



The Planning
Inspectorate

Preliminary Meeting Note

Application: Longfield Solar Farm Limited

Reference: EN010118

Time and date: 18 July 2022 10am

Venue: Microsoft Teams

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

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/longfield-solar-farm/>

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Examining Authority (ExA) welcomed those present and introduced himself and the case team, explaining he had been appointed by the Secretary of State.

The ExA explained he would be examining the application made by Longfield Solar Farm Limited ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy who will decide whether or not to make an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project.

The ExA explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and noted that the Examination will commence after the PM closes.

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

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

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

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

2. The ExA's Remarks about the Examination Process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), further info can be found in the [Advice Note 8.4](#)

3. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex B](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 20 June 2022 and asked for any observations on them.

The Essex Area Ramblers Association (The Ramblers) highlighted section 5 of Annex C of the Rule 6 letter and requested that consideration should be given to the impact on the public rights of way during the operational phase of the development phase. The ExA advised that the effects on views from public rights of way would be considered as part of the landscape and visual effects and obstructions to users would be considered as part of the land use considerations. The ExA also indicated that it was intended for this to cover not just the effects during construction but also those during operation, and that this matter would be considered as part of the Examination.

The Applicant and the Ramblers confirmed that they were content with the ExA's approach.

No other comments were received on the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues.

4. Procedural Decisions taken by the ExA

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

Procedural decisions can be found in Annex E of the Rule 6 Letter.

The ExA noted that the Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) should include both areas of agreement and disagreement, and that SoCGs should not be held back until all matters were agreed. Draft statements would be useful to help the ExA consider which matters require further exploration during the Examination.

The Applicant advised that they are progressing all of the SoCGs requested by the ExA. The Applicant also confirmed that the SoCG's will include both areas that are agreed and areas under ongoing discussion.

The Applicant will submit draft SoCG at Deadline 1.

The Applicant advised that due to limited contact information, they had been unable to make any progress on the SoCG with the UK Health Security Agency. The ExA suggested the Applicant may wish to contact the case team who may be able to assist. The Applicant also explained that the SoCG with the East of England Ambulance Service Trust was not as advanced as others due to the late submission of their comments.

The ExA also noted the late submission from the East of England Ambulance Service Trust and that he anticipated they would wish to participate fully in the Examination. He indicated that he intended to provide them with the same opportunities to make representations as other Interested Parties. The Applicant indicated that they were content with this approach.

5. Draft Examination Timetable

The ExA highlighted some of the key Examination dates and invited comment on the draft Examination Timetable.

The Ramblers suggested moving Deadline 1 due to a number of their members being on holiday. They were concerned that there would be insufficient time available for them to finalise and submit their Written Representation (WR) and sought an extension of around 10 days.

The ExA invited comments from the Applicant - who indicated that such an extension would impact on the wider ET. Instead, the Applicant offered to submit their comments on the Relevant Representations on 4 August 2022, ahead of Deadline 1 so that the Ramblers (and other IPs) had early sight of them to assist in the preparation of WRs. The ExA agreed that this would be useful and indicated that he would amend the timetable to allow the Applicant to submit its comments on the Relevant Representations on 4 August 2022.

In addition, the ExA indicated that if the Ramblers still had difficulty submitting their WR on time, they should let the case team know. In the event that further time was required, the ExA indicated that he would be prepared to exercise his discretion and accept the Ramblers WR as a late submission.

The Ramblers indicated they would endeavour to submit their WR on time.

Chelmsford City Council, Braintree District Council and Essex County Council (“the Councils”) jointly requested that Deadline 6 (currently 15 December 2022) was brought forward to 8 December 2022 to take account of the Christmas period and give sufficient time for them to consider the Deadline 6 submissions before Deadline 7 (5 January 2023).

This was not supported by the Applicant who stated that their preference would be for Deadline 6 to remain on 15 December 2022 due to the significant number of submissions due at that deadline.

In response, the Councils highlighted a number of operational issues over the Christmas period and requested a change to Deadline 7 (currently 5 January 2023), as an alternative.

This was supported by the Applicant who suggested moving Deadline 7 to indicated either 10 or 11 January 2023. The ExA indicated that he was content with the suggested change and that it would be reflected in the Examination Timetable when issued.

The Examination Timetable can be found in the Rule 8 letter published on 26 July 2022 and available on the project page.

6. Dates and Format for Hearings and ASI

The ExA drew attention to the hearings scheduled for week commencing 26 September 2022 and week commencing 14 November 2022.

The ExA also indicated that he had already received a request to from an IP to speak at an Open floor Hearing. He also indicated that he expected to hold at least one hearing

on the dDCO, one on Compulsory Acquisition as well as an Issue Specific Hearing to examine some of the Environmental matters raised by the application. He also noted that at this stage he expected a number of hearings could be held virtually but appreciated that some IPs might require or prefer in-person events and so was prepared to keep an open mind. He indicated that he would find it useful if, when indicating whether or not they wished to participate in any hearings, IPs could also indicate whether they had any special requirements or preferences for a particular format. The ExA also indicated that where there was a clear preference this would be taken into account in finalising arrangements for any hearings.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in [Advice Note 8.5](#)

The ExA also noted that 5 December 2022 had been set aside for any Accompanied Site Inspection. However, he explained that he intended to use any ASI to visit sites which were not otherwise publicly accessible and where other alternative arrangements could not be made.

Item 7 and 8: Other Matters

Items 7 and 8 were taken together. No further matters were raised.

Close

The ExA thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting.