



# Stonestreet Green Solar

## Written Summary of Oral Submissions at the Preliminary Meeting and Responses to Action Points

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# 1 Written summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at the Preliminary Meeting

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## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document summarises the oral submissions put by EPL 001 Limited ('**EPL**' or the '**Applicant**') at the Preliminary Meeting ('**PM**') which took place in a blended format at the Ashford International Hotel and on Microsoft Teams on 19 November 2024.
- 1.1.2 In what follows, the Applicant's submissions on the points raised broadly follow the Agenda for the PM set out in the Examining Authority's ('**ExA**') letter which was published on the Planning Inspectorate's website on 22 October 2024 (the Rule 6 letter) [[PD-004](#)].
- 1.1.3 The Applicant, which is promoting the Stonestreet Green Solar project (the '**Project**') was represented by Mr Hugh Flanagan of Francis Taylor Building, instructed by Herbert Smith Freehills LLP.

## 1.2 Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introduction

- 1.2.1 The ExA formally opened the PM at 10.00am. The ExA welcomed participants, set out the purpose of the PM (this being to consider procedural aspects of the Examination rather than substantive views on the Application) and led introductions.
- 1.2.2 No queries were raised by the Applicant or the Interested Parties ('**IPs**') present relating to the agenda for the PM.

## 1.3 Agenda Item 2: ExA's remarks about the Examination process

- 1.3.1 The ExA noted that Annexes A and B of the Rule 6 letter set out introductory information about the Examination process [[PD-004](#)]. The ExA explained the function of the statutory timescales under the Planning Act 2008 for the Examination (up to 6 months), ExA's recommendation (up to 3 months) and Secretary of State's ('**SoS**') decision on the Application (up to 3 months).
- 1.3.2 The ExA noted that the Examination process is inquisitorial rather than adversarial, and that the ExA's report would be based on facts and evidence. He confirmed that the process would primarily be a written one, and there would be no need for IPs to repeat information in previous written submissions during the course of the Examination, either submitted by that party or another party. The ExA further confirmed there would be opportunity for IPs to supplement the information in their Relevant Representations during the Examination.

## 1.4 Agenda Item 3: Oral representations from Interested Parties on the Examination process

- 1.4.1 In response to submissions from Ashford Borough Councillor Linda Harman (ward member for Saxon Shore and Chair of Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council ('**ABPC**')) relating to the adequacy of the pre-application process, the location of the hearings in Ashford rather than Aldington and issues with local people with limited digital connectivity accessing online application materials, the ExA confirmed that he would welcome written representations from the local community on these matters.
- 1.4.2 In response to comments about the location of the hearings being in Ashford rather than in Aldington village (being closer to the site of the Project), Mr Flanagan on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that the Aldington village hall had been considered, but that the Ashford International Hotel was considered by the PINS case team to be a preferable location. Mr Flanagan noted that its size, audio visual facilities, and break out rooms for the ExA, Applicant and other parties made it suitable.
- 1.4.3 Mr Flanagan noted that the agenda for Issue Specific Hearing 1 ('**ISH1**') (Annex F of the Rule 6 Letter [\[PD-004\]](#)) has some text below the agenda table which appears to relate to Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 1 ('**CAH1**'). He noted the Applicant had assumed this was stray text that should relate to CAH1. The ExA confirmed this was correct.
- 1.4.4 In response to comments from local resident Louise Jessup relating to the pre-application and examination processes, the ExA confirmed that the agenda for the PM would be made available on screen and requested printed copies be circulated around the meeting room. The ExA confirmed that further questions of this nature should be directed to the Planning Inspectorate ('**PINS**') case team.
- 1.4.5 In response to comments from Alison Eardley, speaking on behalf of ABPC requesting that the hearings be moved to Aldington Village Hall, the ExA confirmed that this week's hearings could not be moved as logistical arrangements had already been finalised and the required notices of hearings published. The ExA confirmed that alternative locations would be considered in the event that future hearings were held.
- 1.4.6 In response to comments from ABPC relating to A3 application documents and (in particular) plans being difficult to read, Mr Flanagan on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that they would consider how this might be addressed.
- 1.4.7 **Post-hearing note:** Please see the Applicant's response to Action Point 1 below.
- 1.5 Agenda Item 4: Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (Annex C to the Rule 6 letter)**
- 1.5.1 The ExA invited comments on the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues ('**IAPI**').
- 1.5.2 In response, Mr Durling on behalf of Ashford Borough Council ('**ABC**') noted that there should be an explicit reference to cumulative impacts on designated heritage assets of national significance under the heading 'Heritage', which would align with

