

Use of artificial intelligence

The Planning Inspectorate understands the benefits that artificial intelligence (AI) can bring to the planning system when it is used ethically and transparently. To aid the ethical, transparent and beneficial use of AI in casework evidence, all participants in the examination are directed to the Planning Inspectorate's general [guidance](#) for submitting information that has been generated or altered by AI. **Annex F** sets out the detailed advice you must follow if you wish to use AI in any element of this examination.

Your status in the examination

You have received this letter because you are a person or organisation who is involved in the 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

Susan Hunt

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** Notification of initial hearings
- F** Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
- G** Examination documents
- H** Information about the 'Have your say' page

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 27 January 2026 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting 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 event 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 27 January 2026** 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 **27 January 2026**.

Please note that by attending the event either in person or online 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 page](#). A limited number of seats will be available for observers who wish not to be filmed at the venue. Please contact the Case Team to notify them if you prefer not to be filmed at the event. A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

Date: **Tuesday 10 February 2026**

Registration process: **09:00**

Meeting start time: **10.00**

Venue: **Blended event at Sir Bobby Robson Suite at Ipswich Town Football Club Portman Rd Ipswich IP1 2DA and by virtual means using 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	
09:00	Registration and seating available at venue for in-person attendees
09:00	<p>Virtual registration process</p> <p>Please arrive at 09:00 to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the virtual meeting by the Case Team, greeted and given further instructions.</p> <p>The registration process will commence at 09:00. This will be hosted by the Case Team and cover the housekeeping arrangements for the preliminary meeting and allow for any questions to be asked about how to take part.</p>
10.00	Preliminary meeting
Item 1	The preliminary meeting will formally open at 10.00 . 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
Item 4	Draft examination timetable – annex D
Item 5	Procedural decisions taken by the Examining Authority – annex F
Item 6	Format of future hearings and accompanied site inspection – annexes E and F
Item 7	Any remaining questions or submissions regarding procedural matters not set out in the agenda that have been submitted in writing by procedural deadline A (27 January 2026)
Item 8	Any other matters
Close of the preliminary meeting	

If you are participating using Microsoft Teams please join the virtual lobby promptly using the instructions that will be sent to you. The event will start at **10.00am** 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 is subject to change at the discretion of the Examining Authority, although in making changes the Examining Authority will be mindful of the need to provide opportunities for fair involvement to all invited parties.

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting must be made on the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A (27 January 2026)** and must include the following information:

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

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.

Introduction to the preliminary meeting

Background

The preliminary meeting (PM) will be a blended event with some participants attending in person and some taking part virtually using Microsoft Teams.

The Examining Authority (ExA) 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, case team and inspector support

The members of the ExA, Susan Hunt, Christopher Butler, Jon Hockley, Matthew Sims and Ken Stone will introduce themselves at the start of the PM. The ExA, individually or collectively, exercises the powers set out in the Planning Act 2008.

The ExA is supported by a number of other planning inspectors who are either assisting the ExA or in a quality assurance role.

The ExA will also 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:

norwichtotilbury@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 Norwich to Tilbury 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, 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 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 examination process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached to this 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 sections 14(1)(b) and s16 of the PA2008: it includes the installation of a new electric line above ground in England. The designated National Policy Statements (NPS) for Energy (EN-1) and Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) apply to this examination and to decision-making relating to this application.

The ExA will consider the proposed development in accordance with the NPS 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 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 (IPs)
- 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 (CAH). All APs are an IP, 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 an IP 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.

Conduct of the preliminary meeting

The ExA estimates that the PM should take no more than half a day to complete.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. 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 SoS'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. If you are participating virtually and 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 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 to 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 is 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 (LIRs) if they wish. Whilst these are voluntary, the PA2008 provides that if they are provided, they must be considered by the SoS in reaching a decision. Consequently, LIRs are a very important method for local authorities to communicate issues of concern to the ExA, the SoS and their residents
- IPs can make written representations (WRs) 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. SoCGs most usefully extend to catalogue matters that are not agreed or are outstanding (**annex F**)

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.

There is no merit in withholding or delaying information, or in failing to co-operate, and should it occur, **any unreasonable behaviour that has 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. The ExA is under a duty to complete the examination by the end of the six-month period beginning after the close of the PM. This requirement is set by legislation. The ExA will consider requests for alternative dates, however there will be limited scope to alter the dates as set out in the draft examination timetable.

This is particularly pertinent given the extensive scale of the order limits relating to the proposed development, and the considerable number of parties participating in the examination. The ExA also needs to be mindful of other NSIP examinations taking place at the same time.

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 (**annex D**) includes provision for a number of hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties. The ExA has provided notification in this letter of open floor hearings (OFH), a CAH, and an issue specific hearing (ISH) taking place in the week commencing 9 February 2026.

