

**PLANNING BOARD
27th November, 2025**

Present:- Councillor Mault (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Ahmed, Allen, Bacon, Currie, Duncan, Elliott, Jackson, Tarmey and Thorp.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cowen, Fisher, Hussain and Sutton.

The webcast of the Planning Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

39. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items on the agenda to warrant exclusion of the press and public.

40. MATTERS OF URGENCY

There were no matters of urgency for consideration.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2025

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Planning Regulatory Board held on Thursday, 25th September, 2025, be approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

43. DEFERMENTS/SITE VISITS

There were no site visits or deferments recommended.

44. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Resolved:- (1) That, on the development proposal now considered, the requisite notice be issued and be made available on the Council's website and that the time limits specified in Sections 91 and 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 apply.

In accordance with the right to speak procedure the following people attended the meeting and spoke about the application below:-

- Change of use of land to dog walking paddocks and training facility including extended car parking area at 4 Blackamoor Road Swinton for Invictus Squad (RB2023/0283)

Mr. D. Malone (Applicant)
Mr. D. Foss (Objector)

A statement was also read out on behalf of Ms. D. Williams (Supporter).

(2) That application RB2023/0283 be granted for the reasons adopted by Members at the meeting and subject to the relevant conditions listed in the submitted report.

45. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, REGENERATION AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

Consideration was given to the report which outlined proposals for the large-scale Solar Farm, designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), known as Whitestone.

The Whitestone Solar Farm was primarily located within the administrative boundaries of both the City of Doncaster Council (CDC) and Rotherham Borough Council. As such, both Councils were considered host authorities and statutory consultees. Under the Act, a host authority was defined as a local authority within whose area the application land was wholly or partly situated.

Further information was provided on NSIPs and how they were developments of specific types and scales that the Government considered to be of such national importance that consent for their construction was granted at the national level.

On this basis instead of seeking planning permission from the Local Authority, developers must apply to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

PINS, the Government agency responsible for managing NSIP applications, appointed the Examining Authority (ExA) with the agreement of the relevant Secretary of State to assess the proposal and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Under the Act, the final decision on the application rested with the Secretary of State. If approved, the Secretary of State would issue the DCO. The relevant Local Authority (or Authorities, in the case of cross-boundary applications) would then be responsible for discharging and monitoring the requirements of the DCO and any associated legal agreements.

By way of a presentation the Planning Board were advised:-

- The NSIP Process.
 - . NSIP Overview.
 - . Governing Bodies and Roles.
 - . Six Stage Process.
- Whitestone Proposals.
 - . Project Scope and Location.
 - . Energy Generation Capacity.
 - . Grid Connection and Infrastructure.
 - . Community Environmental Considerations.
- Rotherham Borough Council's Progress to Date.
 - . Active Pre-Application Engagement.
 - . Delegated Decision Making.
 - . Environmental and Consultation Feedback.
 - . Dedicated Page on Website.
 - . Member Briefing Session.
 - . Cumulative Impact – Legal Advice.
- Next Steps.
 - . Stakeholder Engagement.
 - . Awaiting Key Documents.
 - . Drafting Critical Reports.
 - . Transparency and Oversight.

It was further pointed out that to date the Council had actively engaged in the pre-application phase, providing detailed feedback on environmental and technical aspects. The Council had also taken proactive steps to ensure governance arrangements were in place to meet the demanding timelines set by the Planning Inspectorate, including the delegation of responsibilities and the establishment of quarterly reporting to Planning Board.

While the project had evolved in response to initial consultation feedback, concerns remained regarding biodiversity, landscape impact and cultural heritage. The Council would continue to advocate for improvements and safeguards through its contributions to the Local Impact Report (LIR), Statement of Common Ground (SoCG), and ongoing dialogue with the applicant.

As the project progressed towards formal application submission in Spring 2026, the Council remained committed to ensuring that environmental standards were represented, and the development aligned with both national policy and local priorities.

On this basis further reports on progress would be presented to Planning Board on a quarterly basis.

The Chair invited questions which drew attention to:-

- Adequacy of the consultation by Whitestone and whether further evidence was required to confirm the threshold had not been met. Officers were keen to receive any feedback and suggested this be done by residents through their Ward Members for ease of collation.
- Access to the NSIP webpage on the website and inclusion of the details within the Members' Portal. Further information to be shared via the Members' Briefing.
- Complaints by residents of the dates/times of the drop-in sessions and the lack of quality interaction.
- Highway infrastructure and impact on smaller communities such as Treeton who were likely to be affected by three major developments.
- Lobbying Members of Parliament and interested party registration once the application had been accepted.

Officers outlined their ongoing involvement in the technical process particularly around highway infrastructure.

The applicant had also indicated their intention to issue a newsletter once they had evaluated the consultation responses and any changes along with a further newsletter once the application had been accepted.

Resolved:- That the update report and presentation be received and the contents noted.

46. UPDATES

The following update information was provided:-

1. Battery Storage Appeals (RB2024/0063 and RB2024/0321) – Moat Lane, Wickersley

Further to Minute No. 7 of the meeting of the Planning Board held on 12th June, 2025 where it was agreed the Council could effectively only defend the highways reason for refusal at appeal for both planning applications, an update was provided on the outcome of both appeals.

Whilst submitted together, the appeals were heard separately, the first by way of written representations and the second by public hearing. Both appeals were allowed thus granting planning permission.

The Planning Inspector's conclusions were consistent for both applications and indicated with a scheme for the proposed improvements to the Moat Lane/Green Lane Junction and pedestrian refuge facilities on Green Lane with a plan for construction traffic, there would be no unacceptable impact on safe use of Green Lane. This would be controlled by way of a condition for the applicant to provide a pedestrian refuge.

The requirement of such conditions could embrace the local concerns of residents and the Planning Inspector concluded that the Council failed to provide evidence to substantiate the highway reason for refusal on appeal and that the concerns in relation to construction traffic were capable of being dealt with by conditions.

On this basis an application for costs had been submitted by the applicant. The amount was not yet known, but the Council had the opportunity to challenge the sum should it be deemed unreasonable.

The Planning Board, whilst being disappointed with the decisions, believed there would be some learning from this and where they may be technical considerations for an application this may be overcome by conditions. It was for this reason a costs award had been made.

It was, therefore, suggested that in any similar situations consideration be given to enlisting an independent consultant to assist the Council in defending controversial applications.

Upon reflection and further research, it became clear that the national demand for battery storage had created a stronger presumption in favour of supporting renewable energy projects, increasing the likelihood of success on appeal.

Furthermore it was also noted that, although permission had now been granted, the developer would need to enter into legal agreements with the Highways Authority. At this stage, the Council would carry out road safety audits and review more detailed swept path analysis. The site would be revisited with Highways to assess how the scheme could be managed, whether it was workable and to examine the finer details. These details were not yet fully agreed.

Members welcomed this further update and how the legalities around the public highway would be managed and approved to industry standards.

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2. Planning Board Date Change – January, 2026

Consideration was given to a request for the January, 2026 Planning Board meeting to move on one week from the 15th to 22nd January, 2026. This would give officers more time in the submitting of applications for the agenda.

This was approved.