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

Our Ref: TR050008

Date: 24 August 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

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

**Application by Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited for an order granting
development consent for the Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange**

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

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the lead member of the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an examination of the above application I am writing to introduce myself and the other members of the ExA. My name is Adrian Hunter and the other members of the ExA are Alex Oyebade and Guy Rigby. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed on the [documents](#) page on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)).

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

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 29 September 2026	Registration and seating available at venue from: 9.30am Virtual registration process from: 9.30am Preliminary meeting starts: 10.00am	Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 1TE 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

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by Tuesday 15 September 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 **Tuesday 15 September 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 **Tuesday 15 September 2026**.

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 don't like about the application. The merits or disadvantages of the application will only be considered once the examination starts, which is after the preliminary meeting has closed. All relevant and important matters will be taken into account when we make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, 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 received. The initial assessment of principal issues is set out in **annex C** to this letter.

Written submissions about how the application should be examined

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

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

1. consider changes need to be made to the draft examination timetable set out at **annex D** to this letter
2. wish to comment about the arrangements for future examination hearings

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application is to be examined by **procedural deadline A** (Tuesday 15 September 2026) (see **annex D** to this letter).

We request that all submissions are made using the ['Have your say' page](#) on the project webpage on or before **procedural deadline A** (Tuesday 15 September 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 in writing on or before **Tuesday 15 September 2026** (see **procedural deadline A**).

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

- name and unique reference number (found at the top of your letter or email from the Planning Inspectorate)
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- for blended events, 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

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

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

Format of examination events – preliminary meeting and hearings

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented, where necessary, by various types of hearings. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

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

We are providing formal notification that the **preliminary meeting will be a blended event and that the issue specific hearings (ISH1 and ISH2) and compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH1), referred to in annex E to this letter, will also be blended events.**

After the preliminary meeting

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

Notification of initial hearings

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

- Issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) on Tuesday 29 September 2026 at 2.00pm (Blended event)
- Issue specific hearing 2 (ISH2) on Wednesday 30 September 2026 at 10.00am (Blended event)
- Compulsory acquisition hearing 1 (CAH1) on Thursday 1 October 2026 at 10.00am (Blended event)

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. These hearing will be held at Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 1TE.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

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

- Use of artificial intelligence in submissions
- Local impact reports
- Statements of common ground
- Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations
- Document updates during the examination
- Additional submissions
- Comments on relevant representations

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 PA2008. They should inform them that information about how to do this can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's advice for members of the public: [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process](#). The examination timetable includes various deadlines for the submission of an updated book of reference and schedule of changes to the book of reference, which should include confirmation that relevant persons have been informed of their rights under section 102A.

Managing examination correspondence

Given the volume and frequency of letters the Planning Inspectorate needs to send to interested parties during an examination, we aim to communicate with people by email as electronic communication is more environmentally friendly and cost effective for the taxpayer.

If you have received a letter but are able to receive communications by email, please inform the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter as soon as possible.

As the examination process makes substantial use of electronic documents, it will be useful for you to become familiar with the [project webpage](#).

A '[Have your say](#)' page is available on the website which provides a portal through which parties should make written submissions at relevant deadlines during the examination. Further information about the '[Have your say](#)' page is provided at **annex 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.

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

Adrian Hunter

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.

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



Agenda for the preliminary meeting

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by **15 September 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 **15 September 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 **15 September 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 29 September 2026**

Registration process: **9.30am**

Meeting start time: **10.00am**

Venue: **Blended event at Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 1TE 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	
9.30am	Registration and seating available at venue for in-person attendees
9.30am	Virtual registration process Please arrive at 9.30am to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the virtual meeting by the Case Team, greeted and given further instructions. The registration process will commence at 9.30am. 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.
10.00am	Preliminary meeting
Item 1	The preliminary meeting will formally open at 10.00am . The Examining Authority will join, welcome participants and lead introductions.
Item 2	The Examining Authority's remarks about the examination process
Item 3	Initial assessment of principal issues – annex C to Rule 6 Letter
Item 4	Applicant's proposed changes to the application
Item 5	Draft examination timetable – annex D to Rule 6 Letter
Item 6	Procedural decisions taken by the Examining Authority – annex F to Rule 6 Letter
Item 7	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 include** the following information and be made on the [event participation form](#):

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from the Planning Inspectorate)
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- For blended events, 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

Introduction to the preliminary meeting

Background

The preliminary meeting (PM) will be a blended event with some participants attending in person and others 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 to ensure that the time available for participants to speak is maximised.

