



Meeting note

Project name	Oaklands Farm Solar Project
File reference	EN010122
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	14 October 2021
Meeting with	Oaklands Solar Farm Ltd
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Update meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial reasons).

Project Update

The Applicant introduced itself and gave a summary of the proposed development. Oaklands Farm Solar is located in South Derbyshire District Council, south east of Walton-on-Trent, with a capacity of 163 MW plus 37.5 MW of energy storage infrastructure.

The Applicant has a contracted grid connection into Drakelow substation, north of the site, and informed of its recent discussions with National Grid (NG) to identify a possible cable route to the connection point at Drakelow substation. The Applicant stated that a combination of underground and overhead lines was being considered, and this would be confirmed following further technical and environmental assessment.

The Applicant stated that communication with both landowners has started and that an agreement has been made. If necessary, compulsory acquisitions powers will be included in the Development Consent Order (DCO). The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider [recent advice](#) issued in relation to providing a Book of Reference where no compulsory acquisition powers are being sought.

EIA

The Applicant confirmed that it had received the [Scoping Opinion](#) from the Inspectorate and queried what was needed to provide evidence of agreement from relevant statutory bodies in order to scope out certain assessments. The Inspectorate responded that any confirmation from the statutory bodies was sufficient as proof.

The Applicant enquired the Inspectorate on the acceptability of photography taken in autumn to represent "in-leaf" baseline, as the Scoping Opinion stated that "summer views" should be captured. The Inspectorate recommended photographs to be taken as soon as possible to represent the "in leaf" baseline.

The Applicant confirmed that it had commenced some environmental surveys such as glint and glare surveys, noise monitoring, ecology, heritage, transport and hydrology. In relation to Best Most Versatile agricultural land, the Applicant asked how Agricultural Land Classification is being considered in DCO application – the Inspectorate referred to the Cleve Hill recommendation report, suggested consultation with Natural England and the National Farmer's Union and confirmed that the site would not be considered to be brownfield after decommissioning of the solar development.

Programme update

Consultation on the draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) will take place in November 2021. The draft SoCC will include flexibility around how the Applicant consults whilst the COVID pandemic remains ongoing.

The statutory consultation, including a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) will include a full draft of the Environmental Statement (ES), which will be undertaken in Q1 2022.

Draft documents are likely to be submitted for the Inspectorate's review in early Q3 2022, including the draft DCO and Book of Reference (BoF). The Applicant expects to submit its application in late Q3 2022.

Stakeholder engagement to date

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate of their fortnightly engagement with Derbyshire County Council and South Derbyshire District Council. The Applicant confirmed that the District Council had limited experience of NSIP applications and a Planning Performance Agreement has been offered, although this has not yet been agreed.

National Forest has also been contacted regarding the design of the site.