

Ten Questions for a Ground Address

A hyperscale data centre application, in the words of anyone entitled to ask about it. Each question is phrased so that “we followed the standard regulatory process” cannot settle it, because in most cases the standard process genuinely does not require the answer. That is the finding, not the scandal.

For councillors hearing a land-use application, registered objectors, lenders running diligence, and journalists covering an approval. None of these questions assumes bad conduct, only that a facility which is not an ordinary building should be asked what it draws, before the decision rather than after it.

Which approval decided whether this use belongs here at this scale, and what did that decision's record contain about what the facility will draw?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

A compliance claim is about process followed, not content of the record. The record either holds the draw or it does not, and that is checkable from the file.

What will this facility draw from the municipal water and electricity systems, and when did that figure first enter a public record?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

The figure may be real, modelled and honestly held, and still have arrived at a design-submission stage where no decision was left for it to inform. The question is when, not whether.

Who else holds a claim on the same system, and was the cumulative draw across all facilities on it assessed anywhere?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

Each application is adjudicated on its own site. Cumulative assessment is required in principle and thin in practice; “nobody assessed it” is the expected correct answer, which is the problem.

What would count as evidence of the jobs and skills claims, and who agreed to that in advance?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

Benefit claims made at a level of abstraction with no number attached are not false; they are unfalsifiable. An enforceable commitment belongs in the conditions of consent. Everything else is a forecast.

What does the standby generation consist of, and what does the uptime promise assume about it?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

Near-perfect uptime is not a metaphysical claim; it is diesel, fuel storage and a switching station. The environmental file on many approvals is a file about diesel tanks; check whether it is.

Which cooling choice has been made, and is it a licence condition or a brochure statement?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

Closed-loop, air-cooled and recycled are real engineering choices, and each is exactly as binding as the instrument that records it. Until it is a condition of consent, it is marketing.

What was declined or deferred to a later stage, and what standing do objectors have at that later stage?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

Deferral is not concealment; the figures are not yet due. But a deferred question is one nobody may answer on the record. Ask what the later stage is capable of hearing.

What else could this serviced parcel carry, and who weighed that?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

Opportunity cost is an assessable impact: the well-located land with services already in the ground, in a jurisdiction with a spatial-justice duty. Compatibility with the zoning scheme is not the same question.

Which benefit claims are enforceable conditions of consent, and which are forecasts?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

The honest split is the useful one. Most benefit material sits in the second column by default, because nobody was asked to bind it.

If the figures change after approval (more load, more storage, more buildings), which process reopens, and who may trigger it?

WHY “WE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD PROCESS” DOESN'T SETTLE IT

A campus assembled from individually minor increments is categorically different from its parts in the one dimension no process aggregates. Rectification exists for what has already been built; ask what exists for what is about to be.

HOW TO USE THESE

Ask them in writing, and ask for the answer's location in the record (the document, section and page) rather than the assurance. An answer that cannot point to where it lives in the file is not an answer yet; it is a position.

Where the answer is “the process does not require that,” that is not a defeat. It is the mechanism, named in the applicant's own words, and it is the strongest material in the room.

These questions carry no position on whether any facility should be built. They carry a position on what the record should hold before the decision is taken, and they work identically for a supporter who wants the approval durable.

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