



# Botley West Solar Farm

Environmental Statement

**Volume 1**

**Chapter 3: Consenting and Consultation Process**

November 2024

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## Approval for issue

Jonathan Alsop

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## Glossary

Term	Meaning
The Applicant	SolarFive Ltd
The Project	The Botley West Solar Farm
The Site or Order Limits	The area of land encompassing the Project development and shown on the Site Location and Order Limits Overview (Volume 2, Figure 1.1 of the ES).

## Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
PA 2008	Planning Act 2008
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Information Report
PINS	The Planning Inspectorate
PVDP	Photovolta Development Partners GmbH
SoCC	Statement of Community Consultation

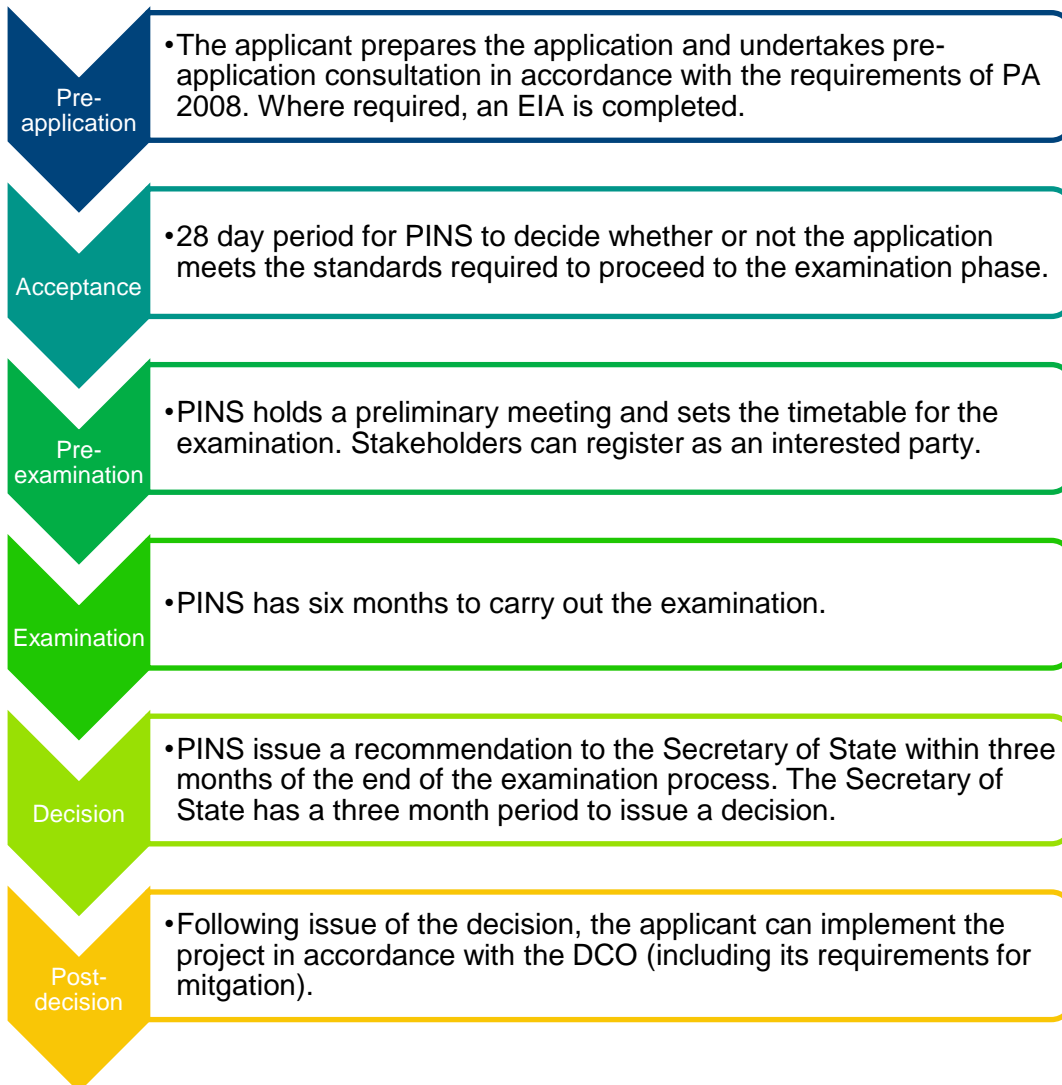
### 3 Consenting and Consultation Process

#### 3.1 Overview of Consenting Process

3.1.1 As set out in the Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 1: Introduction [EN010147/APP/6.3], Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are defined under the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) and require an application for development consent.

