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All Interested Parties, Statutory Parties and
any Other Person invited to the Preliminary
Meeting

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN010123

Date: 21 July 2023

Dear Sir/ Madam

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

Application by Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Heckington Fen Solar Park

Rule 6 letter - appointment of the Examining Authority, invitation to the Preliminary Meeting, notification of Hearings and other Procedural Decisions

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an Examination of the above application I am writing to introduce myself. My name is Susan Hunt. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed under the [Documents tab](#) on the [project webpage](#) of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

You may be aware of applications for other solar Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in Lincolnshire. The Examinations of those will be conducted by other ExA. To ensure that I receive your submissions in relation to the Heckington Fen Solar Project, please take care to make them in accordance with the specific procedures for this project, as set out in this letter, and as we subsequently notify.

This letter covers several important procedural matters ahead of our Examination:

- Your invitation to the Preliminary Meeting
- The purpose of the Preliminary Meeting
- Written submissions about how the application should be examined
- Notification of initial Hearings
- Format of the Preliminary Meeting and Hearings, and requests to register
- Other Procedural Decisions
- Your status in the Examination, and awards of costs
- Examination correspondence, and the management of information



Your invitation to the Preliminary Meeting

I would like to thank those of you who submitted Relevant Representations. These representations have assisted me when considering how I will examine this application.

As a recipient of this letter you are invited to the Preliminary Meeting. The purpose of the Preliminary Meeting is to enable views to be put to me about how the application should be examined. More information is provided in **Annex B** to this letter and in the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.3](#).

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. I will take all relevant and important matters into account when I make my recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will take the final decision in this case.

Preliminary Meeting	
Date:	Tuesday 19 September 2023
Seating available at venue for those attending at the physical venue in person	9:30am
Arrangements conference for those participating via Microsoft Teams	9:30am for 9:45am Arrive at 9:30am to enter the virtual lobby. The Arrangements Conference will start at 9:45am.
Preliminary Meeting starts	10:00am
Venue and joining details	Boston United Football Ground, Pilgrim Way, Boston, PE21 7NE and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online will be provided in advance to those who have had a request to register accepted by the ExA.
IMPORTANT: The Preliminary Meeting should be completed by lunchtime on Tuesday 19 September 2023. However, parties are encouraged to keep the whole day free in case the meeting overruns or there is a technical problem that requires the meeting to be adjourned or resumed later in the day.	



The agenda for the Preliminary Meeting is at **Annex A** to this letter. This has been set following my Initial Assessment of Principal Issues arising from my reading of the application documents and the Relevant Representations. The Initial Assessment of Principal Issues is set out in **Annex D** 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.**

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

- You consider changes need to be made to the draft Examination Timetable set out at **Annex E** to this letter; and/or
- you wish to comment about the arrangements for future Examination hearings, including the use of virtual methods.

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application should be examined **on or before Tuesday 5 September 2023**. Submissions should be made through the '[Have your say page](#)' on the [project webpage](#). Information about using the '[Have your say page](#)' is provided at **Annex I** to this letter.

Notification of initial Hearings

In order to make an efficient start to the Examination I have made a Procedural Decision to hold the following initial hearings:

- **Issue Specific Hearing 1** regarding the draft Development Consent Order on **Tuesday 19 September 2023 2.00 pm**
- **Issue Specific Hearing 2** regarding the scope of development and Environmental matters on **Wednesday 20 September 2023 10:00 am**

Further information about these hearings is contained in **Annex F** to this letter.



Requests to register for the Preliminary Meeting and Hearings

If you would like to participate in the Preliminary Meeting or Initial Hearings, then you must register on or before **Tuesday 5 September 2023**. Information about how to submit a request to register is provided later in this letter.

You are not required to attend or make written submissions to the Preliminary Meeting in order to take part in the Examination. Whether or not you attend, if you are an Interested Party you can make a Written Representation during the Examination and participate in hearings.

If you simply wish to observe the Preliminary Meeting then you **do not** need to register as a participant as you will be able to either:

1. attend at the physical venue in person to observe the proceedings;
2. 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; and /or
3. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#) shortly after the event has finished.

As soon as practicable after the Preliminary Meeting I will issue a letter (known as the Rule 8 letter) setting out the finalised Examination Timetable.

Any request to register for the Preliminary Meeting or Initial Hearings **must be made in writing**.

Please make your request by selecting the appropriate Deadline and Submission Item on the '[Have your say page](#)' and ensure the submission is titled appropriately to allow us to quickly identify which event the notification relates to. **Annex I** of this letter provides further information about the '[Have your say page](#)'.

Any request **must include** the following information:

- 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);
- which event(s) you would like to participate in;
- whether you will participate via Microsoft Teams or at the physical venue;
- the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make.
- the [Examination Library](#) reference number (with paragraph/page number where appropriate) of any documents that you want to refer to.



Registration is needed if you will be participating via Microsoft Teams, so that the Case Team can send you joining instructions. We will consider all requests when we finalise the agenda, including the topics to be discussed and who we intend to invite to speak.

Requests to register for the Preliminary Meeting and Issue Specific Hearing 1 and 2 are required on or before **Tuesday 5 September 2023**.

It is important that requests to register are submitted separately from any other written submission.

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

The format of the Preliminary Meeting and Hearings

Our Examination of the application will principally be a written process (see [Advice Note 8.4](#)), supplemented by various types of hearings (see [Advice Note 8.5](#) and [Advice Note 8.6](#)).