Open floor hearings: Such a hearing may be requested by any registered IP 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 **27 January 2026** on the [event participation form](#). The ExA will set a time slot and time limit for each speaker who has registered. 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 ExA has provided notification in this letter of three OFHs, one in each county: Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. Participants do not have to participate in the hearing which is within their home county and can register to attend any session whether in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams. More information is provided in **annex E**.

Compulsory acquisition hearing: The applicant's draft 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 CAH. The ExA has provided notification in this letter for the first CAH with further information provided in **annex E**.

Issue specific hearings: The ExA has the discretion to hold an ISH if it would aid in the examination and if it 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 ExA has provided notification in this letter for the first ISH with further information provided in **annex E**.

An ISH may include agenda items on a range of environmental matters as well as the draft DCO. This is normal practice, and DCO hearings 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. Whatever the ultimate recommendation is, the ExA must make sure that the draft DCO is fit for purpose if the SoS decides to grant consent.

Provisional dates for further hearings of all the above types are included in the draft examination timetable at **annex D**. All parties are reminded that it is not necessary to make long and detailed submissions at any hearing nor visual presentations. Any

such supporting detail or information can be provided in writing following the event, alongside a written summary of oral submissions, by the relevant deadline.

Site inspections

Site inspections are undertaken by the ExA as part of the examination process. These can be either unaccompanied (including on an access required basis) or accompanied.

A number of unaccompanied site inspections (USI) have already been undertaken by the ExA during the pre-examination period (weeks commencing 13 October and 1 December 2025). The notes of these visits can be found in the examination library [[EV1-001 to EV1-010](#) inclusive]. As a result of these visits, the ExA has established a good understanding of the site of the proposed development and its surroundings, and further USIs may take place throughout the examination.

Accompanied site inspections (ASI) will only be necessary to view land to which there is no public right of access, or with no clear view from nearby locations with open public access. No discussion of the merits of the proposed development will be allowed during an ASI. The draft examination timetable includes provision for an ASI to be held, if deemed necessary by the ExA. Reference should be made to **annex F** of this letter which sets out a procedural decision regarding future site inspections.

Initial assessment of principal issues

This is the initial assessment of principal issues (IAPI) 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.

National Policy Statements

The following National Policy Statements (NPS) published in November 2023 and designated in January 2024 have effect, and the issues contained within will be an integral part of the examination:

- The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1), including matters relating to the need case for nationally significant electricity infrastructure, the consideration of alternatives, assessment principles and generic impacts as relevant.
- The NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5), specific to transmission networks. Including assessment of technology-specific impacts and factors influencing site selection and design.

NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3) is important and relevant in relation to the relationship of the transmission infrastructure to the delivery of energy generation projects which are proposed to connect to the proposed development.

The November 2023 versions of the NPS are those which are designated for this application. The energy suite of NPS were recently updated. The transition provisions set out in section 1.6 of NPS EN-1 (December 2025) apply to the application as it was accepted prior to publication of the revised policy. The updated NPS are capable of being important and relevant considerations in the decision-making process and will be referred to during the examination where relevant.

Integral Issues

The following are not listed in the IAPI as they form an integral part of the examination:

- the policy and consenting requirements associated with the PA2008
- the draft Development Consent Order (DCO), planning obligations, agreements, other consents and licences, management plans and protective provisions
- compulsory acquisition and temporary possession of land and land rights
- approach to Environmental Impact Assessment
- the need for and the benefits of the proposed development
- the achievement of sustainable development including the effects of the proposed development on climate change and greenhouse gas emissions
- the effects of the proposed development in relation to human rights and equalities duties

The ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with the above in mind. Consideration will be given to all relevant matters during all phases of the proposed development: construction, operation, and decommissioning.

List of issues

The order of the issues listed below is alphabetic and does not imply any order of prioritisation or importance. The bulleted items under each issue are indicative and do not preclude other sub-items being considered during the examination.

Air quality and emissions
Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• emissions arising during both construction and operation of the proposed development and their effects on sensitive receptors, including from traffic and plant emissions and construction dust
Alternatives
Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the consideration of alternatives by the applicant prior to application submission including type of transmission, routeing and alternative ways of transmission of energy from offshore wind farms

- use of and treatment of existing pylon transmission routes
- the choice of transmission in specific sections of the route, whether pylons or underground cabling and the type of cabling
- micro-siting of routes

Biodiversity, ecology and nature conservation

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- effects on statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites, protected species and other habitats and species, including habitat connectivity
- effects on trees and hedgerows, including ancient woodland and veteran trees
- provision of Biodiversity Net Gain, environmental mitigation areas and replacement planting
- Habitats Regulations Assessment

Cumulative effects

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- interactions and co-ordination with other nationally significant infrastructure projects and major planning applications
- cumulative effects on all principal issues

Good design

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- application of the Holford and Horlock rules
- application of National Energy System Operator (NESO) electricity transmission design principles
- how the proposed development would meet good design in relation to pylon type, substations, cable sealing ends and compounds

