



Meeting note

Project name	Stonestreet Green Solar
File reference	EN010135
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	Friday 31 March 2023
Meeting with	EPL 001 Limited (“The Applicant”)
Venue	Virtual - 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

Introductions were given by the representatives of the Inspectorate and of the Applicant.

Project Update

The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with an update on the proposed scheme and provided responses to questions raised by the Inspectorate. The following updates were provided by the Applicant:

- An overview of changes that had altered the Order Limits, including two additional areas and a reduction in another area of the Order Limits.
- Increased separation is proposed through vegetative screening between bordering properties and the array site to the north of the Proposed Development.
- Geophysical surveys have been completed to confirm potential areas of archaeological significance and this has informed the relocation of battery storage structures away from these areas. Consultation with Kent County Council is ongoing around the approach and timing of pre-construction surveys.
- Further information was provided on landscape and visual impact and the approach to viewpoints suggested to be taken.

The Applicant queried the following:

- Clarification was sought around the approach to the historic environment in committing to pre-construction surveys to inform whether either piling or ballast should be used for solar panel foundations.

The following response was provided by the Inspectorate:

- The Inspectorate confirmed that pre-construction surveys were appropriate to inform the construction method and that agreement should be sought with Kent County Council over the method and timing of such surveys. Should disagreement continue, the Inspectorate could offer a meeting to discuss the positions of both parties at their request.

Programme

The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with an updated Project Programme.

The Applicant indicated that it would submit Draft Documents for review in July 2023; the Inspectorate confirmed that around 6 to 8 weeks should be factored into the project timeline for the draft document reviews. The anticipated application submission was confirmed to be September 2023.

Consultation update

The Applicant explained that a further 5-week period of Statutory Consultation would take place in June 2023. The documents to form part of this Consultation are anticipated to include the Consultation booklet, a “we said, we did report”, Book of Plans, an updated Landscape Strategy and an updated Preliminary Environmental Information Report. A further section 46 notification will be submitted to the Inspectorate for this additional Statutory Consultation.

Engagement with Host Authorities

The Applicant provided updates regarding their engagement with Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council and Folkestone and Hythe District Council as host authorities. The Applicant explained that monthly meetings are being held with the three host authorities. Discussions with Folkestone and Hythe District Council are less advanced than with the other two host authorities.

Planning Performance Agreements are progressing well with Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council and are awaiting final sign off. Statements of Common Ground are expected to be developed with the host authorities in due course.

The Inspectorate queried if there had been any concerns raised around the loss of agricultural land. The Applicant indicated that this had not been flagged as a concern as the Proposed Development site is mostly located outside of Best and Most Versatile land.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant had engaged with Kent County Council as the Local Mineral Planning Authority. Engagement on this topic is expected shortly with Kent County Council Officers.

Policy Update

The following Policy Update was sought by the Application over the Revised Draft National Policy Statement for Energy and whether solar specific advice was anticipated to be

published by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate advised that the National Policy Statement is still under consultation and that sector specific advice is disseminated through project meetings where relevant although, standardised written advice is being considered in the context of NSIP Reform.

Next Steps

The Applicant indicated which documents would be provided in July 2023 for the Draft Documents Review. The Inspectorate encouraged the use of the Draft Documents Review service and for the Applicant to be mindful of advice provided on other cases at draft document review and post-acceptance stages. It was suggested that the areas of disagreement should be identified early to facilitate early understanding and agreement where possible.

AOB

No other items of Any Other Business were raised that are not reflected elsewhere in this meeting note.