Consistent with the Planning Inspectorate's future operating model, the following formats are available to us for the Preliminary Meeting and Hearings:

- **virtual events** where participation will be via Microsoft Teams; and
- **blended events** where some participants will attend at the physical venue in person, and some will take part via Microsoft Teams.

Taking account of current guidance, I have decided that **the Preliminary Meeting and initial Hearings will be blended events**. The format of any other hearings to be held during the Examination will be confirmed when we provide formal notification of each hearing. This will be provided at least 21 days in advance of it taking place.

Other Procedural Decisions made by the Examining Authority

To make an efficient start to the Examination, I have made some further Procedural Decisions which are set out in detail at **Annex G** to this letter. They are summarised as follows:

- Statements of Common Ground
- Request for suggested locations for an Accompanied Site Inspection
- Request for report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects
- Request for submission of Progress Schedules
- Request for Local Impact Reports from host local authorities and any other neighbouring local authority who may wish to submit one
- Acceptance of Additional Submissions into the Examination



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 by completing the [form available on the project webpage](#). 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.

Your Status in the Examination

You have received this letter because you fall within one of the groups described in the Planning Inspectorate's document [What is My Status in the Examination?](#)

If your reference number begins with '2003', 'HFSP', 'HFSP-0', 'HFSP-AFP', 'HFSP-S57' 'HFSP-APP' you are in Group A. If your reference number begins with 'HFSP-SP' you are in Group B. If it begins with 'HFSP-OP' you are in Group C. The meaning and purpose of those groups are explained in the document published at the link above.

If having read this document you are still unsure about your status, 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](#).

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 which 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](#).

Please make your written submissions at relevant deadlines during the Examination through the ['Have your say page'](#) on the [project webpage](#). Further information about the ['Have your say page'](#) is provided at **Annex I** to this letter.



The 'E-mail updates' function on the right-hand side of the [project webpage](#) gives you the opportunity to receive e-mail updates at key stages during the Examination.

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](#).

Examination Documents can also be viewed electronically at the locations listed in **Annex H** to this letter.

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](#).

I look forward to working with all parties in the Examination of this application.

Yours faithfully

Susan Hunt

Examining Authority

Annexes

- A** Agenda for the Preliminary Meeting
- B** Introduction to the Preliminary Meeting
- C** Interrelationship with other projects
- D** Initial Assessment of Principal Issues
- E** Draft Examination Timetable
- F** Notification of initial hearings
- G** Other Procedural Decisions made by the Examining Authority
- H** Availability of Examination Documents
- I** 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.



Agenda for the Preliminary Meeting

You must register by Tuesday 5 September 2023 if you intend to participate in the Preliminary Meeting.

Information about how to submit a request to register is provided in the Rule 6 letter.

If you simply wish to observe the Preliminary Meeting or Hearings, then you **do not** need to make a request to register as you will be able to either:

1. attend at the physical venue in person to observe the proceedings;
2. 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; and/ or
3. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#) shortly after the event has finished.

Preliminary Meeting	
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Seating available at venue for those attending at the physical venue in person	9:30am
Arrangements conference for those participating via Microsoft Teams	9:30am for 9:45am Arrive at 9:30am to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the Arrangements Conference by the Case Team and given further instructions. The Arrangements Conference will start at 9:45am.
Preliminary Meeting starts	10:00am
Venue and joining details	Boston United Football Ground, Pilgrim Way, Boston, PE21 7NE and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online will be provided to those who have had a request to register accepted by the ExA.
Attendees:	Invited parties

Agenda for the Preliminary Meeting	
Item 1	The Preliminary Meeting will formally open at 10.00am . The Examining Authority will join, welcome participants and lead introductions. The public livestream and recording will start.
Item 2	The Examining Authority's remarks about the Examination process (refer to Annex B), including consideration of the interrelationship of Heckington Fen Solar Project with other projects (refer to Annex C).
Item 3	Initial Assessment of Principal Issues – Annex D to Rule 6 letter
Item 4	Draft Examination Timetable – Annex E to Rule 6 letter
Item 5	Any other matters
Close of the Preliminary Meeting	

Please be available from the start of the meeting and throughout the 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. It is, however, advisable to enter the virtual lobby promptly at 09:30am.

The agenda for the Preliminary Meeting is subject to change at the discretion of the Examining Authority (ExA), although in making changes the ExA 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:

- 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);
- confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person; Annex A A3
- the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make; and
- any special requirements you may have (e.g. disabled access or hearing loop)

Introduction to the Preliminary Meeting

Background

The Preliminary Meeting (PM) will be a blended event with some participants attending in person and some taking part virtually using Microsoft Teams.

The Examining Authority (ExA) is conscious of videoconferencing fatigue and will aim to keep the proceedings focussed and as efficient as possible. This annex provides advance access to information relevant to the ExA's remarks about the Examination process under Item 2 of the Preliminary Meeting Agenda, as set out in **Annex A**. Please read this carefully. The ExA will only present a summary of the key points set out here at the Preliminary Meeting.

The Examining Authority and the Case Team

The ExA will introduce themselves at the start of the Preliminary Meeting.

The ExA will be supported by the Planning Inspectorate Case Team. During the Arrangements Conferences a member of the Case Team will welcome and admit participants both in person and from the virtual lobby, and will be available to answer questions by email before and after the PM.

Their email address is: heckingtonfensolar@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 Heckington Fen Solar Park, 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 Ecotricity (Heck Fen Solar) 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 National Infrastructure Planning website. 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 webpage](#) 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.

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 the day after the close of the PM.

