



Meeting note

Project name	Steeple Renewables Project
File reference	EN010163
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	29 August 2024
Meeting with	Meeting with Renewable Energy Solutions
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees/ additional contacts to share meeting note

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.

Non-Statutory Consultation Summary

The Applicant confirmed that non-Statutory Consultation was carried out between 23 October and 4 December. They noted that they received 118 responses including 111 from local community and 7 from statutory consultees with 80% of those who responded saying that they strongly oppose the proposals. The concerns were about size and scale; impact on local environment; farmer's livelihoods and local farming culture; heritage and archaeology; proximity of the site due to cumulative impact of other projects in the area, traffic and access; and the need for solar in general. The Applicant confirmed that this information is in the early Consultation Report which they have published on their website.

Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) and Statutory Consultation plans

The Applicant confirmed that it has drafted the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) which has been shared informally with Bassetlaw District and Nottinghamshire County Council who have no comments. The Applicant is looking to commence consultation on the SoCC in Q4 2024, with the aim to start Statutory Consultation before 2025.

The Applicant noted that the statutory consultation will commence once relevant surveys have been completed, to ensure a full picture is provided to parties. The Applicant confirmed that presently they are working around the farmers due to harvesting schedules.

The Inspectorate queried the Applicant's Programme Document which states that the last meeting with the Inspectorate was in January this year whereas there was a subsequent meeting in March. The Programme Document also says that the Applicant will be providing Local Authorities (LAs) and the Inspectorate with the issues tracker that they are working on in Q2/3 of this year. The Inspectorate asked if they have provided it to the LAs and if they will be sending this to them to review.

The Applicant noted that it has a signed Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Nottinghamshire County Council and with Bassetlaw District it is in progress. The Applicant confirmed that it has not issued the tracker to them yet.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to update the Programme Document as it proceeds through the entire process especially if it were to submit the programme as part of its application documents.

The Inspectorate asked if communication from Bassetlaw District Council had improved with the Applicant as it had previously struggled to arrange meetings with them. The Applicant confirmed that communication had improved slightly and that the Head of Planning and Planning Officer attended their first meeting. The Applicant is hoping that once the PPA is signed then communication will improve further.

The Inspectorate asked if the Applicant could keep the Inspectorate updated on when it plans to start the Statutory Consultation. It was reminded of its obligation to notify the Inspectorate of the statutory consultation dates officially with a Section 46. The Applicant confirmed that the statutory consultation will last six weeks.

Scoping Opinion overview

The Applicant noted that it has received its Scoping Opinion which was published on 3 June 2024. The Applicant mentioned that there was some confusion with the Environment Agency (EA) and their response as it came through late. The Applicant provided an update to the Inspectorate of the changes made in response to the feedback which included alterations to the red line boundary and parameters, some land being taken out and refined.

Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PIER)

The delay to the PIER is due to challenges getting on to the site because of the wet weather and the cropping regime.

The Applicant said that they are awaiting results on agricultural land surveys, and they are conscious that the public are keen to have full sight there of as part of any PIER material for it to be sufficiently robust. Ongoing surveys include geophysical and ecology. The Applicant stated that it has completed full tree surveys. Its transport team are looking at more details on access options and there are continued conversations about flood risk and drainage with the EA around modelling requirements. The Applicant confirmed all details will be included within the PEIR of all surveys carried out.

The Applicant confirmed that there is no Crown land as part of the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant ensure there is no crown land within the

parameters of the Proposed Development as this can cause delays in the decision from the Secretary of State (SoS). The Inspectorate also asked if there are any consenting agreements that the Applicant is currently seeking with statutory bodies. The Applicant noted that it is in discussions with Network Rail as the railway line is within the red line boundary. It is also in discussion with the EA and the Internal Drainage Boards (IDB). The land is all freehold apart from the area to the North where it will have to seek rights to get into National Grid substation.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to get agreements sorted as soon as possible, to ensure there were limited matters for consideration during the Examination, should the application be accepted.

The Applicant noted that predominately the land is under one owner with six tenants which they are working with around cropping, seasons and programmes rather than paying compensation to tenants.

The Inspectorates advice on the tier service

The Applicant confirmed that it has received a confirmation email from the Inspectorate to say that it is on the basic tier. The Applicant queried the need for it to provide the Inspectorate with a purchase order (PO) number as it will not be liable for charging until April 2025. The Inspectorate confirmed that this is the case, however as the application will be submitted post-March 2025, the PO number is needed so it can be charged in advance for the pre-application service that will be offered till the date of their submission. The Inspectorate also noted that the project webpage states Q1, this will now be updated to Q2/Q3 2025.

The Inspectorate stated that the Applicant will no longer be able to submit draft documents given its choice of the basic tier as this service is not provided. The Applicant confirmed this is not an issue.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Inspectorate to update website to reflect submission date of Q2/3 2025.
- Next meeting middle to end of February unless Statutory Consultation takes place this year.