



Meeting note

Project name	Mallard Pass Solar Project
File reference	EN010127
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	27 September 2021
Meeting with	Windell Energy
Venue	Microsoft Teams Meeting
Meeting objectives	Inception 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).

Details of the proposed development

The project is located to the northeast of Peterborough, adjacent the village of Essendine to the east, south and west, in the county of Lincolnshire. The Applicant, Windell Energy, was offered a grid connection of 320 MW from National Grid. This connection would be to a substation primarily used to supply energy to the East Coast Mainline (ECML). The Applicant noted that part of the land is designated as suitable for wind development in the local plan.

The development is named Mallard Pass due to its proximity near the East Coast mainline where the historic steam train locomotive "The Mallard" used to run.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that initial option agreements have been established with some landowners.

Project programme

The Applicant confirmed that it has been communicating with several Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and that it expects to issue a Consultation Fundamentals paper ahead of stage one consultation in Q4 2021 and a draft Statement of Community Consultation (dSoCC) with the LPAs in Q1 2022. The final SoCC will be submitted by Q2 2022.

The Applicant is aiming to have drafted the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) by late Q1 2022.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate of the submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) by Q4 2022.

EIA

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that it will aim to make the Scoping request by Q1 2022. The Inspectorate advised that a request later in January would allow the team to give constructive advice on a more clearly defined project, and provide greater confidence to scope out a wider range of topics based on evidence. The Inspectorate queried the Applicant on biodiversity net-gain, to which it confirmed that early survey work was being carried out to ensure that enough land will be available to meet a target of 10% biodiversity net gain.

The Applicant stated that the site comprises primarily grade 3 agricultural land (with some land in grade 2). In close proximity to the north west of the site, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was highlighted. The Inspectorate highlighted the need to consider the cumulative impact of agricultural land take with other solar farm developments proposed in the area. The Applicant agreed, but also noted the new draft NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) published on 6 September 2021, which confirms that "land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location" (para 2.48.13). The Applicant noted that it was also considering the potential impact of the proposed development on minerals.

The Applicant highlighted the possible need to raise the height of the solar panels in areas of the site at risk from flooding and how it could affect the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

The Applicant explained that the site has some archaeological sensitivity including a Scheduled Ancient Monument in Essendine and will be undertaking geophysical survey work. It also highlighted that it was considering the impact of its proposals on the setting of Essendine and of Burghley House, although it noted that Burghley is set topographically lower than the proposed development site.

The Applicant stated that there was some potential to require s53 consents for rights of entry for surveying but that this was unlikely as surveys were likely to be via voluntary agreement with landowners.

Future consultation

AOB