



Meeting note

Project name	Mallard Pass Solar Project
File reference	EN010127
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	14 December 2021
Meeting with	The Applicant
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project 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.

Introduction

The Applicant outlined its concept plan and noted that it formed part of its current consultation material.

Environmental Impact Assessment (inc. EIA scoping)

The Applicant has commenced work on its EIA scoping and baseline data gathering. A scoping submission is anticipated in late January 2022. The Applicant confirmed it has reviewed Cleve Hill, Little Crow Solar Farm and Sunnica Energy Farm Scoping Opinions to inform content of the EIA Scoping request. The Inspectorate reminded the Applicant that a shapefile needs to be submitted 10 days in advance of a formal scoping submission.

The Applicant explained it has completed surveys relating to: Land Use/Soil, Transport, and Ecology and obtained flood data from the Environment Agency. Further baseline surveys relating to the following matters are either planned or in progress: Heritage Site walkover, LVIA, Geophysical Survey, Tree Survey, Topography, Ground Conditions and Noise.

The Inspectorate queried if deliveries to the site require use of Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs). The Applicant confirmed it is completing assessments and swept path analysis but that the main transformer weighs in excess of 100 tonnes, so AIL are likely. The Applicant confirmed that it would include any offsite amendments to the road network to facilitate AIL deliveries in the redline boundary plans defining the order limits

in its application for development consent. It was noted that Ryhall 400kv substation development also required AIL and the routing strategy for that had been reviewed.

The Inspectorate noted the Applicant's intention to undertake Geophysical surveys. The Inspectorate queried if the Applicant will be required to undertake trial trenching. The Applicant explained that further conversation will be needed with Local Authorities (LA's) as the design progresses and that the need for trial trenching would be determined by the findings of the geophysical surveys. The Applicant noted that removing land from heavy ploughing regimes could be beneficial for archaeology as noted in the draft NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3).

The Inspectorate highlighted two recent Welsh DNS decisions relating to solar farms and highlighted the need for applications to address impacts upon best and most versatile agricultural land. The Applicant confirmed they were aware of the recent decisions and noted that the draft EN3 included some guidance on the issue.

The Inspectorate queried the Applicant's approach to wintering bird surveys. The Applicant confirmed it is planning on one year of surveys at this stage. The Inspectorate noted that any variation from standard survey methods would need clear justification and should be agreed in writing Natural England/the Local Planning Authority ecologists.

The Applicant noted that it did not intend to survey hedgerows e.g. for dormice. The Applicant stated there would only be short breaks in hedgerow, not widespread removal. The Inspectorate advised that if the Applicant is removing any hedgerow it would need to undertake appropriate surveys as the Examining Authority will want to understand that there is no impediment to licensing and in the absence of the survey information, Natural England may not be able to give this assurance. The Applicant noted the Inspectorate's response and will give further consideration prior to submitting scoping.

The Applicant highlighted that based on the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) methodology, it was unlikely that Heavy Goods Vehicle numbers would exceed the thresholds for undertaking more detailed assessment. The Inspectorate noted that the scoping and ES should provide a clear explanation of the likely vehicle movements during construction and operation to support any scope out of more detailed air quality assessments.

Approach to description of capacity

The Applicant confirmed it will follow the same approach as Cleve Hill, Hornsea 3 and Hornsea 4 to not set a limit on the maximum output for the project. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to ensure it keeps within its parameters assessed in the Environmental Statement.

Stage One Consultation update and feedback

The Applicant outlined its consultation statistics. The Applicant noted it had 2 community webinars, 3 in person events, and all events went well with interesting points being put across. The Applicant stated, at the time of the meeting, it received 258 feedback forms, combination of online and hard copy with 161 emails received. The Applicant confirmed it is collating and reviewing the comments received and looking how it can develop the

project design in response of its consultation which closes on Thursday 16 December 2021.

The Applicant noted it is engaging with the LAs on a regular basis and it has also reached out politically as well.

The Applicant confirmed its intention is to issue a community newsletter towards the end of January.

