



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	West Burton Solar Project <i>and</i> Cottam Solar Project
<b>File reference</b>	EN010132 <i>and</i> EN010133
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	11 January 2022
<b>Meeting with</b>	Island Green Power
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<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.

### ***Proposed development overview/update***

The Applicant explained the differences between the two solar projects in regard to energy generation and storage. Cottam Solar Project will generate approximately 600 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy and will have a 600 MW energy storage capacity. West Burton Solar Project will generate approximately 480 MW of renewable energy and will have a 20 MW energy storage capacity. There are separate National Grid connection points to the existing but decommissioned power stations.

The Applicant noted that the majority of land parcels required are situated in the administrative boundary of West Lindsey District Council within Lincolnshire County Council. Sub-sites Cottam 1, Cottam 2, Cottam 3, West Burton 1, West Burton 2, and West Burton 3 are all located here, with West Burton 4 situated in the neighbouring administrative region of Bassetlaw District Council to the west. As such, the development proposals span two District Councils and two County Councils, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.

The Applicant explained that Cottam 1 is situated near Willingham by Stow and Normanby by Stow; Cottam 2 further north, near the village of Corringham; and Cottam 3 further north, near the village of Blyton. The Applicant explained that West Burton 1 is near Broxholme; West Burton 2 north of Saxilby; West Burton 3 to the southeast of Marton; and West Burton 4 near the village of Clayworth.

The Applicant reminded the Inspectorate of the anticipated elements including, solar panels; built infrastructure (substations, invertors, and energy storage); buried

infrastructure (grid connection cabling); safety features (fencing and CCTV) and landscaping and ecological enhancement.

### ***Programme overview***

The Applicant intends to conduct statutory consultation on the proposals including the preparation of its Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) in summer/autumn 2022, and currently anticipates submission of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate in Autumn 2022. The Inspectorate sought clarity on the timings of the current programme. The Applicant anticipates the examination and determination of the DCO to occur during 2023, with a view to commencing construction in 2024.

### ***Consultation***

The Applicant explained its multi-phased iterative approach to consultation, consisting of; a soft launch of the project in September/October 2021 where the Applicant met with local authorities and parish councils; Phase 1 non-statutory consultation; and a more detailed Phase 2 statutory-consultation expected for Summer-to-Autumn 2022.

The Applicant discussed its approach to recent community consultation. The Applicant had undertaken non-statutory consultation on both projects simultaneously and provided the same level of information for each scheme. The Applicant's Phase 1 consultation ran from 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 to 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021, with a core consultation zone of over 9000 properties receiving a leaflet and feedback form. The Applicant explained that this provided the community the opportunity to comment on specific land parcels, the routing of cable corridors and its approach to Phase 2 consultation. The Applicant explained it had used a combination of hard copy materials available at Community Access Points and digital methods such as online webinars and the use of an interactive digital engagement platform. The Applicant held five in-person information events held at villages across seven sites.

### ***Analysis of consultation feedback***

The Applicant is currently analysing the consultation feedback data. It explained that the majority of feedback was received through hard copy feedback forms (525). The Applicant intends to develop and refine the proposals forward following the initial responses.

The Inspectorate asked how the Applicant intends to conduct statutory consultation for the two solar projects. The Applicant expects to run consultation in parallel and anticipates an eight-week consultation period.

The Applicant noted that some people had commented on the potential for conducting consultation in tandem with Low Carbon's proposed Gate Burton Energy Park. The Inspectorate advised that local authorities and parish councils may have experience or could offer suggestions on the most helpful ways to approach local communities. The Applicant is considering establishing a working group to work with parish councils on West Burton 4.

### ***Stakeholders and other statutory consultees***

The Applicant noted that it is engaging with the four host authorities and is discussing resourcing in light of a number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in their areas, including several solar applications.

The Applicant has met with the Environment Agency, Highways England, Natural England and is in dialogue with the Canal and Rivers Trust. The Inspectorate queried how the Applicant intends to approach the relevant Fire and Rescue service. The Applicant expects to talk to them individually.

### ***Development nearby***

The Inspectorate queried whether, alongside Garden Village proposals near Cottam, there is other Local Plan policy that is of interest to the proposed development(s). The Applicant noted a site at High Marnham, Bassetlaw, where the decommissioned coal-fire powered station has been allocated for business development associated with renewable energy as well as a potential development at RAF Scampton.

### ***Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping***

The Applicant is having regard to the general approach adopted in Scoping Opinions produced by other solar NSIPs including Gate Burton Energy Park and Oaklands Farm Solar Project. The Inspectorate informed the Applicant of the recent Scoping report submitted by Heckington Fen Solar Park and to review other previous solar scoping reports and opinions.

The Inspectorate encouraged the Applicant to include quality technical evidence to support their case and to justify the scoping in and out of certain variables. The Applicant considered that to date, it had been producing robust technical evidence to support the information within the Scoping report including, extensive ecological surveys, Phase 1 ground conditions, resource assessments, electromagnetic field assessments and glint and glare reports.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Scoping reports for both schemes would be submitted simultaneously. The Applicant asked whether the Inspectorate would prefer if the Scoping reports were submitted in parallel, given the commonality in terms of issue and approach. The Inspectorate advised that it could benefit relevant consultees in their response if the Scoping reports were submitted in a staggered manner.

The Inspectorate queried whether there would be any shared elements between schemes. The Applicant noted that the schemes are designed as separate projects, although cable route corridors have yet to be refined so there is currently some overlap of the red line boundaries to inform the Scoping Request. However, the Applicant may wish to coordinate construction and traffic across the projects and, if possible, may share construction compounds in light of cumulative effects.

The Applicant added that it has been discussing elements of their proposals including land parcels, cable routing and approach to LPAs with Gate Burton Energy Park. The Inspectorate stated that it would be important for the scoping reports to explain any relationships between the three projects (West Burton, Cottam, and Gate Burton) where they overlap or share elements.

The Inspectorate encouraged the Applicant to; define overlaps between projects in the Scoping opinion; consider battery storage and the potential for major accidents and disasters; consider waste and decommissioning and cumulative effects given the number of solar farms within the local area.

### ***Update on land matters***

The Applicant noted that the use of all sites had been agreed but the approach to cable corridors is at an early stage in identifying and discussions with potential landowners. The Applicant added there is currently no open category land or special land affected, however proposed crossings of the River Trent and local branch line might trigger land interests for bodies such as Crown Estate and/or Network Rail.

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

The following actions were agreed:

- Applicant to send GIS shapefile ten days in advance
- Review next milestones of programm