The PM will be your opportunity to influence the process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached at **Annex A**. It is important to have the Rule 6 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 includes the construction of an onshore generating station in England with a generating capacity of more than 50MW. As such, it is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008 as it includes development falling within the categories in Sections 14(1) and 15 of the Planning Act 2008.

The ExA will consider the Proposed Development in accordance with any applicable policy or considerations required by the Planning Act 2008 and that it deems to be important and relevant. As well as any designated or draft National Policy Statements, this may include the National Planning Policy Framework and local development plans.

In summary, the Preliminary Meeting will establish the procedures and timetable for the Examination of the Proposed Development. It will set a framework for the ExA to enable the Secretary of State to consider and decide the application. In doing so, the ExA will have regard to:

- The positions and representations of all Interested Parties (IPs);
- any Local Impact Reports (LIR) prepared and provided by relevant local authorities;
- other prescribed matters; and
- any other matters that appear to be both relevant and important to the relevant Secretary of State's decision.

Preliminary Meeting invitees

The Applicant is invited to the PM and will be given the opportunity to reply to any representations made.

Everyone who has made a valid Relevant Representation has been registered as an Interested Party (IP), and has been invited to the PM. All Interested Parties 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 also 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. 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.

Conduct of the Preliminary Meeting

The ExA estimate that the PM will take half a day to complete.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. The ExA will provide breaks during the PM as appropriate.

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 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 five years 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. 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 to 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 are primarily a written process and hearings take on an inquisitorial approach as opposed to an adversarial one. Questioning or cross-examination of participants 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:

- Whilst LIRs 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 relevant local authorities to communicate issues of concern.
- IPs can make Written Representations (WRs) and comment on WRs made by other parties.
- IPs can respond to the ExA's written questions 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 agrees, and if it would be useful for this to be clarified. SoCGs most usefully should also set out 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, 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 therefore 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 in **Annex E** includes provision for hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties.

Open Floor Hearings (OFH) tend to have a community focus and are an opportunity for individuals and community groups to speak directly to the Examining Authority. To date, no IP has requested an OFH to make oral representations about the Application but this does not preclude such a hearing being held at a later date. A potential date is included in the timetable only if the ExA considers it necessary. 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. There should be no new or unexpected material in oral representations.

Compulsory Acquisition Hearings (CAH) are likely to be held given that the Applicant's draft DCO provides for the Compulsory Acquisition of land and rights, and the Temporary Possession of land. Affected Persons have a right to request and be heard at a CAH.

Issue Specific Hearings (ISHs) will be held if they would assist the Examination and be more helpful to the ExA than reliance on written evidence only. They commonly relate to environmental matters. 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.

ISHs on the draft DCO give the parties an opportunity to suggest modifications and amendments to the draft DCO provided by the Applicant 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 set out in the DCO.

The draft Examination Timetable includes provisional dates for all of the above hearings, together with Deadlines for participants to notify the ExA that they wish to speak at each of them.

Site Inspections

As part of the Examination process the ExA will undertake site inspections. The purpose of these is for the ExA to see features of the proposals within the context of the evidence put forward. Notes of the first Unaccompanied Site Inspection (USI) have already been published on the [project webpage](#) [EV-001].

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 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 a USI on an access required basis.

The draft Examination Timetable includes potential ASI dates with Deadlines for IPs to make submissions suggesting sites and locations that the ExA should visit. These will be used to inform further Inspections.

Interrelationship With Other Projects

The chapters of the Environmental Statement include consideration of cumulative and in-combination effects with a range of shortlisted schemes detailed at Table 2.8 of Chapter 2 [APP-055] and shown on Figures 2.2a and b [APP-079 and APP-080].

The schemes include Applications for Orders Granting Development Consent for other solar energy Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in the region which have also been recently submitted for Examination, including:

- [Cottam Solar Project](#)
- [Gate Burton Energy Park](#)
- [Mallard Pass Solar Project](#)
- [West Burton Solar Project](#)

The following NSIP is also considered, which is expected to be submitted in the following months:

- [Tillbridge Solar Project](#)

A number of Relevant Representations have also drawn attention to the potential interaction with a further solar NSIP scheme in Lincolnshire at Beacon Fen which, at the time of publication, was at the initial pre-application consultation stage:

- [Beacon Fen Energy Park](#)

Points to Note

The Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, has appointed the Examining Authority (ExA) for the Heckington Fen Solar Park Project for this project alone. The Examinations of the other projects will be conducted by other ExA, as separately appointed by the Secretary of State. Therefore, the ExA for this Proposed Development will have no responsibility for the Examination of those other projects. Similarly, the ExA for the other projects will have no responsibility for the Examination of this one.

All documents, communications and submissions will be available through the [project webpage](#) and will be dealt with separately from those for the other projects.

Therefore, to ensure that we receive your submissions for this project, please take care to make them in accordance with the specific procedures for this project, as set out in this letter, and as subsequently notified by the ExA.

The ExA's draft Examination timetable is set out in **Annex E**.

The ExA anticipates that several parties will also wish to participate in the Examination of one or more of the other projects, as well as this one. It is also aware that there is likely to be an overlap of the Examination stage of this project with that for other projects. As such the ExA recognises the potential for resource challenges for parties wishing to participate in more than one Examination at the same time.

The ExA has developed the draft Examination Timetable as necessary for its Examination but has also sought to identify Deadlines and events that do not clash with those for the other solar park Examinations. To do this, the ExA has sought to maximise the time between Deadlines and events by minimising the number of Deadlines and by having early Hearings and an early first Deadline.