The Examining Authority and the Case Team

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

At the venue, the ExA will be supported by the Planning Inspectorate Case Team, who will be available to answer any questions when you arrive. For those joining virtually, 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:

OxfordshireSRFI@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 Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange, 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 Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited, which will be referred to as 'the applicant'.

You will find information about the application and, in due course, documents produced for the examination on the project webpage of the Find National Infrastructure Project website ([project page](#)). 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 page](#) 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. You can also sign up to receive email [updates](#) on the project as the examination progresses.

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 is your opportunity to influence the process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached to this Rule 6 Letter at **annex A**. It will be helpful 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, 22 and 26 because it includes a construction of, and alteration of a highway, and a rail freight interchange. The designated National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN), dated March 2024, applies to this examination and to decision-making relating to this application.

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

The SoS is entitled to disregard any representations that relate to the merits of the designated National Policy Statement (NPS). As such, the ExA will not spend time examining representations that challenge policy set out NPSNN, or the validity of NPSNN itself. The focus will be on the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development, tested to the appropriate extent using the tests set out in NPSNN.

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 NPSNN, then the NPSNN will take precedence.

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

- the positions and representations of all interested parties (IP)
- any local impact report (LIR) prepared and provided by relevant local authorities
- other prescribed matters
- any other matters that appear to be both relevant and important to the relevant SoS’s decision

Preliminary meeting invitees

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

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

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

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

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

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

- British Horse Society

Conduct of the preliminary meeting

The ExA estimates that the PM will be complete by 1.00pm.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. If necessary, there will be a mid-morning break at a convenient point in the agenda.

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 by the ExA 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 at least 6 weeks 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 (**annex A**). For virtual attendees, if you prefer not to have your image recorded, you can switch off your camera at any point.

The examination process

The examination of NSIPs follows different processes from those, for example, of a public inquiry into a planning appeal following the refusal of planning permission. The main differences are that the examination of NSIPs 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 are strongly encouraged to submit a LIR. 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 (WR) and comment on WRs made by other parties
- IPs can respond to the ExA's written questions (ExQs) and comment on responses to these written questions provided by others
- IPs may be asked to contribute to the making of statements of common ground (SoCG) if it appears that there are matters on which they and the

applicant agree, 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

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

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

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

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

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

Hearings

The draft examination timetable includes provision for hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties.

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

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

The applicant's draft DCO provides for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights, and the temporary possession of land. APs (meaning those whose land or rights over land are affected) have a right to request and be heard at a **compulsory acquisition hearing** (CAH). If one or more APs request to be heard, then a CAH must be held. Provisional dates for CAHs are included in the draft examination timetable along with deadlines by which requests to be heard must be submitted.

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

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

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

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

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

The draft examination timetable includes an opportunity at deadline 1 (**13 October 2026**) for participants to notify the ExA that they wish to speak at an OFH or a CAH.

Site inspections

The ExA has already carried out an initial unaccompanied site inspection (USI) on 20 and 21 July 2026 [EV1-001]. As part of the examination process the ExA may undertake further site inspections. These can be either unaccompanied or accompanied.

The purpose of these is for the ExA to see features of the proposals within the context of the evidence put forward. Notes of all USI are published on the [project page](#).

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. The purpose of ASIs is familiarisation only and no discussion of the merits of the proposed development will be entertained during an ASI.