3.1.2 The key stages in the application process are set out in the Planning Inspectorate’s (PINS) Advice Note 8: overview of the nationally significant infrastructure planning process for members of the public and others. The stages are summarised below in Diagram 3.1: Overview of the Application Process.

**Diagram 3.1: Overview of the Application Process**



3.1.3 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is undertaken during the pre-application stage. EIA is an iterative process designed to assess projects as informed through pre-application consultation.

3.1.4 The culmination of the EIA process, including this ES, is provided as part of the application for development consent. All consultation completed is documented in the Consultation Report **[EN010147/APP/5.1]**. This includes, for example, consultation with all land interests, prescribed consultees and technical bodies, as well as consultation with the local community in line with the agreed approach set out in the in the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC).

## 3.2 Consultation Process

3.2.1 As stated above, pre-application consultation is an important requirement for development consent applications. It provides an opportunity for stakeholders to comment on the Project whilst at a formative stage, and for consultation feedback to be taken into account as part of the scheme design.

3.2.2 The PA 2008, the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 and the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, include the following requirements for pre-application consultation:

- Notify PINS of the proposed application;
- Produce a SoCC in consultation with the relevant local authorities, setting out how the Applicant proposes to consult the local community about the Project to meet the requirements of Section 47 of PA 2008 and which confirms that the proposed application is EIA development and how the Application will be publicised and consulted on;
- Publish the proposed application and undertake community consultation in accordance with the SoCC;
- Identify and consult statutory consultation bodies in accordance with Section 42 of PA 2008;
- Provide preliminary environmental information in accordance with Regulation 12 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, forming part of the statutory consultation to be carried out prior to the submission of the application;
- Ensure sufficient time for consultation with the community and with statutory consultation bodies and have regard to relevant responses to publicity and consultation; and
- Prepare a Consultation Report **[EN010147/APP/5.1]** to accompany the application for development consent, setting out details of the above.

3.2.3 More details about the process associated with the preparation and agreement of the SoCC and other consultation requirements and activities are set out in the Consultation Report **[EN010147/APP/5.1]**.

3.2.4 PINS Advice Note 7: Environmental Impact Assessment: process, preliminary environmental information and environmental statements provides guidance on the EIA process, and the production of the ES. This Advice Note, and the relevant parts of Advice Note 9: the 'Rochdale Envelope', have been adhered

to in regard to the process of Scoping, the production of the PEIR and the production of this ES.

3.2.5 Paragraph 9.3 of Advice Note 7 states that;

*“The Planning Inspectorate considers that a good ES is one that:*

- *provides a clear description of the Proposed Development through all phases of the development consistent with the DCO i.e. in terms of construction, operation and decommissioning phases;*
- *clearly explains the processes followed to develop the ES including the established scope for the assessment;*
- *explains the reasonable alternatives considered and the reasons for the chosen option taking into account the effects of the Proposed Development on the environment;*
- *details the forecasting methods for the assessment and the limitations (as relevant);*
- *assesses in an open and robust way the assessment of likely significant effects explaining where results are uncertain;*
- *provides sufficient details of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects, the likely efficacy of such measures and how they are secured;*
- *details the need for any ongoing monitoring or remediation; and*
- *demonstrates that the information is sufficient to enable a reasoned conclusion to be reached.”*

## Consultation Undertaken to Date

### Initial consultation during 2022

3.2.6 Photovolt Development Partners GmbH (PVDP), on behalf of SolarFive Ltd (the Applicant), undertook early engagement about the Project with the host authorities, political leaders and statutory consultees from September 2022 onwards, including holding a webinar for elected members prior to the start of the first stage of community consultation.

3.2.7 The Applicant then undertook its first stage of non-statutory (Phase One) community consultation between Thursday 3 November 2022 and Thursday 22 December 2022, including with Parish Councils and key stakeholder groups.

3.2.8 Seven in-person information events were held in Woodstock, Long Hanborough, Cassington, Tackley, Cumnor, Eynsham and Begbroke. Two information events were added following feedback from the community, with the Applicant also holding an online community webinar in early December 2022.

3.2.9 Engagement during the non-statutory consultation period resulted in over 620 attendees at in-person information events and 56 attendees on the community webinar. Feedback was received throughout this consultation period, including

767 completed feedback forms (663 digital and 104 hard copies) and 316 pieces of written feedback through the Project communications channels. This feedback has been analysed by the project team and has helped inform refinements in project design.

- 3.2.10 The Applicant published a Phase One Consultation Summary Report **[EN010147/APP/5.1]** in July 2023 that captured the feedback received at the first stage of consultation and set out how this would be considered in the evolving design of the Project.