If the ExA decides to change the Examination Timetable, then it will consider the potential for clashes with the Examination Deadlines or events of other projects.

The ExA's Initial Assessment of Principal Issues at **Annex D** includes at item 5 General and Cross-Topic Matters:

- Cumulative and in-combination effects with other projects and developments in the locality including other solar farm proposals in the region.

This will be an issue to be Examined within the scope of many of the Principal Issues and will also include matters of effective implementation, mitigation and the implications of any changes to the information on other projects during the Examination.

Recognising the potential for the information available on other National Infrastructure Projects to change during the Examination, the draft Examination Timetable in **Annex E** includes provision for the Applicant to provide a 'Report on the interrelationship with other National Infrastructure projects' that is updated during the Examination. The content of this report is to include the matters set out in **Annex G** under the heading of 'Report on the interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects'.

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; and
- 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 Report to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero after the Examination has concluded.

The order of the issues listed is alphabetic and does not imply any order of prioritisation or importance. The policy and consenting requirements and documents associated with the PA2008 are an integral part of the Examination and are therefore not listed as main issues.

It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equalities duties are not listed as main issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the Examination with these in mind.

Principal Issues	Relating to (but not limited to):
1. Biodiversity, Ecology and the Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for statutory and locally protected habitats sites • Appropriateness of habitat surveys • Effects on specific species and their habitats, including European protected species • Effects on trees and hedgerows • Habitat creation, enhancement and application of Net Gain
2. Compulsory Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with relevant statute and guidance • Accuracy of the Book of Reference and the Land Plans • Whether the full extent of the land, rights and powers that are sought to be compulsorily acquired, including access for maintenance, temporary possession, powers to override easements and rights under streets, are

	<p>necessary to facilitate or are incidental to the Proposed Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Statement of Reasons and whether the powers sought are required for the development to which the order relates, whether they are legitimate, necessary, and proportionate and whether it is clear how the Applicant intends to use the land • Whether there is a compelling case in the public interest for the compulsory acquisition of the land, rights and powers that are sought by the dDCO that justifies interference with the human rights of those affected • Whether the temporary possession powers sought are needed to enable the construction, operation, or decommissioning of the Proposed Development; the total period for which the land may be subject to temporary possession; and whether the powers sought are compatible with human rights tests • Whether all reasonable alternatives to compulsory acquisition have been explored • The acquisition of any statutory undertakers' land or rights over such land and the detriment that may be caused to the carrying on of the undertaking in question • The adequacy of the Protective Provisions set out in the dDCO and the need for any other Protective Provisions to safeguard relevant interests • Crown Land consent in accordance with s135 of the Planning Act 2008 and the need to obtain it before the close of the Examination • The adequacy and security of project funding.
<p>3. Draft Development Consent Order</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appropriateness of the draft Development Consent Order including its structure, scope, provisions, requirements and protective provisions
<p>4. Energy Generation and Storage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely potential energy generated by the solar panels • Capacity of the secured Grid connection

<p>5. General and Cross-Topic Matters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality • Alternatives and site selection • Benefits • Cumulative and in-combination effects with other projects and developments in the locality including other solar farm proposals in the region • Electromagnetic field effects • Extent of the Rochdale envelope • Fire and safety hazards associated with storage technology • Greenhouse gas emissions arising during all phases • Human health and wellbeing • Need case • Noise and vibration • Policy and legislation including emerging National Policy Statements • Relevant DCO decisions and High Court challenges • Waste management, including replacement equipment and decommissioning
<p>6. Historic Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings • Appropriateness of schemes of investigation for archaeology
<p>7. Land Use and Soils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness and accuracy of Best and Most Versatile designations within the site • Loss of BMV agricultural land including implications for food production and supply • Proposed uses of the land once operational • Proposals for soil stockpiles and bunds • Soil management Plans • Site restoration following decommissioning
<p>8. Landscape and Visual, and Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study area, including Zones of Theoretical Visibility • Landscape effects, identification of valued landscapes and setting of settlements • Visual effects and identification of sensitive receptors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glint and glare • Mitigation proposals • The Rochdale Envelope in relation to design and scale parameters and flexibility • Consideration of good design and relevant guidance for all above ground structures including solar panels, substations and storage equipment • The need for a Design Approach document to guide detailed design, with consideration of future consultation and approval of detailed design proposals post-consent
<p>9. Socio-Economics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and employment effects during all phases including on tourism and local businesses • Effects on local living conditions and communities including recreational impacts
<p>10. Traffic and Transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access proposals • Effects on the local and strategic road networks, rail network and public rights of way • Effects on non-motorised users, public rights of way and bridleways
<p>11. Water Environment and Flood Risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk Assessment including identification of risk zones and climate change allowance • Surface water drainage strategy • Water quality including groundwater • Watercourse crossings • The Water Framework Directive

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 six 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.	<p>Procedural Deadline A</p> <p>Deadline for receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written submissions about how the application should be examined, including the draft Examination Timetable Requests to be heard at the Preliminary Meeting Requests to be heard at Issue Specific Hearing 1 regarding the draft Development Consent Order Requests to be heard at Issue Specific Hearing 2 regarding the scope of the development and environmental matters 	<p>Tuesday 5 September 2023</p>
2.	<p>Preliminary Meeting</p>	<p>Tuesday 19 September 2023</p> <p>10:00am</p>
3.	<p>Issue Specific Hearing 1 regarding the draft Development Consent Order</p>	<p>Tuesday 19 September</p> <p>2:00pm</p>
4.	<p>Issue Specific Hearing 2 regarding the scope of the development and environmental matters</p>	<p>Wednesday 20 September</p> <p>10:00am</p>
5.	<p>Issue by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination Timetable 	<p>As soon as practicable following the Preliminary Meeting</p>