The ExA may decide to hold USIs of relevant nominated locations, supported by the submission of additional written, photographic, video or even drone material if this would be preferable to not visiting sites or holding ASIs in circumstances which could make them difficult and unduly time-consuming to conduct (for example if access would require specific health and safety considerations). The ExA may also consider whether it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of a USI on an access required basis (ARSI)

The draft examination timetable includes at procedural deadline A (**15 September 2026**) an opportunity for IPs to make submissions suggesting sites and locations that the ExA should visit. These will be used to inform further USIs/ ARSIs as well as possible ASIs.

Initial assessment of principal issues

This is the initial assessment of principal issues 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 Transport after the examination has concluded.

The policy and consenting requirements and documents associated with the PA2008 are an integral part of the examination and are therefore not listed as principal issues. It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equality duties are not listed as principal issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind.

Regarding national policy, the following National Policy Statement (NPS) has effect, and the issues contained within it will be an integral part of the examination:

- National Policy Statement National Networks (NPSNN)

Whilst matters relating to compulsory acquisition and the draft Development Consent Order are not listed as principal issues, they will form an integral part of the examination.

Consideration will be given to all relevant matters during the construction, operation and decommissioning activities associated with the proposed development, and cumulatively with other plans and projects, as necessary.

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

Topic	Summary of principal issue
Need, location and delivery	• Whether there is an identified need for the proposed development, in terms of its size and scale, its proximity to the markets to be served and the presence of nearby proposed logistics development • Whether the location of the site is acceptable, having regard to the suitability of the Chiltern Main Line (CML) to accommodate the proposed development, and any effects upon existing and future passenger rail services on the CML, including the potential delivery of Ardley Station • Overall strategy and construction sequence for the proposed development, including timings for the delivery of Ardley Bypass, Middleton Stoney Relief Road and a fully operational rail connection • Whether good design has been considered in all elements of the proposed development
Landscape and visual (including lighting)	• Effects on landscape character, including effects on hedgerows and trees • Visual effects, including from PRow and residential receptors • The applicant's approach to mitigation, in particular the use of landscape bunds • Night time effects and whether sufficient information has been provided in the lighting strategy [APP-256] to determine that there would be no adverse effects.
Heritage	• Effects on the setting of designated heritage assets, in particular the Threshing Barn at Ashgrove Farm and Upper Heyford Conservation Area.
Ecology and biodiversity	• Whether sufficient information has been provided in the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan [APP-189], the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment [AS-072] and the draft Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan [AS-075] to determine that the proposed development would have an acceptable effect having specific regard to SSSI, ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, habitat provisions, Biodiversity Net Gain and protected species.
Groundwater	• Potential impacts on groundwater levels, private supplies and aquifers due to excavation (possible piled foundations and leachate) and disturbance of existing historic pollutants • Storage of fuel, oil and other chemicals • Monitoring proposals during construction and operation
Soils	• Effects on BMV agricultural land • Effects on soil resource • Approach to soil management as part of the overall earthworks strategy
Minerals and waste	• Potential sterilisation of mineral resources and conflict with the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

	• Impacts associated with the removal of the existing Ashgrove Farm (Biffa) IVC facility • Impacts on continuity of operation of the Ardley ERF and household waste sites
Socioeconomics and Health	• What economic impacts the proposed development would bring locally, regionally and nationally in terms of employment • Whether the proposed development would have social impacts in relation to health, wellbeing and residential amenity
Traffic and Transport	• Effects of operational traffic on both the strategic and local road networks, local access arrangements, road safety and non-motorised users • The applicant's approach towards the mitigation of construction traffic, operational movements, HGV routeing strategy and suitability of proposed sustainable transport initiatives, including measures in the Framework Travel Plan [APP-203] • Cumulative effects and whether these have been adequately assessed/mitigated by the applicant • Consideration of the methods of transporting containers from their origins to their final destinations, including the movement of containers between the rail terminal and individual warehouses