the points listed for inclusion in the Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG') with Historic England in Annex G to the letter. Mr Durling further noted that effects of the Project on the amenity value and experience of the Public Rights of Way ('PRoW') network should also be added to the IAPI.

- 1.5.3 Mr Tennant on behalf of Aldington and Mersham Support Group ('AMSG') noted that AMSG's written submission requested an issue specific hearing relating to battery energy storage and fire safety. The ExA confirmed this was noted.
- 1.5.4 Councillor Harman proposed the additional topic of rural character should be added to the IAPI, given the impacts the Project will have on Aldington village. She noted her concerns that the Project would denigrate the value of local PRoWs to the local community. The ExA confirmed that these matters would be considered as part of the principal issue of landscape and visual impact.
- 1.5.5 In response, Mr Flanagan on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that the Applicant was content with the IAPI. In respect of the points raised by IPs, Mr Flanagan noted that the Applicant was aware of submissions relating to PRoW. Consideration of PRoW ranges across a number of disciplines of environmental assessment, and the Applicant considers that PRoW matters are adequately covered in the Application.
- 1.5.6 The Applicant also noted that the conclusion that the IAPI is comprehensive is based on negotiating and agreeing SoCGs with all of the parties listed in Annex G to the Rule 6 letter, which is underway. Mr Flanagan confirmed that these SoCGs will cover all of the principal issues listed.

## 1.6 **Agenda Item 5: The Examining Authority's remarks about the draft Examination Timetable (Appendix D of the Rule 6 letter)**

- 1.6.1 The ExA ran through the draft timetable. He noted that the timing of Open Floor Hearing 1 in the evening was to enable as many people to attend as possible.
- 1.6.2 In respect of Issue Specific Hearing 2 (Traffic and Construction) ('ISH2'), the ExA noted that it would be useful for the Applicant to present information about the proposed construction routes in visual form, ideally as a visual fly through.
- 1.6.3 Mr Flanagan on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that a visual presentation would be provided at ISH2.
- 1.6.4 **Post-hearing note:** *Please see the Applicant's response to Action Point 2 below.*
- 1.6.5 The ExA noted that First Written Questions would not be issued until January 2025 and would not repeat matters raised in the Relevant Representations. The ExA asked the Applicant to confirm whether it intended to respond to all written submissions.
- 1.6.6 In response, Mr Flanagan on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that the Applicant's written responses to all Relevant Representations would be submitted at Deadline 1. He further confirmed that responses would be provided to the Local Impact

Reports ('LIRs') and Written Responses at Deadline 2, and that the process of negotiating SoCGs process will happen throughout the Examination.

1.6.7 The ExA encouraged the local authorities not to repeat information in their LIRs in their written representations. He also confirmed that detailed agendas would be published for any hearings held during w/c 24 February 2025.

### 1.7 **Agenda Item 6: Oral representations from Interested Parties on the draft Examination Timetable.**

1.7.1 The ExA invited submissions from the IPs on the draft Examination Timetable and asked whether the Applicant had any intention to submit any change requests.

1.7.2 In response, Mr Flanagan on behalf of the Applicant confirmed there was no intention for the Applicant to submit a change request during the Examination.