6.	<p>Deadline 1</p> <p>Refer to Annex F for further details.</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on Relevant Representations (RRs) and Additional Submissions listed in Annex G 8 • Summaries of all RRs exceeding 1500 words • Requests from Interested Parties for locations for an ASI shown on a plan, including details of any access requirements • Notification of wish to be heard at an OFH Requests by Interested Parties to be heard at an Open Floor Hearing (OFH) • Notification of wish to be heard at a CAH Requests by Affected Persons (defined in section 59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at a Compulsory Acquisition Hearing (CAH) • Notification of wish to be heard at a further Issue Specific Hearing • Notification of Statutory Parties of their wish to be considered an IP by the ExA if not submitted an RR • Local Impact Reports from relevant local planning authorities (see Annex G 6) • Written summaries of oral submissions made at Hearings held on 19 and 20 September • Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) with the parties listed at Annex G 2 • Statement of Commonality for all SoCGs • Any additional responses to the amended plans and documents received as part of the Change Request Application in relation to land and works at Bicker Fen Substation (see Annex G 1), and any further submissions as accepted by the ExA • The Applicant's Report on the interrelationship with other National Infrastructure projects (see Annex G 4) • Progress schedules – see Annex G 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land and Rights related matters including Protective Provisions and Statutory Undertakers 	<p>Tuesday 3 October 2023</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schedule of the latest versions of the Applicant's submission documents and documents to be certified ○ Schedule of progress in securing other consents ● Any further information requested by ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	
7.	<p>Publication by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ExA's First Written Questions ● Notification of an Accompanied Site Inspection (if required) 	17 October 2023
8.	<p>Deadline 2</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comments on submissions for Deadline 1 ● Written Representations from Interested Parties with summaries for any that exceed 1500 words ● Responses to the ExA's First Written Questions ● Updated Statements of Common Ground and Statement of Commonality in clean and tracked changes versions ● Requests to be heard at hearing(s) in w/c 20 November 2023 ● The Applicant's updated documents – clean version and version showing tracked changes since the last submitted version: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report on the interrelationship with other National Infrastructure projects ○ draft Development Consent Order ○ Explanatory Memorandum ○ Book of Reference ○ Statement of Reasons ○ Progress schedule for Land and Rights related matters including Protective Provisions and Statutory Undertakers 	7 November 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schedule of the latest versions of the Applicant's submission documents and documents to be certified ○ Schedule of progress in securing other consents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicant's draft itinerary for the Accompanied Site Inspection (ASI) ● Any further information requested by ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Rules ● Comments on any further information received Comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by Deadline 2 	
9.	<p>Time reserved for Hearings and an ASI:</p> <p>Issue Specific Hearings</p> <p>Compulsory Acquisition Hearing</p> <p>Open Floor Hearing (if required)</p> <p>ASI</p>	<p>Week Commencing 20 November 2023</p>
10.	<p>Deadline 3</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comments on submissions for Deadline 2 including responses to Written Representations ● Written summaries of oral submissions made at Hearings held w/c 20 November ● Updated Statements of Common Ground and Statement of Commonality in clean and tracked changes versions ● The Applicant's updated documents – clean version and version showing tracked changes since the last submitted version: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report on the interrelationship with other National Infrastructure projects ○ draft Development Consent Order ○ Explanatory Memorandum ○ Book of Reference ○ Statement of Reasons ○ Progress schedule for Land and Rights related matters including Protective Provisions and Statutory Undertakers ○ Schedule of the latest versions of the Applicant's submission documents and documents to be certified 	<p>Tuesday 5 December 2023</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schedule of progress in securing other consents ● Any further information requested by ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Rules ● Comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by Deadline 3 	
11.	Publication by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ExA's second written questions 	Tuesday 19 December
12.	Deadline 4 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comments on submissions for Deadline 3 ● Responses to ExA's second written questions ● Updated Statements of Common Ground and Statement of Commonality in clean and tracked changes versions ● The Applicant's updated documents – clean version and version showing tracked changes since the last submitted version: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report on the interrelationship with other National Infrastructure projects ○ draft Development Consent Order ○ Explanatory Memorandum ○ Book of Reference ○ Statement of Reasons ○ Progress schedule for Land and Rights related matters including Protective Provisions and Statutory Undertakers ○ Schedule of the latest versions of the Applicant's submission documents and documents to be certified ○ Schedule of progress in securing other consents ● Any further information requested by ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Rules ● Comments on any further information requested by the ExA and received by Deadline 4 	Tuesday 16 January 2024
13.	Publication by the ExA of:	Tuesday 23 January 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ExA's schedule of changes to the draft DCO (if required) • Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) and any associated questions (if required) 	
14.	<p>Deadline 5</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on submissions for Deadline 4 • Comments on the ExA's schedule of changes to the draft DCO (if provided) • Final Statements of Common Ground in clean and tracked changes versions • List of matters not agreed where SoCG could not be finalised • The Applicant's final documents – clean and tracked changes versions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft DCO in the Statutory Instrument template with the relevant validation report (with tracked changes version since the initial version submitted with the application) • Explanatory Memorandum (with tracked changes version since the initial version submitted with the application) • Report on the interrelationship with other National Infrastructure projects • Book of Reference • Statement of Reasons • Schedule for Land and Rights related matters including Protective Provisions and Statutory Undertakers • Schedule of the Applicant's documents and documents to be certified • Schedule of progress in securing other consents • Final navigation document/guide to the application • Final signed and dated section 106 agreement (if required) • Comments on the RIES (if required) and responses to any associated questions • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Rules 	Tuesday 13 February 2024
15.	<p>Deadline 6</p> <p>For receipt by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary statements from parties regarding matters that they have previously raised during 	Tuesday 20 February 2024

