



Planning Inspectorate

Preliminary Meeting Note

Application: North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

Reference: EN010119

Time and date: 28 January 2025, 10:00am

Venue: Wivenhoe House Hotel, Wivenhoe Park, Park Road, Colchester, CO4 3FA
and Microsoft Teams (Blended)

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

1. Welcome and Introduction

Wendy McKay (WM) welcomed those present and introduced herself as the lead member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors (ExA) and Matthew Shrigley, Jonathan Medlin, Helen VanWillegen and Anthony Johnson as panel members to examine the North Falls Offshore Wind Farm application.

WM explained the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 13 September 2024.

WM stated that the ExA would be examining the application made by North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Ltd ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

WM explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and noted that the examination will commence after the PM closes.

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

2. Audio recording

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

3. Examination Process

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

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

4. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAP I) (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex B](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 10 December 2024 and asked for any observations on them.

- Suffolk County Council (SCC) highlighted the application of the section 85 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 duty relating to Protected Landscapes which was recently revised by section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA). SCC believed that the revised duty to 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes had not been explored in other recent offshore wind applications.
- Mr Fell for Strutt & Parker Farms Ltd and Liana Enterprises Ltd raised concerns regarding the level of detail on issues that would affect agricultural land including drainage, cable depth, cable location, haul road, ground conditions and reinstatement of land. It was highlighted that there were other plans for the land use which conflict with the development proposal and pointed out that there is no reference to agricultural businesses in the socio economic effects issue (IAP I 14).
- Port of London Authority noted that 'cumulative effects' were not specifically mentioned in relation to the navigation and shipping issue (IAP I 13). They raised particular concerns with regard to cumulative impacts and offshore effects in combination with other schemes including cable crossings, shipping and navigational issues and the overlap of construction works.
- Aldeburgh Town Council noted that not all interested parties were available for the preliminary meeting and might need until deadline 1 to raise issues that would assist the ExA. Concerns were raised regarding the level of detail within the application and the cumulative impact, together with the impact on communities and their well-being. It was also highlighted that it is difficult for Town and Parish Councils participating in an examination to look through all the documentation and to understand and be able to find the required information.
- National Highways explained that their interest was in the impact during the construction phase and specifically in relation to the A120 and abnormal loads. There was a specific concern as regards the risk to the road surface that National Highways wanted to raise.
- Babergh District Council referred to cumulative effects and invited the ExA to ensure that the application documents included consideration of reasonably foreseeable developments. They also invited the ExA to ensure that there would be an appropriate assessment of the setting of the National Landscape and consideration of how the applicant plans to discharge the statutory duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- Ms Robertson discussed the cumulative effect of other planning projects and invited the ExA to look at the land that would be affected by these projects. She also raised the matter of finding alternative options and consideration of the well-being of local

communities.

5. Examination Timetable

The ExA noted requests, already received in writing, to amend the draft Examination Timetable contained in [Annex C](#) of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further suggestions from the parties in attendance.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the Rule 8 Letter.

The Examination Timetable can be found in the Rule 8 letter published on 4 February 2025.

6. Hearings and Site Inspections

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue Specific Hearings
- Compulsory Acquisition Hearings
- Open Floor Hearings
- Accompanied Site Inspections
- Unaccompanied Site Inspections

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events. These were duly noted and considered by the ExA.

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

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

7. Procedural decisions

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

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

- Aldeburgh Town Council clarified that the reason for their accompanied site visit request was so that those with local knowledge could highlight areas for the ExA to look at within the special protection areas. They also explained that for context they believed it would be beneficial for the inspectors to see the Alde and Ore Estuary and Horsey Island and the national landscape area.
- Ms Robertson commented to show her support for site inspections and the chance for the inspectors to see the areas affected by the cumulative impact.
- The applicant highlighted that the areas specified for an accompanied site visit are publicly accessible, and if the inspectors felt it was necessary to visit them, they would be able to do so unaccompanied.