



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Heckington Fen Solar Park
<b>File reference</b>	EN010123
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	08 March 2022
<b>Meeting with</b>	Ecotricity
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams Meeting
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project Update Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	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.

### ***Agricultural Land Classification – grid route and onsite***

Ecotricity (“the Applicant”) acknowledged that the Proposed Development site comprises best and most versatile (BMV) and lower grade agricultural land. The Applicant will be conducting a sequential test to justify the land used for the Proposed Development. It was noted that the loss of BMV land and the impact on food supply is a concern for Lincolnshire County Council.

The Applicant is proposing to conduct agricultural surveys on portions of the Proposed Development site, rather than surveying the entirety of the site including the grid cabling route, given that the cabling is underground. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider the location of the above ground cabling components in light of minimising interruptions to farming the land and the overall impact on loss of BMV land. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to seek agreement on the approach with the relevant landowners and Local Authorities.

The Applicant discussed grazing and the securing of grazing as a form of mitigation against the loss of BMV land. The Inspectorate encouraged the Applicant to provide clarity on such mitigation and secure through the Development Consent Order (DCO), sheep grazing across the lifetime of the Proposed Development in discussion with relevant Local Authorities and the local community. In addition, the Inspectorate advised the Applicant to remain attentive to the Examination of the Sunnica Energy Farm which may provide useful in terms of being another solar farm project.

The Applicant discussed the proposed ecological enhancement area which is proposed to be located on BMV land adjacent to the Proposed Development site. The Applicant’s approach

was discussed and the principle that the proposed enhancement would result in the removal of land from agricultural use. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider the cumulative impact on the loss of BMV land on a county-wide basis given the number of proposed nationally significant solar projects in Lincolnshire, as requested by the Local Authority.

### ***Rochdale Envelope – Trackers and Bifacials***

The Applicant is considering two different solar technologies and their impacts (i.e. – glint and glare, water runoff, etc). It added that a parameter plan would be included for both technologies if both are to be included in the Environmental Statement. The Applicant noted that one technology may be removed from consideration following the formation of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR). The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider the views of statutory consultees and Local Authorities if including both potential options within the Environmental Statement. The Inspectorate added that the two options may increase complexity of the Examination of the application if accepted.

### ***Grid route works including at Bicker Fen Substation***

The Applicant noted that grid route works are required at Bicker Fen Substation. Ecotricity wish to conduct these works but noted that National Grid would prefer to conduct these through their Permitted Development Rights.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to make sure the works at Bicker Fen Substation are fully assessed in the Environmental Statement as they are part of the Proposed Development including, for example, construction and operational noise impacts.

### ***Further information relating to the archaeological assessment required on the cable route and trial trenching on site***

The Applicant explained that geophysical surveys for the archaeological assessment on the proposed site have been subcontracted out to four different consultants to survey different sections due to the size of the area. The Applicant is continuing to discuss this approach with the local authority.

The Applicant will be conducting geophysical surveys across the grid route after the site has been surveyed.

The Applicant is considering whether trial trenching will be required and if so, the timing of such works (i.e. whether it would be a pre-commencement requirement for cable routing). The Applicant is continuing to discuss this with the Local Authorities with the view of producing a Statement of Common Ground.

The Inspectorate discussed the drafting of the Development Consent Order (DCO) in relation to trial trenching given that these undertakings in themselves are not considered works, should they be undertaken pre-commencement. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant ensure that the DCO is clear on whether any Written Schemes of Investigations are required to be signed off prior to the undertake of trial trenching and if so, when these would be triggered in the DCO.

## ***Differences between Regulation 11 and the Applicant's consultation list***

The Applicant discussed the difference between the Inspectorate's list of consultation bodies under Regulation 11(1)(a) of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and the Applicant's consultation list. The Inspectorate advised that during scoping, only those parties identified through the regulations were consulted whereas the consultation undertaken by the Applicant was able to be extended.

There was a discussion on which internal drainage board was consulted.

## ***Fire risk and energy storage***

The Applicant is proposing an energy storage unit in a central zone in the proposed development site. The Applicant has not yet decided its approach as to how the components would be housed, either together or separated and which components will be required with technology continually changing.

The Applicant explained that the fire risk is a high risk issue with a low probability, and that it will likely be scoped in to the Environmental Statement. However, despite the low probability, the Applicant was seeking to include mitigation through the design. The Inspectorate explained that the Applicant could seek guidance from the Health and Safety Executive and advised the Applicant to continue a dialogue with Lincolnshire County Council.

## ***Assessment of maximum extents***

The Applicant does not intend to define the maximum capacity of the Proposed Development.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to make sure the project description in the Environmental Statement and Development Consent Order is clear, consistent and to justify the suitability of proposed maximum extents. Whilst recognising the need for flexibility in a project to allow for technological advances, the Inspectorate impressed the importance of clear parameters being required to meet the EIA regulations and enable a robust EIA. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to look at assessments of maximum extents for nationally significant offshore windfarms and strategic rail freight interchanges where flexibility is also often required.

## ***AOB***

The Applicant anticipates running statutory consultation from June to August 2022 with an ambition to submit an application to the Inspectorate in Q1 2023.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to ensure that Photomontages demonstrate both best and worst-case scenarios.

## ***Specific decisions/ follow-up required?***

The following actions were agreed:

Planning Inspectorate to investigate which internal drainage boards were consulted at scoping and the rationale for their inclusion.