Historic Environment

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- the effects of the proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets
- the effects on non-designated heritage assets
- effects on archaeology, the adequacy of the archaeological assessment and the written scheme of investigation

Health and wellbeing

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on human health and wellbeing, including from electromagnetic fields

Landscape and visual

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- the effects of the proposed development (both temporary and permanent) on landscape character and quality including nationally designated, locally designated and valued landscapes
- the effects of the proposed development on views including on sensitive receptors and from residential properties
- the representativeness of the submitted viewpoints and photomontages or wireframes
- consideration of planting and landscape mitigation proposals, management and maintenance

Land use (to include agriculture, use of best and most versatile land, soils, green belt and green infrastructure)

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- effects on agricultural land and farming practices
- food production and food security
- agricultural land classification and the effects on soil resources, including best and most versatile land
- soil management measures
- approaches to micro-siting within limits of deviation

- whether the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt and if there are very special circumstances to justify it
- the effects on green infrastructure and any mitigation proposals.

Noise and vibration

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- noise and vibration during construction including issues arising from construction processes, traffic routes and site compounds, particularly with regard to sensitive receptors
- potential noise and vibration during operation.

Safety and Security

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- safe construction and operation of the proposed development in relation to aviation safety including effects on aerodromes
- local and national security issues relating to energy transmission infrastructure

Socio-economics, recreation and tourism

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- the extent to which the proposed development would result in any socio-economic benefits in terms of the national, regional and local economy
- the effects on local businesses
- assessment of and effects of the proposed development on public rights of way and other recreational routes
- effects on tourism and recreation

Transport and traffic

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- effects on the operation of, the condition of, and management of the local and strategic highway network, local access arrangements and the public rights of way network during construction and operation

- effects on highway safety for all types of vehicles, public transport, and non-motorised users (pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders) during construction and operation

Water environment

Including (but not limited to) issues relating to:

- compliance with the Water Framework Directive
- surface water drainage and its future management
- effects on water resources including quality
- effects on main rivers, ordinary watercourses and drainage systems, including temporary bridging proposals
- de-watering, abstraction and discharge proposals and the associated licensing
- the application of the sequential test and exceptions test, resilience of the development to flood risk and effects on flood risk elsewhere

Common to all the above principal issues:

- data sources, methodology and assumptions behind the Environmental Impact Assessment
- proposals and security for mitigation and monitoring

Draft examination timetable

The Examining Authority (ExA) is under a duty to **complete** the examination of the application by the end of the period of 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.	<p>Procedural deadline A</p> <p>Deadline for receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responses to the Rule 6 letter including any written submissions on the examination procedure and about this draft examination timetable the applicant is to set out its approach to errata including its approach to updating the ES and other application documents as may be necessary requests to be heard orally at the preliminary meeting on Tuesday 10 February 2026, including the agenda items you wish to speak on and the matters you will address (and why these points need to be made orally rather in writing) requests to participate in any of the open floor hearings from Tuesday 10 February to Thursday 12 February 2026 (annex E of this letter) requests to participate in the compulsory acquisition hearing on Wednesday 11 February (annex E) requests to participate in issue specific hearing 1 on Friday 13 February (annex E) 	Tuesday 27 January 2026
2.	<p>Preliminary meeting (Suffolk)</p> <p>Venue: Ipswich Town Football Club</p>	Tuesday 10 February 2026 at 10:00
3.	<p>Open Floor Hearing 1 (Suffolk)</p> <p>Venue: Ipswich Town Football Club</p>	Tuesday 10 February 2026 at 16:00

4.	Continuation of Open Floor Hearing 1 (Suffolk) Venue: Ipswich Town Football Club	Wednesday 11 February 2026 at 10:00
5.	Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 (Suffolk) Venue: Ipswich Town Football Club	Wednesday 11 February 2026 at 14:00
6.	Open Floor Hearing 2 (Essex) Venue: Orsett Hall	Thursday 12 February 2026 at 10:00
7.	Open Floor Hearing 3 (Norfolk) Venue: The Space, Norwich	Thursday 12 February 2026 at 11:00
8.	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (Essex) Relating to the scope of development and alternatives Venue: Orsett Hall	Friday 13 February 2026 at 10:00
9.	Issue by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the examination timetable 	As soon as practicable after the close of the Preliminary Meeting
10.	Deadline 1 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> notification by statutory parties of their wish to be considered as an interested party by the ExA comments on relevant representations written representations (with summaries for any that exceed 1500 words) local impact reports from any local authorities written summaries of oral submissions made at hearings held during week commencing 9 February 2026 initial and updated statements of common ground and overview document (annex F) initial report on interrelationship with other infrastructure projects (annex F) suggested locations for site inspections (accompanied or unaccompanied), including justification for consideration by the ExA and 	Thursday 26 February 2026

	<p>specifying whether the locations require access to private land (annex F)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notification of wish to speak at an Open Floor Hearing (annex F) • notification of wish to speak at a Compulsory Acquisition Hearing (annex F) • comments on any further information/ additional submissions accepted by the ExA • submission of policy compliance tracker document, if required, in regard to any relevant developing/ emerging National Policy Statements (NPS), new policy intentions related to critical infrastructure; National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and National Development Management Policies (NDMP) (annex F) • any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	
11.	<p>Deadline 2</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on written representations • comments on the local impact reports • the applicant's draft itinerary for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) • the applicant's updated documents and application guide (annex F) • comments on any further information or submissions received by deadline 1 • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	Thursday 12 March 2026
12.	<p>Publication by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ExA's first written questions (ExQ1) 	Friday 20 March 2026
13.	<p>Deadline 3</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses to ExQ1 • comments on the applicant's draft itinerary for the ASI 	Tuesday 7 April 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requests by IPs to be heard at any further open floor hearings • notification of a wish to attend issue specific hearings and compulsory acquisition hearing on the week commencing 27 April 2026 • notification of a wish to attend the accompanied site inspection (if required) week commencing 27 April 2026 • the applicant's updated documents and application guide (annex F) • comments on any further information or submissions received by deadline 2 • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	
14.	Dates reserved for hearings and accompanied site inspection (if required)	Week commencing 27 April 2026
15.	Deadline 4 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written post-hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings week commencing 27 April 2026 • Applicant's mid-examination update to statements of common ground • Mid-examination update to report on interrelationship with other infrastructure projects • the applicant's updated documents and application guide (annex F) • updated tracking documents, if required, in regard to any relevant developing/emerging NPSs, new policy intentions related to critical infrastructure, NPPF and NDMP (annex F) • comments on any further information or submissions received by deadline 3 • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	Tuesday 12 May 2026
16.	Publication by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ExA's second written questions (ExQ2) 	Friday 22 May 2026

17.	<p>Deadline 5</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses to ExQ2 • the applicant's updated documents and application guide (annex F) • notification of a wish to attend the ISHs and CAH on the week commencing 22 June 2026 (if required) • comments on any further information or submissions received by deadline 4 • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	Tuesday 9 June 2026
18.	<p>Dates reserved for hearings (if required)</p>	Week commencing 22 June 2026
19.	<p>Deadline 6</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written post-hearing submissions including written summaries of oral cases made at hearings week commencing 22 June 2026 • the applicant's updated documents and application guide (annex F) • comments on any further information or submissions received by deadline 5 • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	Tuesday 7 July 2026
20.	<p>Publication by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the report on the implications for European sites (RIES) and any associated questions (if required) • ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the draft development consent order (if required) 	Tuesday 7 July 2026
21.	<p>Deadline 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on the RIES and responses to any associated questions (if provided) • comments on the ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the draft development consent order (if provided) • comments on any further information/ submissions received by Deadline 6 	Tuesday 28 July 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 <p>Final updated documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> signed statements of common ground report on interrelationship with other infrastructure projects draft development consent order to be submitted by the applicant in the statutory instrument (SI) template with the SI template validation report book of reference land rights tracker signed and dated other agreements Environmental Statement and other documents including management plans/ control documents Habitats Regulations Assessment, and appropriate assessment/ derogation case (if required) policy compliance documents, if required, in regard to any relevant developing/ emerging NPSs, NPPF and NDMP (annex F) 	
22.	<p>Deadline 8</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> comments on any further information received by deadline 7 applicant's closing statement with a summary of areas of disagreement final application guide to include hyperlinks to all relevant and the most up-to-date examination library references closing statements from interested parties with a summary of matters that they have previously raised during the examination which have not been resolved to their satisfaction (if desired) any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	Thursday 6 August 2026
23.	<p>Close of examination</p> <p>The ExA intends to close the examination on this date. See 'Note about the close of examination date'.</p>	Monday 10 August 2026

Note about the close of examination date

The ExA is under a duty to complete the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting. The ExA may however decide to close the examination earlier if it considers that the application and relevant matters have been examined adequately.

Submission times for deadlines

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is 23:59 on the relevant deadline date, unless instructed otherwise by the ExA.

