



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Frodsham Solar Project
<b>File reference</b>	EN010153
<b>Status</b>	Final
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	21 November 2023
<b>Meeting with</b>	Frodsham Solar Ltd
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project Update Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	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.

### Project Overview

The Proposed Development is located in north west England, adjacent to the river Weaver, river Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal. It is in an area with very high energy usage.

The Applicant described local projects surrounding the Proposed Development site, including Strategic Development Area 'Protos' and Frodsham Onshore Wind Farm.

The Applicant is planning to have up to three electricity export connections; two above ground and one underground.

Features surrounding the Proposed Development site include:

- Mersey Estuary Special Protected Area (SPA), Ramsar and Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Frodsham and Helsby Local Wildlife Site;
- Footpaths and Restrictive byways;
- Flood risk;
- Frodsham Conservation Area;
- Wind farm mitigation areas within Frodsham Solar Development Area; and
- Green Belt

### Landscape Masterplan

The Applicant detailed plans setting out ideas to construct permissive paths for public access across the site to create linked footpaths and enhance recreation. The Applicant aims to achieve a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

Part of the site is within a defended flood zone with surrounding flood protection bunds and, due to past dredging deposits, a significant area of the site is raised above former ground levels and therefore raised out of the flood plain. Within the areas potentially at risk of flooding, panels will be raised above the modelled flood levels.

Construction vehicles will access the site via existing access tracks to Frodsham wind farm from the Protos site, to avoid additional traffic through communities in Frodsham.

## **Scoping**

The Applicant detailed the topics it plans to scope in and out of the Environmental Statement.

The Applicant plans to scope in Landscape and Visual, Ecology and Nature Conservation, Food Risk, Drainage and Surface Water, Ground Conditions, Cultural Heritage and Archaeology and Climate Change. It also plans to scope out Noise and Vibrations, Socioeconomics, Land Use and Tourism (ongoing discussions with Cheshire West regarding Tourism), Traffic and Transport, Air Quality, Glint and Glare, Agricultural Land, Human Health, Major Accidents or Disasters and Waste.

## **Consultation**

The Applicant detailed ongoing consultation including:

- Council and Political Briefings – May 2023;
- Public Exhibitions and stakeholder briefings – June 2023;
- Natural England – Ongoing since end of 2022 including Design and Access Statement meeting, site visit and engagement on SPA;
- Environment Agency – met with the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) advice team;
- Canal and Rivers Trust, as the Proposed Development crosses Weaver Navigation;
- National Highways; and
- Various utility providers on the site.

The Proposed Development is a Cross Boundary application with two host Local Planning Authorities (LPA), Cheshire West, Chester Council (CWACC) and Halton Borough Council; the Applicant is having ongoing discussions with the LPAs, including discussing Planning Performance Agreements.

## **SPA/Ramsar/SSSI**

The Applicant described the various ecological surveys being undertaken, including extensive wintering bird surveys. The Applicant has been in discussion with Natural England, RSPB and CWACC officers in relation to impacts and the requirement to deliver mitigation. The Applicant is exploring various options to deliver the required mitigation and will continue to discuss with the relevant stakeholders.

## **Project Programme**

The Applicant displayed the previous Proposed Development Indicative Programme and informed the Inspectorate that there has been a delay in timescales and will provide an update as soon as possible on the revised application submission date.

The Inspectorate advised that, if the Applicant is planning to submit draft documents for review, it should allow six to eight weeks for feedback and recommended leaving sufficient time to review the feedback before Development Consent Order (DCO) submission.

### **Specific decisions/ follow-up required?**

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant to update the Inspectorate on the DCO submission date.
- The Inspectorate to organise a project update meeting at the end of January 2024.