### **Consultation on the Scoping Report**

- 3.2.11 This Environmental Statement, and the PEIR which preceded it, reflects the Secretary of State's Scoping Opinion and the consultation feedback within it, which was provided by PINS on 24 July 2023.

- 3.2.12 The ES has responded to the key points raised in the Scoping Opinion, and the subsequent consultation meetings undertaken during the pre-application phase. These details have been identified and reflected upon in the individual topic sections within Volume 1. In doing so each specialist topic area reported in this ES in Volume 1 identifies;

- The results of Scoping;
- the relevant feedback received from consultation;
- data that has been collected and assessed at the point of submission; and
- any supplementary data that will continue to be collected.

### **Statutory Consultation**

- 3.2.13 The Applicant undertook a second phase of consultation, statutory under sections 42, 47 and 48 of the PA 2008. In doing so, the Applicant consulted with statutory and prescribed consultees, land interests, and the local community in parallel.

- 3.2.14 The Statutory Consultation, including consultation on the PEIR, was carried out between 30th November 2023 and 8th February 2024.

- 3.2.15 This Statutory Consultation included a further series of nine in-person public information events, held in Bladon, Woodstock (twice), Begbroke, Long Hanborough, Cassington, Cumnor, Botley and Eynsham, and a community webinar.

- 3.2.16 The PEIR provided the initial findings of these assessments to help consultees develop an informed view of the potential environmental effects of the Project and the proposed approach to assessing and mitigating them. This built upon the initial EIA Scoping Report, the Scoping Opinion and associated consultee responses, and environmental assessment work.

- 3.2.17 Feedback from statutory consultees, key stakeholders and the community from this has been assimilated and used to further inform and guide the development of the Project, in considering design options and environmental impacts and benefits. Over 1,030 people attended the nine in-person



information events and a community webinar. Feedback was received throughout this consultation period, through the Project communications channels, including 860 completed feedback forms (555 digital and 305 hard copies) and 215 pieces of written feedback. This feedback has been analysed by the project team and has helped inform refinements in project design. The results of this statutory consultation are also set out in the Consultation Report [EN010147/APP/5.1].

3.2.18 Responses and representations to this consultation are presented, alongside the Applicant's responses having regard to feedback received, in the Consultation Report [EN010147/APP/5.1]).

### Targeted Consultation

3.2.19 A targeted consultation was undertaken for the Project between Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June and Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2024, focusing on specific changes that were made across the Site since the PEIR submission.

3.2.20 This consultation focused on specific changes to the Project site boundary (indicative Order Limits), primarily with small increases in land area, but also reductions to the land required in some areas.

3.2.21 The changes came about as feedback from the statutory consultation was considered (see paragraph 3.2.17 above), the Project was continuing to be refined and engagement was ongoing with various stakeholders, and are considered necessary as a result of a number of factors;

- **Due diligence** – to adjust and reconcile the Project boundary to precisely align with updated mapping of land ownerships and field boundaries;
- **Engineering and feasibility** – due to the identification of preferred routes and the removal of land to avoid potentially significant impacts to archaeology and minimise other likely environmental effects;
- **Transport and access** – following a review of all site access requirements, for safety reasons and to allow for sufficient land to be included for access and maintenance; and
- **Refinement** – to remove land no longer needed following this refinement process.

3.2.22 Feedback was received throughout this consultation period, including 135 completed online feedback forms and 136 pieces of written feedback through the Project communications channels. This feedback has been analysed by the project team and has helped inform refinements in project design. The results of this statutory consultation are also set out in the Consultation Report [EN010147/APP/5.1].

3.2.23 A further consultation on a single change within the Central Site took place between 15<sup>th</sup> August and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

3.2.24 The change focused on an addition to the Order Limit to include land around an established veteran tree, adding necessary flexibility to the existing cable corridor.

3.2.25 Feedback was received throughout this consultation period, including 46 pieces of written feedback through the Project communications channels. This feedback has been analysed by the project team and has helped inform refinements in project design. The results of this statutory consultation are also set out in the Consultation Report **[EN010147/APP/5.1]**.

### **3.3 Response to Consultation**

3.3.1 The details of the Project have been further refined based on the responses to consultation with the community and with the statutory consultee bodies. The consultation responses have been used to inform the final application for development consent including this ES.

3.3.2 The application is accompanied by a Consultation Report **[EN010147/APP/5.1]**, which sets out details of the consultation undertaken, the responses to consultation and how this has informed the application.

### **3.4 References**

HMSO (2008), The Planning Act 2008, Available at:  
[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/pdfs/ukpga\\_20080029\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/pdfs/ukpga_20080029_en.pdf).

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The Planning Inspectorate (2024), Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-the-stages-of-the-nsip-process-and-how-you-can-have-your-say>