



Meeting note

Project name	West Burton Solar Farm & Cottam Solar Farm Projects
File reference	EN010132 & EN010133
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	28 July 2022
Meeting with	West Burton Solar Project Limited & Cottam Solar Project Limited
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.

Statutory Consultation Update – Phase 2 (15 June 2022 – 27 July 2022)

The Applicant stated that they had utilized combined consultation opportunities across West Burton and Cottam, conducting six face to face events and two webinars, seeing approximately 500 submissions. The Applicant saw good attendance but lower attendance for the webinars since Covid-19 restrictions have relaxed. The Applicant also provided free of charge USB sticks upon request that includes the full PEIR.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant had been tracking engagement with deposit locations. The Applicant stated that they have not been able to gather data on engagement via deposit location and the Inspectorate advised it is not a requirement but may be helpful to assess whether more parties are engaging in person or online.

The Inspectorate queried whether the extended consultation would impact the submission date. The Applicant advised that at this stage there is no expectation for the submission date to be delayed.

The Applicant highlighted that during community consultation, concerns were raised regarding flood risk on specific areas on the sites. The Inspectorate queried whether these areas aligned with the baseline findings from their technical assessments. The Applicant confirmed that this was the case.

Best and Most Versatile Land (BMV)

The Applicant reported that the results from the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Report became available during Phase 2 of the statutory consultation on the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) for the West Burton Solar Project. The PEIR states that if this ALC update became available during the statutory consultation period and the findings materially changed previous land gradings, then the Applicant would provide an Addendum to the PEIR and this document would be issued for a further 28-day consultation.

The Applicant explained that the ALC survey indicated that what was previously thought to be Grade 3b land at West Burton 4, was now identified as Grade 3a land, almost doubling the amount of Grade 3a percentage cover across the sites within the West Burton Project, whilst reducing the percentage cover of Grade 3b. Following these updated results, the Applicant explained that 42% and 8.5% of the land for the West Burton site and Cottam site respectively, was BMV.

The Inspectorate queried whether the design of Cottam and/or West Burton would need to be altered to reflect these findings. The Applicant reported that no changes were required to West Burton 4, as no construction activity or infrastructure is proposed to be located on Grade 1 or Grade 2 land at that site. *The Inspectorate advised the importance of the Applicant detailing the extent of the agricultural updates and how they have dealt with them within the ES.*

Trial Trenching Update (West Burton and Cottam)

The Applicant confirmed that discussions are still ongoing with Lincolnshire County Council regarding the extent of trial trenching to determine the archaeological baseline environment.

The Inspectorate queried whether this may cause delays to submission. The Applicant advised that delays are possible and that they will inform the Inspectorate of any changes to the schedule.

Landscape and Visual 360 visual viewer tool (West Burton and Cottam)

The Applicant explained that they are seeking to provide a 360 degree viewer, a digital method of previewing 360 degree horizontal field of view (HFoV) viewpoint photography which aids understanding the potential likely visual effects resulting from the West Burton and Cottam projects and any cumulative developments. The 360 degree tool is web based and allows the user to toggle between different viewpoints as well as showing photomontages at different stages of the Development e.g. baseline, with the development, with mitigation and without. To date, the Applicant noted that the tool had been used as part of the statutory consultation process.

The Applicant queried whether this tool could be integrated and submitted as part of both the West Burton and Cottam applications. The Inspectorate welcomed this approach but requested more technical information which the Applicant agreed to provide.

POST MEETING NOTE: The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with more information and a link to the version of the tool which was used for the West Burton and Cottam PEIR consultations (Cottam Solar Project [<https://www.cottamsolar.co.uk/digital-viewpoint-photography-cottam>] and West Burton Solar Project [<https://www.westburtonsolar.co.uk/digital-viewpoint-photography-west-burton>]). .

In their response, the Inspectorate welcomed this opportunity to facilitate this 360 degree visualisation package as a trial. The Inspectorate advised that the application submission would require the equivalent still photography so the 360 degree visualisation package will be an additional element – both for comparison purposes and to ensure compliance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition, 2013) and the Landscape Institute's Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Advice Note 01/11 (2011). Based on the example links the Applicant provided, the Inspectorate highlighted the following:

- The map inset is helpful especially with the mobile cone relating to the panorama. This map inset however should be positioned outside of the main viewpoint frame as it occupies a large portion of the vista.
- The music does not form part of the collected data, as such, for submission the viewpoint would either need to be accompanied by silence or by the actual background noise of each specific location.
- For each viewpoint the appropriate data and metadata should be provided as set out in the Landscape Institute's technical guidance notes – date, time, camera specification and height (for example).

Although not wholly applicable as this 360 visualisation package concerns viewpoints rather than an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), the Inspectorate would however like to draw the Applicant's attention to the information requirements set out in [Annex A of this letter](#) [infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010107/EN010107-000413-210115%20SHBEC%20Rule%209%20letter.pdf] as some of these requests will be relevant. The output of from this letter was this video [<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010107/EN010107-000526-SHBEC%20UAV%20March%202021.html>] which was submitted as an additional 'novel' examination document for South Humber Bank Energy Centre Project.

- From the time of submission, the Inspectorate would ideally host the visualisation package on the National Infrastructure (NI) website. However, if this is not achievable, the Inspectorate would expect the appropriate metadata for assurance and as above, would be required as the usual still photography to directly publish on to the NI website.

Noise and Health Assessment Methodology (West Burton and Cottam)

The Applicant explained that they are finalising discussions on the methodology for the noise and health assessment with West Lindsay District Council. .

EIA Scoping – aspect update (West Burton and Cottam)

The Applicant queried whether a separate agricultural chapter could be provided in submission as this is different to what is proposed in the Scoping Reports for West Burton and Cottam. The Inspectorate agreed this was appropriate and requested that the Environmental Statement explains why this approach differs to that proposed in scoping.

The applicant also indicated that they would be submitting a single 'Cultural Heritage' ES chapter addressing both archaeology and built heritage, rather than separate ES chapters for each subject, as had initially been suggested in the EIA scoping request. The Inspectorate agreed this was appropriate.

POST MEETING NOTE:

The Inspectorate queried the Applicants stance on providing draft documents to the Inspectorate for review. The Applicant advised that they do not expect the Development Consent Order to include anything novel and therefore have not factored this into their schedule and do not plan to submit draft documents. The

Applicant is reviewing draft documents on other solar projects to incorporate any relevant advice into the application.

Land Negotiations – The Inspectorate queried how far land negotiations had reached. The Applicant advised that they would require Compulsorily Acquisition (CA) powers. The Applicant is not currently aware of any special category land but there may be some crown interests, despite the project design seeking to avoid any special category land.

The Applicant advised that there is ongoing negotiation regarding the cable route, however, agreements are already in place for the solar array sites.

The Applicant confirmed they have a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) in place with Lincolnshire County Council and Nottingham County Council and they are also working to get one in place with West Lindsey and Bassetlaw District Councils.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant and the Inspectorate agreed to arrange the next project update meeting for mid-September.