

Meeting note

Project name	Tween Bridge Solar Farm
File reference	
Status	Draft
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	19 December 2022
Meeting with	RWE
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Inception 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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an Applicant for commercial sensitivity reasons).

Proposed Development

The project consists of a ground mounted solar development with a capacity of up to 600 MW, with an anticipated operational lifetime of 45 years. The Applicant is proposing to connect to the grid through an existing overhead 400 kV connection that runs across the proposed site. Due to the position of the connection no modifications are currently considered necessary apart from an additional 132 kV substation adjacent to the line. Other ancillary infrastructure will include underground cables, as well as battery storage (likely 100 MW). It was also confirmed the developer had a Grid Connection Agreement with National Grid for 350 MW, with an anticipated grid connection date of June 2029. The developer is liaising with National Grid in respect of an additional connection for further capacity.

The development will also include a focus on significant biodiversity mitigation, with dual use of the existing arable land. This will come in the form of sheep grazing on the site as well as plans for extensive green infrastructure and opportunity for a community space. The Inspectorate queried how the applicant was going to secure these proposals and the Applicant confirmed it would consider this. The Applicant explained that it intends to acquire rights and leases to control and manage the grazing. The Chief Executive at Doncaster Council is keen for the project to encompass Doncaster Council's current biosphere

aspirations within the project. The Chief Executive would like to see this delivered through biodiversity enhancements included as part of the proposals, all of which will be confirmed through the continuing development process.

Draft order limits

The Applicant presented a map that illustrates the current draft order limits and confirmed that the proposed order limits will cover an area of 1500 hectares. The existing Tween Bridge Windfarm is situated within the northern part of the site and the project is bound by a canal and a railway line to the south of the site. Standing in the wider Yorkshire Humber region, Local Authority boundaries dissect the site in a North South direction through the middle, North Lincolnshire is to the East of the site and Doncaster is to the West of the site. The Applicant confirmed that 70% of the overall order limits are within Doncaster. The Inspectorate also advised that early consultation with National Rail to establish any protective provisions or initial agreements would be beneficial to the application.

The Inspectorate queried the agricultural classification of the land, to which the Applicant confirmed that to their current knowledge the land is primarily grade 3 but also comprises some grade 2 land. Further studies are being undertaken to confirm this. The issue of flood risk and the potential impact of the nearby Peatlands Nature Reserve was also discussed, the Applicant confirmed that although the site is in Flood Zone 3, the risk of flooding is low due to existing flood management infrastructure associated with the windfarm and that flood risk studies are ongoing. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant should clearly demonstrate their sequential approach to use of lower grade agricultural land and areas of lower flood risk in their documentation.

The Inspectorate asked if any parcels of land were archaeologically sensitive, the Applicant explained that the area south of the M180 was more sensitive than other areas on the site. The Applicant has requested heritage data within both authorities and are working towards identifying built heritage and sites of buried archaeological interest within and around the Draft Order Limits. Initial inception meetings have been undertaken with North Lincolnshire and Doncaster to open a dialogue regarding landscaping, heritage, and flooding.

Environmental Surveys

The Applicant presented an overview of the baseline studies currently underway and those that will be continued into 2023. The Applicant has begun winter bird surveys, with summer studies continuing in 2023. It was explained that this data will be shared with Local Authorities. Desk top reviews are underway for Heritage studies and the team are working to understand different heritage assets throughout the site. Transport studies are underway in relation to highway access for the Proposed Development.

The Inspectorate asked whether the potential for the site to comprise land functionally linked to the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) had been considered, since the land abuts the moors. The Applicant explained that this was being considered and that baseline surveys and the feedback from relevant consultees will inform further assessments.

EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Scoping Request

The Applicant confirmed the timeline for the EIA scoping request with the case team. The shapefile was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2022, and the scoping request will be submitted in January 2023. The case team will arrange a scoping opinion feedback session with the Applicant in March 2023.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Applicant shared information on the stakeholder engagement to date and future consultation plans. An initial inception meeting was held, this corresponded with the launch of the RWE project website. The Applicant sent letters to the relevant Members of Parliament as well as East Riding, Doncaster and North Lincolnshire Councils, and affected Parish Councils. The project was also published through local press releases.

Practical Arrangements (PINS)

The Inspectorate queried if the project will involve the permanent acquisition of land. The Applicant explained that there are many primary land interests within the draft order limits, eight associated with the wind farm and six more associated with the canal and the railway. The Applicant has reached Heads of Terms agreements with several of these landowners, and is seeking easement rights for under the railway, the motorway, and the canal. The Applicant confirmed that its intention is to secure voluntary lease arrangements. The extent of potential compulsory acquisition is not known at this stage. It was confirmed that there is currently no known crown land effected and further land refencing will confirm this. The Applicant confirmed it is not planning to permanently divert or end any public rights of way, this will be further detailed in the traffic management documents. If this is considered necessary as the project progresses, it will form part of the detailed proposals and be consulted on accordingly.