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.	Procedural deadline A Deadline for receipt by the ExA of: - written submissions on the examination procedure and information set out in the rule 6 letter and annexes - requests to be heard orally at the preliminary meeting on 29 September 2026 (am), including on which part of the agenda (see annex A) interested parties wish to be heard - requests to speak at issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) on 29 September 2026 (pm) and/or attend at the venue in person - requests to speak at issue specific hearing 2 (ISH2) on 30 September 2026 and/or attend at the venue in person - requests to speak at compulsory acquisition hearing 1 (CAH1) on 1 October 2026 and/or attend at the venue in person - summaries of all relevant representations (RR) exceeding 1500 words (see annex F) - comments on RR (see annex F) - suggested locations for site inspections (accompanied or unaccompanied) for consideration by the ExA (see annex F) - update from the applicant in relation to any proposed changes to the application	Tuesday 15 September 2026
2.	Preliminary meeting	Tuesday 29 September 2026 10.00am

3.	Issue specific hearing 1 (ISH1) Relating to the principle and scope of proposed development, the need for the proposed development and alternatives considered by the applicant (see annex E)	Tuesday 29 September 2026 2.00pm
4.	Issue specific hearing 2 (ISH2) Relating to matters identified in the IAPI and possible other environmental matters and the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) (see annex E)	Wednesday 30 September 2026 10.00am
5.	Compulsory acquisition hearing 1 (CAH1) Relating to the applicant's overall case for compulsory acquisition and temporary possession (see annex E)	Thursday 1 October 2026 10.00am
6.	Issue by the ExA of: - the examination timetable (Rule 8 letter) - the ExA's first written questions (ExQ1)	As soon as practicable after the preliminary meeting
7.	Deadline 1 For receipt by the ExA of: - comments on RR if not submitted at procedural deadline A - summaries of all RR exceeding 1500 words if not provided at procedural deadline A - written representations (WR) and summaries of any WR which exceed 1500 words - local impact reports (LIR) from local authorities (see annex F) - drafts of any DCO obligations - statements of commonality of SoCG (see annex F) - applicant's revised dDCO, schedule of changes and updated Explanatory Memorandum - applicant's updated land and rights negotiations tracker - any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 1 and submissions at hearings - updated guide to the application, if necessary	Tuesday 13 October 2026

	• post hearing submissions, including written summaries of any oral cases heard in ISH1, ISH2, and CAH1 • the applicant's draft itinerary for accompanied site inspection (ASI) • requests by interested parties to be heard at open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) on the date reserved in the examination timetable • requests by affected persons (defined in section 59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at CAH2 on the date reserved in the examination timetable • requests by interested parties to be heard at issue specific hearing 3 (ISH3) on the date reserved in the examination timetable • comments on any further information/ submissions accepted by the ExA • notification by statutory parties of their wish to be considered as an interested party by the ExA • any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	
8.	Deadline 2 For receipt by the ExA of: • comments on WRs • comments on LIRs • responses to ExQ1 • updated statements of commonality of SoCG • comments from affected persons on the applicant's updated land and rights negotiations tracker • comments on applicant's revised dDCO • any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 1 • updated guide to the application, if necessary • comments on the applicant's draft itinerary for the ASI and any requests to attend • comments on any further information/ submissions received by deadline 1	Monday 26 October 2026

	any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	
9.	Dates reserved (if required) for: - Issue specific hearing (ISH3) - Compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH2) - Open floor hearing (OFH1) - ExA's accompanied site inspection (ASI)	Week commencing 9 November 2026
10.	Deadline 3 For receipt by the ExA of: - comments on responses to LIRs - comments on responses to WRs - Comments on responses to ExQ1 - drafts of any DCO obligations - updated statements of commonality of SoCG - applicant's revised dDCO, schedule of changes and revised Explanatory Memorandum - applicant's update land and rights negotiations tracker - any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 2 and submissions at hearings - updated guide to the application, if necessary - post hearing submissions including written summaries of any oral cases heard at hearings and responses to hearing action points - comments on any further information/ submissions received by deadline 2 - any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	Tuesday 24 November 2026
11.	Publication by the ExA of: ExA's second written questions (ExQ2)	Friday 11 December 2026
12.	Deadline 4 For receipt by the ExA of: responses to ExQ2	Tuesday 19 January 2027