Notification of initial hearings

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

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Tuesday 10 February 2026	Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) Suffolk	<p>Registration and seating available at venue from: 15:00</p> <p>Virtual registration process from: 15:00</p> <p>Hearing starts: 16:00</p>	<p>Sir Bobby Robson Suite at Ipswich Town Football Club</p> <p>Portman Rd</p> <p>Ipswich</p> <p>IP1 2DA</p> <p>and</p> <p>By virtual means using Microsoft Teams</p> <p>Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered</p>
Wednesday 11 February 2026	Continuation of OFH1 Suffolk	<p>Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:00</p> <p>Virtual registration process from: 09:00</p> <p>Hearing starts: 10:00</p>	<p>Sir Bobby Robson Suite at Ipswich Town Football Club</p> <p>Portman Rd</p> <p>Ipswich</p> <p>IP1 2DA</p> <p>and</p> <p>By virtual means using Microsoft Teams</p> <p>Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered</p>

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Wednesday 11 February 2026	Compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH1) on the applicant's strategic case	<p>Registration and seating available at venue from: 13:00</p> <p>Virtual registration process from: 13:00</p> <p>Hearing starts: 14:00</p>	<p>Sir Bobby Robson Suite at Ipswich Town Football Club Portman Rd Ipswich IP1 2DA 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</p>
Thursday 12 February 2026	Open floor hearing 2 (OFH2) (Essex)	<p>Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:00</p> <p>Virtual registration process from: 09:00</p> <p>Hearing starts: 10:00</p>	<p>The Gold Room Orsett Hall Prince Charles Avenue Orsett Essex RM16 3HS 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</p>

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Thursday 12 February 2026	Open floor hearing 3 (OFH3) (Norfolk)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 10:00 Virtual registration process from: 10:00 Hearing starts: 11:00	The Auditorium The Space Roundtree Way Norwich NR7 8SQ 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 13 February 2026	Issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) on the scope of development and alternatives	Registration and seating available at venue from: 09:00 Virtual registration process from: 09:00 Hearing starts: 10:00	The Gold Room Orsett Hall Prince Charles Avenue Orsett Essex RM16 3HS 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 27 January 2026 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 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 27 January 2026** 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 **27 January 2026**.

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 and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- **OFHs:** state your preferred session and location (see note below) and whether you wish to attend in-person or virtually. 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
- **CAH1 and ISH1:** confirmation of your wish to participate, the agenda item(s) on which you wish to speak, and confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person at either hearing (see note below regarding strategic nature of these hearings which are not site specific)
- the [Examination Library](#) reference number of any documents you wish to refer to (with paragraph/ page number where appropriate)

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A (27 January 2026)**.

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.

Open floor hearings

Given the scale of the proposed development which affects an extensive geographical area, and the high level of interest in the project, timings will be limited. IPs wishing to speak at an OFH will be allocated a location, date and time slot following their registration to participate. Whilst your preferred slot cannot be guaranteed we will do our best to take this into account when producing the agendas. Once the slots for each session are full no more IPs can be admitted. 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.

Participants are not obliged to attend the OFH which is in their home county if another date would suit them better.

There is a OFH hearing timetabled in each county:

- **OFH1** Suffolk (Ipswich): Tuesday 10 February from 16:00 and Wednesday 11 February from 10:00
- **OFH2** Essex (Orsett): Thursday 12 February from 10:00
- **OFH3** Norfolk (Norwich): Thursday 12 February from 11:00

It should be noted that OFH2 and OFH3 will take place concurrently, albeit at slightly staggered times, on the same day.

The ExA will split into a panel of two and three for these sessions, with each panel accompanied by a case team. Each concurrent hearing will be live streamed and recorded in the usual way.

Oral submissions should not simply repeat matters previously covered in the relevant representations, but 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 from each speaker following the OFH.

The applicant should attend each session, however given that there will be restricted time available they will not be expected to respond orally to comments nor answer any questions. Any responses can be provided in writing.

As with all examination events, OFHs are subject to the powers of control of the ExA, as set out in the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) and supporting legislation. Participants must register in advance by the deadline shown in the examination timetable and in accordance with the instructions.

Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 (CAH1)

CAH1 on **Wednesday 11 February** will be a half day session only, and is intended to be a high-level hearing on the applicant's strategic case related to the compulsory

acquisition process and over-arching issues in which the ExA will seek updates from (and direct questions to) the applicant only. There will be no discussion relating to specific plots nor objections raised by APs in relevant representations. The ExA will deal with more site-specific questions and objections relating to compulsory acquisition/ temporary possession and land rights matters through written questions and a further CAH later in the examination timetable.

If the ExA wishes any APs to specifically attend CAH1, they will be listed in the forthcoming agenda.

Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1)

ISH1 on **Friday 13 February** will be a half-day session only, and is intended to be a high-level hearing in which the ExA will seek updates from (and direct questions to) the applicant only. The hearing will relate to matters of scope and principle of the proposed development, alternatives, need and other overarching matters such as the interrelationship with other nationally significant infrastructure projects.

If the ExA considers it beneficial for any specific IPs to attend ISH1, including relevant local authorities, they will be listed in the forthcoming agenda.

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 CAH1 and ISH1 the ExA will publish a detailed agenda of the matters it wishes 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. Use of artificial intelligence in submissions

The Planning Inspectorate understands the benefits that artificial intelligence (AI) can bring to the planning system when it is used ethically and transparently. To aid the beneficial use of AI in casework evidence, all participants in the examination are directed to [guidance](#) for submitting information that has been generated or altered by AI.