1.7.3 Mr Flanagan then made the following two comments:

- He reiterated the request made in the **Applicant's Response to Procedural Deadline A** [\[PD1-001\]](#) that Deadline 2 be moved from Friday 3 January 2025 to Tuesday 7 January 2025 to allow further time for the Applicant and IPs to respond to the LIRs and Written Representations submitted at Deadline 1. He noted that the festive period falling between these two deadlines dramatically cuts down the working days available and noted that ABPC have also raised these concerns [\[PD1-005\]](#).
- Secondly, he noted that Deadline 7 is scheduled for 6 May 2025 and the close of Examination is 19 May 2025. He noted the ExA's oral comment that it could close the Examination early, but observed that if that was to take place, the Applicant would still consider if useful for there to be at least some window between the final deadline and the close of the examination, so that if there are any new matters raised in submissions made at Deadline 7 that need to be addressed by the Applicant, there is a window for that to happen, although it is hoped that that will not be necessary.

1.7.4 Ms Eardley on behalf of ABPC reiterated the request for larger plans to be provided by the Applicant prior to Deadline 1 on 10 December 2024. In response, the Applicant confirmed that this request would be considered.

1.7.5 **Post-hearing note:** *Please see the Applicant's response to Action Point 1 below.*

1.7.6 Ms Potter on behalf of Kent County Council ('KCC') confirmed that the local highway authority technical lead is unable to attend ISH2. She confirmed she was able to attend on behalf of KCC and would take comments away for the highways team to respond to.

1.7.7 Mr Thompson on behalf of CPRE Kent supported the request to move Deadline 2 to 7 January 2025. In response to further comments from CPRE Kent that more time should be afforded for hearings, the ExA confirmed the Examination timetable could

be amended if the ExA deemed this appropriate in order to fully deal with outstanding matters.

- 1.7.8 Mr Durling on behalf of ABC confirmed support for the request to move Deadline 2 to 7 January 2025.
- 1.7.9 The ExA confirmed that the Rule 8 letter would be published shortly and this would confirm the dates for all Examination deadlines.
- 1.7.10 In response to a request from a member of the local community that the biodiversity net gain ('**BNG**') metric be presented in a spreadsheet not a PDF to aid legibility, the Applicant confirmed this would be taken away and considered.
- 1.7.11 **Post-hearing note:** *Please see the Applicant's response to Action Point 3 below.*
- 1.7.12 Mr Tennant on behalf of AMMSG noted that the 6 month Examination was constraining full assessment of the issues in the application, particularly in relation to archaeological assessment.
- 1.7.13 The ExA responded that if this is still at issue at the close of the Examination, this can be managed post-Examination, for example through a control via a DCO requirement and subject to further consultation with Historic England and other IPs if required.

## 1.8 **Agenda Item 7: Any other matters.**

- 1.8.1 The ExA asked whether any person had matters to raise, of which there were none. He reiterated that he would issue the Rule 8 letter and any required procedural decisions as soon as possible after the close of the PM.
- 1.8.2 The ExA thanked participants and closed the PM at 11:02am.

## 2 The Applicant's written submissions in response to Action Points

### 2.1 List of action points arising

2.1.1 Table 2-1 below sets out the list of action points that arose from the Preliminary Meeting and the Applicant's written response to those points.

Table 2-1: List of action points arising and the Applicant's written submissions in response

Action Point	Applicant's response
Action Point 1: Applicant to provide larger / higher quality plans with a readable key to ABPC so they can present these in the village hall to the local community.	The Applicant has discussed this with ABPC and has provided a full size printed copy of the <b>Illustrative Drawings (Doc Ref. 2.7(A))</b> . This is in addition to the printed full size copies of the <b>Works Plans (Doc Ref. 2.3(B))</b> .
Action Point 2: Applicant to consider presentation of construction traffic information at ISH2, the preference being for a visual fly through.	Please refer to the <b>Applicant's Written Summary of Oral Submissions from Issue Specific Hearing 2 and Response to Action Points (Doc Ref. 8.5.5)</b> .
Action Point 3: Applicant to consider presenting BNG metric information in a spreadsheet rather than PDF.	The Applicant notes that this information has already been submitted as an application document in excel format. Please see <b>Appendix 3 Detailed Results of Statutory Biodiversity Metric [APP-145]</b> .