	<p>the Examination and have not been resolved to their satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on submissions for Deadline 5 • Summary statement from the applicant setting out any outstanding matters • Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 	
16.	<p>The ExA is under a duty to complete the Examination of the application by the end of the period of six months</p> <p>Please note that the ExA may close the Examination before the end of the six-month period if it is satisfied that all relevant matters have been addressed and discussed.</p>	Tuesday 19 March 2024

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.

Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES)

Where an applicant has provided a No Significant Effects Report or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report with the application, the ExA may decide to issue a RIES during the Examination. The RIES is a factual account of the information and evidence provided to the ExA on HRA matters during the Examination up to the date of the publication of the RIES, for the purposes of enabling the Secretary of State, as competent authority, to undertake its HRA. It is not the ExA's opinion on HRA matters. Comments on the RIES will be invited by the ExA and any received will be taken into account as part of the ExA's Recommendation to the Secretary of State. The ExA may also raise questions in the RIES to confirm or clarify matters that remain outstanding.

The Secretary of State may rely on the consultation on the RIES to meet its obligations under Regulation 63(3) of The Habitats Regulations 2017 and/ or Regulation 28 of The Offshore Marine Regulations.

Notification of Initial Hearings

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

Issue Specific Hearing 1 regarding the draft Development Consent Order	
Date:	Tuesday 19 September 2023
Seating available at venue for those attending at the physical venue in person	1:30pm
Arrangements conference for those participating online using Microsoft Teams	1:30pm for 1:45pm Arrive at 1:30pm to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the Arrangements Conference by the Case Team and given further instructions. The Arrangements Conference will start at 1:45pm.
Hearing starts	2:00 pm
Venue and joining details	Boston United Football Ground, Boston, PE21 7NE and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join will be provided to those who have had a request to register accepted by the ExA.

Issue Specific Hearing 2 on the scope of the development and Environmental Matters	
Date:	Wednesday 20 September 2023
Seating available at venue for those attending at the physical venue in person	9.30am
Arrangements conference for those participating online using Microsoft Teams	9:30am for 9:45am Arrive at 9:30am to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the Arrangements Conference by the Case Team and given further instructions. The Arrangements Conference will start at 9:45am.
Hearing starts	10:00am
Venue and joining details	Boston United Football Ground, Boston, PE21 7NE and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams

NOTE: If any of the hearings are no longer required then notification that a 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.

If you would like to participate in the Hearings, then you are required to submit a request to register on or before **Tuesday 5 September 2023**. Information about how to submit a request to register is provided in the Rule 6 letter.

If you simply wish to observe the Hearings, then you **do not** need to make a request to register as you will be able to either:

1. attend at the physical venue in person to observe the proceedings;
2. 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; and/ or
3. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the [project webpage](#) shortly after the event has finished.

It is important that notifications from Interested Parties to participate in hearings is submitted separately from any other written submission. Please select the appropriate Deadline and Submission Item under the '[Have your say page](#)' and ensure the submission is titled appropriately to allow us to quickly identify which event the notification relates to. **Annex I** provides further information about the '[Have your say page](#)'. Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support to attend a hearing.

Hearing Agendas

Agendas for these hearings will be published on the [project webpage](#) at least five 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.

Procedure at Hearings

The Examination will principally be a written process (see the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.4: The Examination](#)), supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. Please refer to the [Advice Note 8.5: Hearings and site inspections](#) and [Advice Note 8.6: Virtual Examination events](#) as these provide important information about hearing procedures.

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 a number of Procedural Decisions.

Firstly, in order to make an efficient start to the Examination the ExA has made a Procedural Decision for **Deadline 1** of the Examination to be on **Tuesday 3 October 2023**. The submissions required at this Deadline are set out in the draft Examination Timetable in **Annex E**, which includes the following:

1. Change Request Application

Further to the Change Notification dated 13 June [PS-001], an application for a change request is expected to be received by the ExA in early September 2023, prior to the commencement of the Examination. Consultation on the amended plans and documents is expected to be completed by the end of August 2023. There is provision in Deadline 1 for any additional responses from Interested Parties to the amendments.

2. Statements of Common Ground (SoCG)

In relation to some of the Principal Issues identified in **Annex D** to this letter, the ExA would be assisted by the early preparation of SoCGs between the Applicant and certain Interested Parties. The draft Examination Timetable at **Annex E** to this letter therefore establishes **Deadline 1** for submission of SoCGs.

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. Importantly, it should also state where and why there may be disagreement. Unless otherwise stated or agreed, the SoCG should be submitted **by the Applicant**.