If any party uses AI to create its submission, it is important to let us know if you have used AI in any way. This does not include basic spell-checks or grammar tools.

All parties should specify which AI systems or tools have been used, the source of the information that the AI system has based its content on, and what parts of the submitted information or representation AI has been used to create or alter.

Where you have used AI systems to summarise, substantially rewrite or add commentary to information which goes beyond a simple factual description, this can affect the accuracy and interpretation of the underlying data. In addition to telling us that you have used AI, as with all other information submitted to us, it is your responsibility to ensure that it is fit for purpose, accurate, complete and not misleading.

By following this guidance, you will help the ExA to understand the origin and accuracy of the information submitted, thereby supporting our fair and impartial examination of the application.

If you do not declare the use of AI in any evidence submission where it has been used or remove evidence such as watermarks the ExA reserves the right to reject the submission.

2. Interrelationship with other projects

There are a number of other nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) and other major projects in the region which are either consented, awaiting decision by the Secretary of State, in examination (or pending consideration of planning application) or at pre-application stage.

Environmental Statement (ES) chapter 17 [[APP-281](#)] details the cumulative effects assessment, including inter-project effects with other existing or approved developments and the accompanying appendices 17.2 [[APP-283](#)] and 17.3 [[APP-284](#)] and figure 17.2 [[APP-286](#)] detail a range of other developments considered in the assessment. These include the following NSIPs:

- Hornsea Project Three Offshore Wind Farm
- Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension Projects
- Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm
- North Falls Offshore Wind Farm
- Bramford to Twinstead
- Lower Thames Crossing
- Longfield Solar Farm
- Tilbury 2
- Thurrock Flexible Generation Plant
- Rivenhall Integrated Waste Management Facility and Energy Centre

There are also a number of major planning applications included in the cumulative effects assessment, many of which are Tier 1 projects and may interact with the order limits of the proposed development.

The ExA is aware that a number of these projects have progressed since the ES was produced, including a decision by the Secretary of State on the Five Estuaries Wind Farm. The Tarchon Interconnector Project is an emerging project now listed on the Planning Inspectorate's national infrastructure project website. A number of consented projects have progressed towards or through their construction phase. The ExA therefore requests that the applicant submits a standalone report on the interrelationship with other infrastructure projects, where the progress of the other projects and how they interrelate with the proposed development is set out in a simplified summary form (with cross references to the more detailed information in the ES).

The initial version of the report shall be submitted at **deadline 1 (Thursday 26 February 2026)** and updated at regular intervals as set out in the draft timetable. The report should include:

- plan(s) showing the order limits of the proposed development and the nearest order limits of the other listed NSIPs clearly marked with their project title and reference
- a summary of the other projects identified above and in the short list, including updates to expected timings for their submission/ decision, construction phasing and expected start of operation
- the approach taken by the applicant to coordinate the proposed development with the other projects, including a summary log of discussions with the developers of the projects both pre-application/ pre-examination and as progressed during the examination
- a summary of key survey data shared with other project developers
- details of mitigation measures shared with other projects and how they are to be secured
- details of where the proposed development may affect or interact with any mitigation or enhancement measures that have been proposed by, or secured through, other projects
- details of how good design has been considered alongside other infrastructure projects

- a summary of other projects (both NSIPs and major planning applications/ consents) which are reliant on the construction of the proposed development for grid connection
- a summary of any provisions within the draft development consent order for the proposed development which include reference to other NSIPs, and within consented development consent orders for the other listed NSIPs which include reference to the Norwich to Tilbury project
- a summary of any changes to the ES necessary as a result of the progress of other projects
- a summary of any matters agreed with other project developers, any outstanding matters, and the next steps, signposting to relevant statements of common ground (SoCG).

3. Statements of common ground

A number of SoCG between the applicant and certain consultees have been submitted with the application. These are summarised in the overview document [[APP-088](#)].

The ExA notes from table 1.2 of the document that a number of SoCGs are awaited further to ongoing engagement or the consultee requesting sight of the submitted application before confirming their position.

Table 1.3 of the document indicates a number of consultees where SoCGs are not currently proposed. The applicant is requested to provide an update to table 1.3, particularly where the justification indicates that no response had been received to outreach or statutory consultation.

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter establishes **deadline 1 (Thursday 26 February 2026)** for submission of the additional SoCGs listed in table 1.2 [[APP-088](#)], together with an update to table 1.3.

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 interested parties (IPs) and submitted **by the applicant**.

All of the SoCGs listed in tables 1.1 and 1.2 [[APP-088](#)] should cover the articles and requirements in the draft Development Consent Order (DCO). Any IP seeking that an article, requirement or protective provision is reworded should provide the form of words which are being sought.