	• comments on applicant's revised dDCO • comments from affected persons on the applicant's updated land and rights negotiations tracker • updated statements of commonality of SoCG • any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 3 • comments on any additional information/ submissions received at deadline 3 • requests by interested parties to be heard at hearings that may be held, if required, in the week commencing 1 February • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	
13.	Dates reserved (if required) for: • Issue specific hearings • Compulsory acquisition hearing • Open floor hearing	Week commencing 1 February
14.	Deadline 5 For receipt by the ExA of: • comments on responses to ExQ2 • drafts of any DCO obligations • updated statements of commonality of SoCG • applicant's revised dDCO, schedule of changes and Explanatory Memorandum • applicant's update land and rights negotiations tracker • any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 4 and submissions at hearings • update from the applicant and all Statutory Undertakers on the agreement of protective provisions • post hearing submissions including written summaries of any oral cases heard at hearings and responses to hearing action points, if required • comments on any additional information/ submissions received at deadline 4	Tuesday 16 February 2027

	any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	
15.	Publication by the ExA of: - ExA's third written questions (ExQ3) (if required) - the ExA's commentary on, or schedule of changes to, the draft DCO (if required)	Tuesday 23 February 2027
16.	Deadline 6 For receipt by the ExA of: - responses to ExQ3 (if required) - responses to ExA's schedule of changes to dDCO (if required) - applicant's revised dDCO, schedule of changes and Explanatory Memorandum (if required) - comments from affected persons on the applicant's updated land and rights negotiations tracker - updated statements of commonality of SoCG - any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 5 - comments on any additional submissions received at deadline 5 and accepted by the ExA - any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	Tuesday 9 March 2027
17.	Deadline 7 For receipt by the ExA of: - comments on responses to ExQ3 (if required) - comments on responses to ExA schedule of changes to dDCO (if required) - any other updated documents and statements from the applicant deemed necessary following responses at deadline 6 - comments on any additional information/ submissions received at deadline 6 - any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	Tuesday 16 March 2027

	• applicant's closing statement with summary of areas of disagreement • any interested party closing statements (if desired) regarding matters that they have previously raised during the examination and which have not been resolved to their satisfaction For receipt by the ExA, from the applicant, of final updated documents (in clean and tracked versions), including: • final draft dDCO to be submitted by the applicant in the SI template. Applicant to provide the email notification from https://publishing.legislation.gov.uk/validation confirming the document has successfully passed validation, and the PDF version of the SI validation report obtained from the link in the notification email. The applicant should also provide a clean (all tracking removed) standalone MS Word version of the draft DCO, with no header or cover page • final explanatory memorandum • final position on Protective Provisions • final position on securing other consents • the final updated book of reference (BoR) and schedule of changes to BoR • final land and rights negotiations tracker • final signed SoCG including list of matters not agreed • final statement of commonality of SoCG • any signed and dated planning agreements and obligations (if required) • final management plans and control documents (if required) • final guide to the application	
18.	Deadline 8 For receipt by the ExA of: • any further information requested by the ExA under rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010	Tuesday 23 March 2027
19.	Close of examination The ExA intends to close the examination on this date. See 'Note about the close of examination date'.	Thursday 25 March 2027

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 and on the date specified in the timetable 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.

Publication dates

All information received will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the deadlines for submissions.

Notification of initial hearings

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

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Tuesday 29 September 2026	Issue specific hearing 1 on the principle and scope of proposed development, the need for the proposed development and alternatives considered by the applicant	Registration and seating available at venue from: 1.30pm Virtual registration process from: 1.30pm Hearing starts: 2.00pm	Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 1TE and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Wednesday 30 September 2026	Issue specific hearing 1 (continued) on matters identified in the IAPI, possible other environmental matters, and the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO)	Registration and seating available at venue from: 9.30am Virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 1TE and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Thursday 1 October 2026	Compulsory acquisition hearing 1 on the applicant's overall case for compulsory acquisition and temporary possession	Registration and seating available at venue from: 9.30am Virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 1TE 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 15 September 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 15 September 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 15 September 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 (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- Confirmation of the hearing(s) you wish to participate in, the agenda item(s) on which you wish to speak and/ or brief details of the topic(s) that you would like to raise
- For compulsory acquisition hearings, the plot number(s) of the relevant land provided in the [Book of Reference](#) and the [Land Plan](#).
- The [Examination Library](#) reference number (with paragraph/ page number where appropriate) of any documents you wish to refer to

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

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

Hearing agendas

The indicative high-level agendas for ISH1, ISH2 and CAH1 are set out below to help inform your decision about whether to register to participate.

