



Preliminary Meeting Note

Application:	Byers Gill Solar
Reference:	EN010139
Time and date:	Tuesday 23 July 2024 10:00am
Venue:	Mercure Darlington Kings Hotel and virtually via Microsoft Teams

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the Preliminary Meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Mr. Andre Pinto welcomed those present and introduced himself as the lead member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors, the Examining Authority (ExA) and members Mr. Max Wiltshire and Mr. Alex Oyebade to examine the Byers Gill Solar application.

Mr. Pinto explained the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Mr. Pinto explained that the ExA would be examining the application made by RWE Renewables UK Solar and Storage Limited ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

Mr. Pinto explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and noted that the Examination will commence after the PM closes.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

2. Audio recording

The video recording of this Preliminary Meeting is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#)

3. General Data Protection Regulation

The ExA explained the Planning Inspectorate's duties under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Further info relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Privacy Note](#).

4. Examination Process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), further info can be found in the [Advice Note 8.4](#)

5. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex B](#) of the [Rule 6](#) letter of 25 June 2024 and asked for any observations on them.

Bishopton parish council asked about what is expected of them by the ExA as they were not informed ahead of time. Mr Pinto explained why they were invited to attend following their submitted representation.

Applicant requested to make a SoCC with both Bishopton groups individually to be submitted for the next deadline.

6. Examination Timetable

The ExA noted requests, already received in writing to amend the draft Examination Timetable contained in [Annex C](#) of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further suggestions from the parties in attendance.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the Rule 8 Letter.

The Examination Timetable can be found in the Rule 8 letter which will be published as soon as practicable.

Applicant queried the timescales surrounding the ExA's first written questions. Mr Pinto clarified that the ExA was simply questioning the need for a published draft ahead of time and that this option would be of little benefit.

Darlington Borough Council queried the possibility of an alternative date for the second set of hearings due to resourcing. The ideal alternative would be w/c 16 September 2024. If this is not possible, a request was made to postpone landscape matters until w/c 25 November 2024. The ExA confirmed that further consideration would be given for both requests.

The Applicant suggested a modification to the exam timetable in relation to the Christmas period, specifically noting the provision of further written questions. The ExA confirmed that changes to this period would be considered.

7. Hearings and Site Inspections

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue Specific Hearings
- Open Floor Hearings
- Accompanied Site Inspections (ASI)

- Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI)

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events. These were duly noted and considered by the ExA.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in our [Advice Note 8.5](#)

The ExA provided further explanation regarding locations visited during the previously undertaken site inspection. The USI note can be accessed [here](#).

An interested party requested consideration of a nearby playground for a future USI. The ExA requested further details of this location in writing to be considered for an inspection in the future by Deadline 1.

The ExA confirmed that visits to homes of Interested Parties would be considered if a future USI was requested.

8. Procedural decisions

Procedural decisions can be found in [Annex H](#) of the Rule 6 Letter.

No comments have been made by any of the parties in attendance.