

# Preliminary Meeting Note

<b>Application:</b>	Equinor
<b>Reference:</b>	EN010109
<b>Time and date:</b>	10 am on Tuesday, 17 January 2023
<b>Venue:</b>	Blackfriars Hall The Halls St Andrew's Plain Norwich NR3 1AU & Microsoft Teams

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

Menaka Sahai, welcomed those present and introduced herself as the lead member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors, the Examining Authority (ExA), Rod Macarthur, Steven Rennie, Jonathan Manning and David Wallis as panel members to examine the Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension projects application. The ExA mentioned the case team and welcomed those present.

The ExA then invited other parties present to introduce themselves.

## 2. Purpose of the Preliminary Meeting

ExA explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) is for all parties to put their views to the ExA about how the application will be examined and noted that the Examination will commence after the PM closes, further information regarding this can be found in the [Advice Note 8.3](#).

The agenda for the meeting was highlighted to be at Annex A of the [Rule 6 Letter](#) of 13 December 2022.

ExA explained the process of blended events and noted that this will be the preferred method of hearings for the Planning Inspectorate.

## 3. General Data Protection Regulation

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

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

## 4. Audio recording

The full audio recording of this Preliminary Meeting is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#).



## 5. Remarks about the Examination process

ExA provided the summary of the Examination process which is explained in the Annex B of the [Rule 6](#) letter.

ExA explained that it has read the application documents in order to understand the proposed development and have undertaken Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) in November 2022 and on 16 January 2023. The [USI notes](#) have been published on the National Infrastructure website.

ExA added that late submissions have been accepted at the discretion of the ExA which are also published and listed in the [Exam library](#) (EL) as Additional Submissions (AS).

ExA explained that the designated Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN1) and the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy infrastructure (NPS EN3) applies to this Examination and to decision-making relating to this application. The Examining Authority will consider the Proposed Development in accordance with the NPS EN1 and EN3 and any other applicable policy or considerations the Examining Authority deems to be important and relevant.

ExA explained that the panel would be examining the application made by Equinor (the Applicant) before making recommendation to the Secretary of State of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy who will then decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

ExA further explained that it had made procedural decisions relating to parties who have been invited to the PM even though they do not fall under any categories of being an Interested party (IP), statutory undertaker or statutory body and this was covered under procedural decisions item of the agenda.

No remarks were made by any other parties under this item.

## 6. Initial Assessment of Principle Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principle Issues (under section 88 (1) of the PA2008), this can be found in Annex C of the [Rule 6](#) letter.

Oulton Parish Council (PC) referenced section 8 of Annex C of the Rule 6 letter and asked for consideration to be paid towards the cumulative effects of the project and other projects in the surrounding area that have been granted consent. In principal issue 1, Oulton PC requested clarification on whether viability of the grid connection would include consideration of an alternative connection point and said that it had urged the applicant for over two years to renegotiate their grid connection before DCO was submitted and requested panel if this can be included in the Examination. Oulton PC also requested to



compel National Grid to attend the hearings and provide explanation in open forum.

ExA advised that it is aware of the points raised and will respond appropriately in due course.

The Ardent management request the ExA to consider under point 7 of the Initial Assessment of principal issues that endeavours to address impact on a volume of endeavours to address impact on the affected parties and reach agreement by negotiation through negotiated settlements.

Norfolk Parishes Movement highlighted that the list does not appear to include any consideration of alternative grid connection sites to which the ExA confirmed that it is aware of the point made and this has been mentioned in other Relevant Representations received. The ExA confirmed that the matter would be considered in Examination.

The applicant made no comments on the Principal Issues list.

## **7. Draft Examination Timetable**

ExA ran through the key Examination dates and invited those in attendance to make comment on the draft Examination Timetable, this information can be found in Annex D of the [Rule 6](#) letter.

ExA provided more information on hearings, written submissions, site inspections and explained about the Report on the implications for European sites (RIES).

Ardent Management asked if there was opportunity in the examination timetable to request another Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) and expressed an interest in discussions on terrestrial ecology and biodiversity in relation to chalk streams and crayfish to which the ExA mentioned that ISH are set by the ExA but noted the point raised.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) explained they would try to meet the deadlines as a host authority and because of other NSIP applications and resources management asked ExA to be mindful that the NCC would not be delaying the responses deliberately.

North Norfolk District Council suggested that the two-week response window to respond to Written Question should be extended to be representative of statutory bodies workload to which ExA responded that they have noted the comments and will consider when timetable is finalised.

The Applicant supported the Natural England's point of publishing the REIS earlier to make comments on the proposed deadline. The Applicant also updated on the Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) list mentioned in the Rule 6 letter and expected most of the parties listed but highlighted that it disagreed to submit the SoCG with Suffolk Council and Norwich City Council (NCC). The Applicant highlighted that NCC has not submitted a Relevant Representation (RR) and it have had a very little engagement with them. The ExA queried whether the NCC



is the host authority to which the Applicant said it considers NCC to be neighbouring authority but would like to double check and come back on this.

The ExA also highlighted to the Applicants comments regarding submitting the SoCG with the statutory undertakers was immature at this point, but ExA reiterated that it would like to have a sight of the matters parties agree and disagree with earlier into the Examination to which the Applicant agreed.

## 8. Procedural Decisions

ExA explained that Annex F of the [Rule 6](#) letter provided the information on the procedural decisions made by the ExA during the Pre-Examination.

ExA then explained that Additional Submissions (AS) accepted at the discretion of the ExA are listed in part 8 of the Annex F of Rule 6 letter. The Applicant also submitted number of documents in response to the s51 advice which are accepted as AS are under references AS-001 to AS-032 of the EL.

ExA informed that it had used its discretion to treat Mulbarton Parish Council as an IP. Due to an error in the e-mail address, the Parish Council may not have received the s56 notification. In consideration of the specific circumstances that have led to Mulbarton Parish Council not receiving the s56 notification, the ExA made this Procedural Decision on 21 December 2022.

The Applicant also informed the ExA that some non-statutory stakeholders were not sent s56 notification. In taking a precautionary approach, and to ensure that relevant stakeholders who may have valuable contributions to make to the Examination are given an opportunity to do so, the ExA on 21 December 2022, made a procedural decision to invite them to the PM. The parties who have been invited are listed in Annex B of the Rule 6 letter.

ExA also informed that the Applicant wishes to submit a change request and invited Applicant to explain the change request. The Applicant explained that the two changes that it wishes to submit and are non-material changes. The first relates to the drainage solution at the onshore substation and in the application, it's explained that two options are being put forward for the discharge of surface water and there has been ongoing consideration and discussion with the local flood authority about those options

The other change is a small matter to do with a hedgerow or technical point whereby in the light of ongoing discussions with NCC in relation to traffic safety, they have pointed out a particular hedgerow that they think is going to need to be the composite or removed, and to reflect that and to facilitate that, we need to make a couple of minor changes to the relevant documentation. The Applicant intend to make these change requests at deadline 2.

The Applicant further explained that there was already an interaction between the scheme and something called the Food Enterprise Park in relation to its phase one existence. That is a phase two under active development and it was notified by the Food Enterprise Park after the application that there is phase two under active development and it is having active ongoing engagement to review



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the implications but re-iterated that it is likely that it will be seeking material change request to allow more flexibility in the corridor of the cables to minimise the conflict with the phase two. This will involve additional land to which ExA queried if there are any additional affected persons because of additional land take to which the Applicant stated that there may not be.

The ExA closed the hearing.