Where a particular SoCG cannot be agreed between the parties by **deadline 4 (12 May 2026)**, or if any local authority position needs to be signed off at a higher level, draft versions of that SoCG are requested to be submitted **by the**

applicant at that deadline. The draft examination timetable makes provision for final versions by **deadline 7 (Tuesday 28 July 2026)**. The ExA can only fully take into account SoCGs which have been signed and dated by both parties.

The content of SoCGs will help to inform the ExA about the need to hold any issue specific hearings (ISH) during the examination, and to enable the ExA and the applicant to give notice of such hearings in advance of them taking place.

4. Compulsory acquisition and land rights

To help inform your decision about whether to register to participate, the first compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH1) will focus on the applicant's strategic case in relation to compulsory acquisition and temporary possession. Affected persons (APs) with a specific objection are invited to register a request to be heard at a future CAH.

The ExA notes the applicant's submission of a Land Rights Tracker (LRT) to capture all land rights in a simple table. The LRT submitted to date would be helpfully improved with the addition of the following columns:

- 'objection status': showing either 'yes', 'no' or 'withdrawn'
- 'objection withdrawn date': showing date of withdrawal of objection
- 'category of interest': Category 2 Persons to be included on the main tab rather than a separate tab. This could be achieved by providing a column to identify the interest Cat 1/ Cat 2 etc and therefore have the ability to sort by interest.

The LRT should enable the ExA and Secretary of State to easily interrogate the information and isolate those persons who have objected to the CA or TP of their rights and interests and who maintain that objection.

The applicant should submit this as a readable Excel spreadsheet for use by the ExA and a separate PDF for publication to the website each time it is submitted. The LRT should be updated at each deadline or if no changes have been made confirmation provided that no changes have been made.

A final version of the LRT should be provided at **deadline 7 (Tuesday 28 July 2026)**.

5. Accompanied site inspection

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter includes a date reserved for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) for week commencing **27 April 2026**.

The ExA requests that IPs submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **deadline 1 (Thursday 26 February 2026)**. 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

Interested parties 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 2 (Thursday 12 March 2026)**. 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 **deadline 1 (Thursday 26 February 2026)**

Comments by interested parties on the applicant's draft itinerary must be submitted by **deadline 3 (Tuesday 7 April 2026)**.

The order limits for the Norwich to Tilbury Project are extensive in length and area. There is unlikely to be sufficient time in the examination for the ExA to visit all sites which are suggested. The ExA has already viewed a large proportion of the application site and its surroundings from public land on the first and second unaccompanied site inspections (USI1 and USI2 [[EV1-001 to EV1-010](#) inclusive]). All parties are invited to view the notes of the USIs before making suggestions for an ASI location.

The ExA will then consider each suggested site location which has not already been visited and decide whether it would assist the examination of the application to visit that location.

The ExA will also determine if it could be viewed unaccompanied from public land, on an access required basis, or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis.

The ExA will publish its final itinerary at least 5 working days before the date of the ASI.

6. Comments on relevant representations

A large volume of relevant representations (RRs) have been received. The ExA has made the procedural decision that when the applicant provides comments on the RRs at **deadline 1 (Thursday 27 February 2026)** it should provide the following:

- specify the name of the party making each RR and the examination library reference
- where similar comments have been received by a number of IPs they can be grouped together, however all names and examination library references should still be given
- where representations have been made by APs who are listed in the book of reference [\[AS-018\]](#), this should be specified, and cross referenced to the land rights tracker
- representations made by statutory consultees should be listed separately or highlighted so that they are easily identifiable
- where a detailed or tabular RR has been submitted, responses should be presented in a comparable manner

7. 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 (Thursday 27 February 2026)**. 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.

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.

8. Notification by statutory parties, or certain local authorities of their wish to be considered as an interested party

In order to facilitate a timely start to the examination, the ExA has made the procedural decision that statutory parties including local authorities and parish councils 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 (Thursday 27 February 2026)**.

9. Requests for an Open Floor Hearing

IPs who wish to be heard at a future open floor hearing (OFH) should submit their request in writing to the Inspectorate by **deadline 1 (Thursday 27 February 2026)**. If the ExA decides to hold a further OFH adequate notice to all parties will be provided in line with Rule 13 of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (EPR).

10. Requests for a Compulsory Acquisition Hearing

Affected persons who wish to be heard at a future CAH should make their requests to the Inspectorate by **deadline 1 (Thursday 27 February 2026)**. The ExA may choose to hold a CAH even if it receives no requests. If the ExA

decides to hold one or more CAH then it will give adequate notice to all parties, in line with Rule 13 of the EPR.

11. Request for regular updated documents throughout the examination

The ExA requests that at each deadline, updated documents are submitted by the applicant as necessary and as noted in the examination timetable together with an updated application guide.

The final version of the application guide must be submitted at the final deadline, **deadline 8 (Thursday 6 August 2026)**, after the submission of all final documents at **deadline 7 (Tuesday 28 July 2026)**. The guide shall include hyperlinks to all relevant and the most up-to-date examination library references.

