



Meeting note

Status	Final
Author	Siân Evans
Date	11 March 2015
Outreach event	Sizewell C Joint Local Authorities Town and Parish Event
Attendees	Mark Wilson (The Planning Inspectorate) Siân Evans (The Planning Inspectorate) Sizewell C Joint Local Authority Group (JLAG) (Members of Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council) Representatives of various East Suffolk Town and Parish Councils (TPCs) Natural England Environment Agency
Circulation	Michael Wilks – Suffolk County Council

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

Mark Wilson of the Planning Inspectorate gave a presentation about the Planning Act 2008 process and this can be seen on the Planning Inspectorate website here:

<http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/document/3168533>

Question and answer session with Mark Wilson of the Planning Inspectorate

The Town and Parish Councils (TPC) queried their role in the examination process. They were advised that if they are host town/parish councils they will automatically be granted Interested Party status which means they will be kept informed of the process and given a right to take part in the examination.

The TPCs queried the limits of the area for statutory consultation as some of them may not be immediately affected but have concerns about transport and housing, for example. EDF is required, as is the Planning Inspectorate at the appropriate time, to consult any TPC which would host development within its boundary, but beyond that, at the pre-application stage, the developer will decide on the areas to consult but anyone can get involved in the consultation process and it is open to anyone to register as an Interested Party when an application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

The TPCs asked when the pre-application process will finish. They were advised that it is up to the developer to decide when they have done sufficient consultation and when to submit their application. It is in a developer's interest to narrow down the key issues and negotiate an option for the acquisition of land prior to submitting their application. A developer cannot be forced to submit an application by the Government – it is a private company working within a regulated environment. A developer will have their own political or commercial reasons for bringing forward a project at any given time.

The Environment Agency advised that the National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) makes clear that not all matters will be considered by the Examining Authority, as environmental permitting is a twin track process. There are three operational permits for the Environment Agency to determine, rather than as part of the DCO process. The Environment Agency will advise the Planning Inspectorate their views on whether the permits will be allowed. The Environment Agency is involved in giving advice and guidance in the pre-application stage.

The Planning Inspectorate advised that they also do not issue the nuclear site license. The issue of nuclear safety is not considered in the examination. The National Policy Statement has established the Government's policy that nuclear energy generation is to be used as part of the nation's future energy mix. The Planning Inspectorate is focussed on the local impacts arising from the construction and operation of the power station. In accordance with the Planning Act 2008, the Examining Authority can consider any important or relevant matters. For example, evidence on the effect of the development on house prices can be considered and this could be a legitimate concern to put to the Examining Authority.

The TPCs queried how the quality of the consultation is monitored. The Planning Inspectorate advised that the adequacy of the consultation is considered when the application is submitted. It is up to a developer to decide how to consult on their proposals (having regard to advice received from the local authorities) but if the Planning Inspectorate determines that the consultation does not comply with the requirements and standards set down in the Planning Act 2008 and in regulations then the application may not be accepted for determination.

The TPCs asked if any section 106 agreement would be considered within the examination. The Planning Inspectorate advised that a section 106 agreement is usually between the local authorities and the developer and is put forward as part of the mitigation measures. The Examining Authority can look at any section 106 agreement but will not get involved in the detailed negotiation as it is a legal agreement between the relevant parties.

The TPCs queried the location of where the park and ride and other Associated Development will be located. The Planning Inspectorate advised that the Examining Authority will only consider the application before them and will have limited scope to consider any alternatives which have not been applied for, and therefore environmentally assessed.

The TPCs asked whether, if there are any major concerns about the content of an application, these could be raised in the 28 day acceptance period. The Planning Inspectorate advised that they will consider any comments from local authorities on the adequacy of the public consultation but the merits of the proposal are not considered at the acceptance stage.

A presentation was then given by the Joint Local Authority Group (JLAG).

Question and answer session with the panel comprising JLAG representatives, local authority officers and Mark Wilson of the Planning Inspectorate

The TPCs stated that the proposed site is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and queried what measures were in place to ensure a high quality design.

The Panel advised that there are significant environmental challenges with this site articulated in their various 'Principles' available on the Sizewell C website. The National Policy Statement is the key document to look at in regard to the policy requirements for good design. Suffolk's design principles outline significant concerns in relation to height, colour and domes and JLAG are pushing the developer, EDF, hard on these.

The TPCs queried the interface between the two government departments (Communities and Local Government and Energy and Climate Change) as far as planning and energy generation is concerned.

The Planning Inspectorate advised that the generic design assessment (GDA) process is separate to the development consent order (DCO) process. There will be design constraints in terms of technical matters arising from the GDA process and the applicant may well seek a degree of flexibility in the DCO such as setting down parameters within which they can work, known as the limits of deviation. The colour of the buildings and the cladding materials may be left to the relevant local authority to approve after the DCO is granted.

The TPCs raised a concern that the process could lead to fragmented communities by pitting them against each other and putting them under extreme time pressure. The TPCs asked JLAG to work out where there is consensus and asked when they are going to meet communities. JLAG advised that they were doing this and had a meeting with some of the local communities that evening, though recognised more could and would be done.

The TPCs asked whether JLAG are in contact with Network Rail in regard to the use of rail transport. JLAG advised that their Stage 1 consultation response considers rail issues and that EDF has had some discussions with Network Rail to which the LAs had been party.

The TPCs raised concerns about traffic on the road where the construction workers campus will be built. They asked whether instead of building a campus, a proportion of the 10,000 homes required for the Suffolk Coastal area could be built as part of the application and then sold when not required for the construction workers.

The Panel advised that the Planning Act 2008 does not allow for legacy houses. There will be a need for accommodation for around 3,500 workers in the locality and therefore some campus accommodation needs to go somewhere. If there is no campus accommodation then the traffic issues may well be worse due to increased commuting.

The TPCs asked whether there is an issues register or similar that could be sent to stakeholders. JLAG advised that pre-application discussions with EDF are confidential at the moment to avoid partially complete information potentially causing confusion

and concern and possibly blight. Issues are however being collated and discussed with EDF but they cannot be shared in detail at this time as they relate to material that EDF has decided not to put in the public domain yet.

The TPCs stated there was an opportunity to get together and set down the 'must haves', the 'nice to haves' and what can be conceded. JLAG said they would consider how to approach this.

The TPCs asked whether the issue of an A12 bypass could be considered further as it would be of benefit to the county. JLAG stated that it was a mistake that the A12 had been detrunked and a submission has been made to the Departments for Transport, Energy and Climate Change and Communities and Local Government to seek funding for, and to work together on, delivering a full four villages bypass.

The TPCs asked whether they should register separately as Interested Parties if the application is accepted by the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate encouraged anyone with an interest to register as an Interested Party at the appropriate time. People can register either on behalf of themselves or as part of a wider group or both.

JLAG advised that for the stage 2 and 3 consultation periods the TPCs should continue to engage with EDF directly as it is their consultation, but to keep JLAG abreast of their concerns.