SoCGs are requested to be prepared between the Applicant and the following parties:

Parties to the SoCG	Matters to be included in the SoCG (but not limited to such matters)
Boston Borough Council North Kesteven District Council Lincolnshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Principal Issues identified in Annex D. • The Environmental Statement including its scope, methodology, baseline, likely significant effects, in-combination effects, mitigation measures and management plans. • The need case, site selection and consideration of alternatives. • Cumulative effects with other NSIPs and major projects in the region. • Planning policy compliance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dDCO, its Articles and Requirements. • Any other matters raised by interested local residents, Members of the Council and internal consultees. <p>Note: The SoCGs need not include all details if already included in a Local Impact Report; cross-referencing and a summary is adequate.</p>
Anglian Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on operations. • Water supply requirements of the proposed development. • Drafting of the dDCO including Requirements and Protective Provisions.
Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (IDB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on both IDB and non IDB maintained watercourses. • Adequacy of information in relation to watercourse crossings. • The dDCO, including relevant Articles, Requirements and Protective Provisions. • Byelaws under the Land Drainage Act 1991 • Relevant other agreements, consents, permits and licences.
Cadent Gas Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on and protection of assets and operations. • Drafting of the dDCO including Protective Provisions.
Environment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of effects (including survey areas, baseline data and methodology) relating to (i) flood risk and drainage, ii) groundwater protection and iii) water resources. • Compliance with the Water Framework Directive. • Drafting of Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan including Outline Soil Management Plans. • The dDCO, including relevant Articles, Requirements and Protective Provisions. • Relevant other agreements, consents, permits and licences.
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of effects (including survey areas, baseline data and methodology) which relate to ecology and biodiversity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on habitats, species and designated sites, including cumulative effects. • Mitigation and enhancement measures. • Biodiversity Net Gain. • Protected species licences. • Drafting of the dDCO, including relevant Articles, Requirements and Protective Provisions.
National Gas Transmission plc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on and protection of assets and operations including Feeder Main 7 Hatton to Gosberton. • Drafting of the dDCO including Protective Provisions.
National Grid Electricity Transmission plc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on and protection of assets and operations including Bicker Fen substation and overhead lines. • Connection agreement. • Drafting of the dDCO including Protective Provisions.
National Grid Ventures (Viking Link Ltd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on and protection of the Viking Link. • Drafting of the dDCO including Protective Provisions.
Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of effects (including survey areas, baseline data and methodology) as relevant including (i) land use and soils (including best and most versatile agricultural land) and (ii) ecology and biodiversity. • Effects on sites and features relevant to a Habitats Regulations Assessment. • Effects on habitats, species and designated sites. • Mitigation and enhancement measures. • Biodiversity Net Gain. • Protected species licences. • Drafting of the dDCO, including relevant Articles, Requirements and Protective Provisions. • Drafting of Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan including Outline Soil Management Plans. • Drafting of Outline Landscape Ecological Management Plan.
Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on operations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting of the dDCO including Protective Provisions.
Triton Knoll OFTO Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on operations. • Drafting of the dDCO including Protective Provisions.

All of the SoCGs 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 form of words which are being sought.

The draft Examination Timetable makes provision for updated SoCGs to be submitted at various Deadlines with final versions by **Deadline 5**.

The content of SoCGs will help to inform the ExA about the need to hold any Issue Specific Hearings during the Examination.

A 'Statement of Commonality' should be submitted at the same Deadlines to provide an overview and summary of the current position on all SoCGs with the principal issues clearly set out as a) agreed b) subject to discussion or c) not agreed.

The ExA wishes to stress that areas of disagreement within each of the SoCGs are particularly important, and that early identification of these areas would assist in providing a clear focus for the Examination and the drafting of any written questions.

3. Accompanied Site Inspection – suggested locations

The draft Examination Timetable at **Annex E** to this letter includes a date reserved for an Accompanied Site Inspection (ASI) in the week commencing **20 November 2023**.

The ExA requests that Interested Parties submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **Deadline 1**. The request must include:

- Sufficient information to identify the location, including a plan where possible
- the issues to be observed at the location and reasons why the location has been suggested
- any access arrangements
- identification of any private land which could be visited by the ExA on an unaccompanied basis, with consent from the landowner(s)

Interested Parties should be aware that ASIs are 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 Applicant is requested to prepare a draft itinerary for the ASI to be submitted by **Deadline 2**. This should include:

- Relevant locations referred to in the Relevant Representations and those suggested by Interested Parties at **Deadline 1**
- any other locations at which the Applicant has predicted likely significant environmental effects
- travel, parking and access arrangements
- whether there are any health and safety considerations or need for protective clothing or equipment at any of the locations (a risk assessment will be carried out nearer the time)

The ExA will consider each suggested site location to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied or access only basis, or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis.

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

4. Report on the Interrelationship with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

This document should consider the other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects as identified in **Annex C** and include the following:

- A plan showing the order limits for the Proposed Development and the other projects, with the locations of the main features of each including solar arrays, energy storage facilities, substations, electrical cable routes, grid connection, environmental mitigation areas, temporary construction and decommissioning areas, and construction haulage routes
- An overview of the Proposed Development and the other projects including the timings, construction phasing, grid connection and start of operation
- The approach taken by the Applicant to coordinate the Proposed Development with the other projects, including during the Examination
- The Development Consent Order provisions required for the Proposed Development to be implemented satisfactorily in relation to other projects
- Any mitigation measures to be shared with other projects, and details of how they would be secured
- Any other information on the other projects relied on for the cumulative impact assessment, the level of detail, and any changes since the submission of the application

- An overall summary setting out the matters that have been agreed, any inconsistencies or outstanding matters, and the next steps to be taken to resolve them

This should be a live document with the overall summary to be updated at every Deadline, or provide confirmation that there is no change to the previous version.

