



The Planning Inspectorate

National
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Services: 0303 444 5000
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All Interested Parties and Statutory
Parties

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN010132

Date: 13 September 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (as amended) – Rule 9

Application by West Burton Solar Project Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the West Burton Solar Project

I write to inform you that the Examining Authority (ExA) has made a Procedural Decision to adjourn the Preliminary Meeting (PM) that opened on 7 September 2023 and to delay the start of the Examination.

This decision has been made following consideration of written submissions made at Procedural Deadline A and oral representations made at the PM (Day 1) by the Applicant, Statutory Parties, and Interested Parties.

Concerns have been expressed about the close alignment of this Examination with that of other solar Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects both in terms of geography and the timing of Examinations, namely Mallard Pass Solar Project, Gate Burton Solar Project, Cottam Solar Project, and Heckington Fen Solar Project. Specifically, Statutory Parties and Interested Parties noted difficulties with the draft timetable, based on the overlap of this with other project timetables requiring attendance at events and written submissions by certain deadlines.

Statutory and Interested Parties have also highlighted the importance of having a face-to-face element to hearings. However, the Applicant has confirmed the difficulty of identifying suitable venues for the events set out in the draft timetable, with the suggestion that those proposed for December 2023 be moved to January 2024. This would create further issues in managing these events at a timely point in the Examination.

The ExA had sought to anticipate and address these challenges in the draft Examination timetable by setting deadlines and events well into, and towards the end of, the prescribed 6 month period. Even so, the position explained above suggests that the ExA could face

challenges in receiving timely, adequate, and informed submissions, and therefore the information it requires to conduct an efficient and effective Examination. An effective Examination is critical to ensuring that the ExA can adequately assess the impacts of the Application so that the ExA's recommendations to the Secretary of State are fully informed and lawful.

The ExA will endeavour to ensure that the delay to the commencement of the Examination is minimised. Consideration will be given to the finalised timetable for the Cottam Solar Project which will be issued shortly in a Rule 8 letter. After that time, we will issue a procedural decision, with a revised timetable and invitation to attend the resumed PM, which will provide at least 21 days notice for Day 2 of the PM.

In practice this means that the start of the Examination will be delayed by at least one month. We will aim to ensure that it is not delayed by more than two months. We say this recognising the importance of balancing the resourcing issues identified with conducting a timely Examination.

If you have any questions about the content of this letter, please contact the Case Team on the details above.

Yours faithfully

Andrea Mageean
Lead Member of the Examining Authority