For issue specific hearings and compulsory acquisition hearings the ExA will publish a detailed draft agenda on the project webpage at least 5 working days in advance of the hearing date. However, the actual agenda on the day of each hearing may be subject to change at the discretion of the ExA. For any open floor hearings an agenda may not be published.

Agenda for issue specific hearing 1	
Item 1	Welcome, introductions and arrangements for the hearing
Item 2	Introduction to the application – explanation of how the proposed development would operate
Item 3	The need case for the proposed development and alternatives considered by the applicant
Item 4	Any other business
Item 5	Close of hearing

Agenda for issue specific hearing 2	
Item 1	Welcome, introductions and arrangements for the hearing
Item 2	Discussion on matters identified in the IAPI and possible other environmental matters
Item 3	The draft Development Consent Order
Item 4	Any other business
Item 5	Close of hearing

Agenda for compulsory acquisition hearing 1	
Item 1	Welcome, introductions and arrangements for the hearing
Item 2	Introduction to CA, the applicant's strategic case and how the proposal meets the tests in the Planning Act 2008
Item 3	Human Rights and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) • Circumstances within which the provisions relating either to human rights or the PSED might be engaged • How the applicant has taken into account the relevant provisions in the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act 2010

Item 4	Land rights tracker update
Item 5	Funding
Item 6	Submissions from Affected Persons on the applicant's strategic case
Item 7	Any other business
Item 8	Close of hearing

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. Local impact reports (LIR)

The ExA requests LIR from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council and welcomes LIR from any other relevant local authorities defined in section 56A of the Planning Act 2008 who may wish to submit one. All LIR are required to be submitted into the examination no later than **deadline 1**.

3. Statements of common ground (SoCG)

In relation to some of the principal issues identified in **annex C** to this letter, the ExA would be assisted by the preparation of SoCG between the applicant and certain interested parties. 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 party or parties and submitted **by the applicant**.

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter establishes **deadline 7** for submission of completed SoCG. SoCG can be submitted earlier in the examination if signed and completed before this deadline.

SoCG are requested to be prepared between the applicant and:

- Cherwell District Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England
- National Highways
- Anglian Water Services
- Thames Water
- Upper Ouse Water Management Limited
- Chiltern Railways
- Dorchester Living
- Valencia Waste Management Limited
- Viridor Limited
- Biffa Waste Services
- Smith & Sons

All the SoCG listed above should cover the articles and requirements in the draft Development Consent Order. Any interested party seeking that an article or requirement is reworded should provide the alternative form of words which are being sought.

At **deadlines 1 to 6**, the ExA requests the applicant prepare and submit a **Statement of Commonality**. This information will help to inform the ExA about the need to hold or the topics to be discussed at any issue specific hearings during the examination. It will also enable the ExA to give as much notice as possible of the agenda for such hearings.

This statement should be in a tabulated form and should:

- list each SoCG being produced and detail the structure of each SoCG
- detail the current status of each SoCG at the relevant deadline
- summarise the status of the key matters using red, amber and green ratings

4. Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations

The draft examination timetable at **annex D** to this letter includes a date reserved for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) during the week commencing **9 November 2026**.

The ExA requests that interested parties submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **procedural deadline A**. The request must include:

- sufficient information to identify the location
- the features 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 an ASI is 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 ExA has already undertaken an unaccompanied site inspection of the surrounding area [EV1-001]. A note of the locations visited by the ExA has been published at the same time as the rule 6 letter.