12. Draft Development Consent Order (DCO)

Where the applicant submits an amended draft DCO at any deadline, the submission should include a new version number identifying that the submitted draft DCO is an amended version. Amended draft DCOs submitted by the applicant must be in clean and track change versions and accompanied by:

- versions submitted in Microsoft Word. The version submitted at **deadline 7 (Tuesday 28 July 2026)** must have been validated against the Statutory Instrument template
- an amended Explanatory Memorandum
- a consolidated schedule of changes listing all changes to the draft DCO since the application version, when (including the version number) and for what purpose each change was introduced.

13. Policy Compliance Document Tracker

The submitted application documentation [[APP-086](#)] includes a policy compliance document which refers to the existing NPSs and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a range of local development plan policies.

The November 2023 versions of the NPS are those which are designated for this application. The energy suite of NPS were recently updated. The transition provisions set out in section 1.6 of NPS EN-1 (December 2025) apply to the application as it was accepted prior to publication of the revised policy. The updated NPS are capable of being important and relevant considerations in the decision-making process and can be referred to during the examination where relevant.

The ExA requests the applicant to provide:

- a NPS tracker, which sets out the changes/ modifications to any relevant updated NPS
- a tracker related to any other any new government policy intentions for energy and critical energy infrastructure that are not addressed within the NPS
- updates in regard to the draft NPPF (published December 2025), as it considers them to be relevant to its proposed NSIP, as it progresses through consultation towards formal publication

In addition to the above the ExA requests the applicant also provides a tracker on any National Development Management Policies (NDMP) and development plan documents published for consultation or adopted, as the applicant considers them to be relevant to the proposed development, as such they progress through consultation towards formal publication.

These trackers should be provided at **deadlines 1, 4 and 7**, unless there is nothing of relevance to provide in relation to such documents or updates on such documents, or should be provided sooner if a policy of particular relevance has been issued by the government. Where there is nothing of relevance, the ExA requests the applicant to confirm no update is being provided in a covering letter stating why it does not consider it necessary to submit such documents.

14. Approach to errata

The ExA requests the applicant to set out its approach to errata noted during the course of the examination, including its approach to updating the ES and other application documents. This should be submitted at **procedural deadline A (27 January 2026)**.

15. Additional submissions

From the applicant:

Following the acceptance of the application the applicant submitted a number of documents in response to the Planning Inspectorate's Section 51 advice [[PD-001](#)]. The ExA accepted these documents ([\[AS-001\]](#) to [\[AS-020\]](#) (inclusive)) as additional submissions on 14 October 2025.

The ExA accepted an Enhanced Land Rights Tracker [\[AS-021\]](#) and cover letter [\[AS-022\]](#) as additional submissions on 30 October 2025.

On 20 November 2025 the applicant submitted a covering letter [\[AS-023\]](#) and the following updated documents:

- guide to the application [\[AS-024\]](#) (Clean) and [\[AS-025\]](#) (Tracked)
- Ecology and Biodiversity chapter and appendices to the ES [\[AS-026\]](#) to [\[AS-045\]](#) (inclusive)
- outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan and appendix E, in clean and tracked versions, [\[AS-046\]](#) to [\[AS-048\]](#) (inclusive)

The ExA accepted these documents as additional submissions on 24 November 2025.

Notifications of the Applicant's intention to submit two change requests were submitted on 12 December 2025:

- notification of proposed change to DCO application 1 (Bulphan) [[AS-049](#)]
- notification of proposed change to DCO application 2 (Little Bromley) [[AS-050](#)]

A Procedural Decision was made by the ExA on 24 December 2025 to accept both documents as additional submissions. The ExA stress they are notifications only of the applicant's intention to submit two change requests. It does not mean the proposed changes to the application have been formally accepted by the ExA, as no formal submission of any change request has been received from the applicant. This is set out in the ExA's response dated 19 December 2025 [[PD-008](#)]. The applicant submitted its response to that letter [[AS-051](#)], along with a revised statement of reasons [[AS-052](#)] on 24 December 2025. The ExA also accepted these as additional submissions.

From interested parties:

In addition to the above, the ExA has also made a procedural decision [[PD-005](#) to [PD-007](#) inclusive] to accept additional submissions from Birketts LLP on behalf of its clients ([[AS-053](#)] to [[AS-060](#)] inclusive):

- Olive Godbold, Stephen Andrew Baker and Diana Joy Johnson
- Thornbush Energy Limited
- Trustees of the Godbold Discretionary Settlement Trust
- The Executors of the Estate of Herbert Earthy Godbold)
- H&O Godbold Partnership

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 'Get Updates' button on the [project webpage](#).

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

The Examination Library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [Examination Library](#) which is accessible by clicking the blue button under the [documents tab](#). There is a separate document for the [relevant representations](#). The examination library is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The examination library 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.