5. Progress Schedules

In order to make an efficient start to the Examination the ExA requests submission of a Schedules of Progress on the following range of matters to be submitted by the Applicant at **Deadline 1**.

a) Land and rights related matters

The Schedule should relate to compulsory acquisition, temporary possession, protective provisions and statutory undertakers. It should comprise a table (or tables) which can be easily updated, representing a live document which can be easily updated at every Deadline and include the following information as a minimum:

- Identification of all Affected Persons (APs) where agreement has not yet been reached in relation to all powers of land acquisition, rights and temporary possession
- Relevant plot numbers and any corresponding references in the Book of Reference
- Examination Library references of Relevant Representations, Written Representations and Statement of Common Ground (if provided)
- The purposes and duration for which the land is sought
- A summary of the APs objections, the Applicant's response and progress in reaching a voluntary agreement
- Next steps to be taken with an estimated timescale for agreement

In addition to land where agreement has not been reached with landowners, the following information is also required:

- Plots where the Applicant has not yet been able to identify landowners or interests
- Crown Land plots
- Each Statutory Undertaker where s127 and/or s138 of the Planning Act 2008 is applicable

- Progress in relation to the Protective Provisions included in Schedule 13 of the draft Development Consent Order and any related side agreements

Please note that the information will be published on the project webpage, so commercial and/or confidential details need not be given.

The Schedule should be updated at each Deadline, together with a tracked changes version, or provide confirmation that there is no change to the previous version.

b) Documents and Plans

The ExA requests a schedule of identifying the latest version of each individual document and plan submitted by the Applicant and clear identification of the document references which are to be certified under Schedule 11 of the draft Development Consent Order.

The Schedule should be updated at each Deadline, together with a tracked changes version, or provide confirmation that there is no change to the previous version.

c) Other Consents

The ExA requests a schedule of other consents, including any licences and agreements, required for the delivery of the Proposed Development. This should include the name of the consent, the relevant legislation, the consenting authority, why the consent is required, a summary of the up-to-date position and when it is expected to be obtained.

The Schedule should be updated at each Deadline, together with a tracked changes version, or provide confirmation that there is no change to the previous version.

6. Local Impact Reports

A Local Impact Report (LIR) is a report in writing giving details of the likely impact of a Proposed Development on a local authority's area (or any part of that area). For more information about the importance and content of LIRs, see our [Advice Note One: Local Impact Reports](#).

The ExA requests LIRs from the host local authorities Boston Borough Council, North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council, and also welcomes LIRs from any other neighbouring local authorities who may wish to submit one. All LIRs are requested to be submitted into the Examination no later than by Deadline 1 in order to front-load the Examination and maximise the available time. The production of the LIRs will also assist in focusing the SoCGs, but significant duplication should be avoided.

7. Comments on Relevant Representations

The Applicant and other Interested Parties are invited to provide any comments on the Relevant Representations by **Deadline 1**.

Comments on Relevant Representations should specify the names of the parties making the representation and the relevant Examination Library reference in order to demonstrate that all Relevant Representations have been responded to.

8. Additional Submissions

The ExA has exercised its discretion and made a Procedural Decision to accept the following Additional Submissions:

- S.56 Statutory Consultation Comment by the Canal and River Trust
- S.56 Statutory Consultation Comment by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

These can be viewed under the Additional Submissions section in the [Examination Library](#)

Availability of Examination Documents

The application documents and Relevant Representations are available on the [project webpage](#).

All further documents submitted in the course of the Examination will also be published under the [Documents tab](#) of the [project webpage](#).

The Examination Library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [Examination Library](#) which is accessible by clicking the blue button under the Documents tab. The [Examination Library](#) is updated regularly throughout the Examination.

The [Examination Library](#) records and provides a hyperlink to:

- Each application document;
- each representation made to the Examination; and
- 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 [Examination Library](#) when referring to any Examination Documents in any future submissions that you make.**

Electronic deposit locations

Documents can be viewed electronically, free of charge, at the electronic deposit locations listed in the table below. Please note that for the libraries you may need to bring a form of identification and register as a library member in order to use a computer at these locations.

Annex H

Local authority	Venue/address	Opening hours	Printing costs
North Kesteven District Council	Sleaford Library 13 – 16 Market Place Sleaford NG34 7SR	Monday & Tuesday: 09:00 – 17:00 Wednesday: 09:00 – 17:00 Thursday: 09:00 – 18:00 Friday: 09:00 – 17:00 Saturday: 09:00 – 13:00 Sunday: Closed	A4 BW COST: 10p A4 COLOUR COST: 20p A3 BW COST: 40p A3 COLOUR COST: 50p
North Kesteven District Council	Heckington Fen Community Hub Council Chambers St Andrew's Street Heckington Sleaford NG34 9RE	Monday to Saturday: 10:00 - 12:00 Sunday: Closed	A4 BW COST: 10p A4 COLOUR COST: 20p A3 BW COST: 40p A3 COLOUR COST: 50p
Lincolnshire County Council	Boston Library County Hall Boston Lincolnshire PE21 6DY	Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday: 09:00 – 17:00 Thursday: 09:00 – 18:00 Friday: 09:00 – 17:00 Saturday: 09:00 – 16:00 Sunday: Closed	A4 BW COST: 10p A4 COLOUR COST: 20p A3 BW COST: 40p A3 COLOUR COST: 50p

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 postcard or email from the Planning Inspectorate) beginning 2003 or HFSP. 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 eg technical reports, media articles etc. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.4: The Examination](#) for further information about making written submissions. All submissions must be made in a format that can be viewed in full on the National Infrastructure Planning 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 E** 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.