At the ASI the ExA would specifically wish to see:

- relevant parts of the Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI
- the site of the former Ardley Station
- the former Ardley landfill site
- Ashgrove Cottages/Ashgrove Farm
- the eastern end of the Upper Heyford Airfield to enable views back towards the main site

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

- the above listed locations
- any 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 interested parties submitted by procedural deadline A

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

The ExA will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis. The ExA will also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of an unaccompanied site inspection on an

access required basis. This may be needed for locations where there are specific health and safety requirements for access.

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

5. Document updates during the examination

When submitting updated documents into the examination, the following should be adhered to.

Guide to the application

The ExA requests that the applicant provides, at each deadline, an update to its Guide to the Application [APP-003]. It should list the most up-to-date status of the documents submitted, along with identifying which documents have been superseded in whole or in part. A final version must also be submitted at **deadline 7**. All examination documents submitted should include a version number and date.

Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) and explanatory memorandum

Where the applicant submits an amended dDCO at any deadline, the submission should include a new version number identifying that the submitted dDCO is an amended version.

Amended dDCOs submitted by the applicant must be accompanied by:

- clean and tracked change versions
- a consolidated schedule of changes document listing all changes to the dDCO since the initial application version, when (including the version number) and for what purpose each change was introduced
- an amended explanatory memorandum, in both clean and tracked changed version, to reflect any changes

Land and rights negotiations tracker

The Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker [APP-146] should enable the ExA and SoS to easily interrogate the information and identify those persons who have objected to the compulsory acquisition or temporary possession of their rights and interests and who maintain an objection.

The applicant should therefore update the tracker with this information and submit a duplicate copy of the PDF tracker in a readable Excel spreadsheet format each time it is updated. Updates to the tracker should be clearly identified.

The ExA requests that the updated Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker is submitted into the examination at **procedural deadline A** and then at the relevant deadlines set out in **annex D** to this letter. A final version should be provided at **deadline 7**.

Book of Reference (BoR) and Statement of Reasons (SoR)

Where the applicant submits an amended BoR and/ or SoR, it must be accompanied by:

- clean and tracked change versions
- a 'Schedule of land rights changes' setting out the reasons for the changes included in each update

Updates to management plans and control documents

The ExA expects that the applicant should be having ongoing engagement with relevant parties on the content of these documents so that the drafting of them can be agreed as far as is reasonably possible at an early stage of the examination.

In the event of revised versions of documents such as outline management plans or other control documents being submitted, clean copies and copies showing tracked changes highlighting the changes made to the previous version of the document should be submitted. In instances of changes (other than minor typographical corrections) being made, a summary explanation of the reason for those changes being made should be provided.

6. Additional submissions

In addition to the documentation submitted by **procedural deadline A** the ExA has exercised its discretion and made a procedural decision to accept the following additional submissions:

- late relevant representation by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- late relevant representation by The Garden Trust
- late relevant representation by British Horse Society
- late adequacy of consultation response by West Berkshire Council
- late relevant representation by MOD National Armaments Director Group
- SoCG between applicant and Network Rail by the applicant
- Multiple applicant's responses to section 51 advice following acceptance [AS-001 to AS-086].

7. Comments on relevant representations (RR)

Rule 3(2) of the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 requires written comments on any RRs to be submitted either on the date of the preliminary meeting (PM), or a date specified in the Rule 8 letter, which follows as soon as practicable following the PM, whichever is the later.

To comply, the ExA has included responses to RRs and summaries exceeding 1500 words in the submissions by **deadline 1** (6 October 2026). However, to prepare for the PM and subsequent hearings, the ExA asks for comments on RRs to be submitted by **procedural deadline A** (15 September 2026).

Comments on relevant representations should:

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

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 on the [documents](#) page of the project webpage.

You can also sign up to get [email updates](#).

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

The Examination Library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [Examination Library](#) (EL) which is accessible by clicking the blue link at the top of the [documents](#) page. The EL is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The EL records and provides a hyperlink to:

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

Each document is given a unique reference which will be fixed for the duration of the examination. **Please quote the unique reference number from the EL when referring to any examination documents in any future submissions that you make.**

Information about the 'Have your say' page

The '[Have your say' page](#) is available on the [project webpage](#).

You will need to enter your unique reference number ('Your ref' found at the top of 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.