

SPR EAIN 7 EA2 PROJECTS (DEADLINE 13)

FINAL SUBMISSION

SIMON IVE - PINS Ref: 20023671 & 20023672

INTRODUCTION

In my final submission, I refer back to my letter of 1 June 2020 to Mr Rynd Smith as Head of the Examining Panel.

The key questions I raised were:

1 – How does the Planning Inspectorate investigate, co-ordinate and reconcile its responses to the DCO Applications and relate them to the East Suffolk Council Local Plan

And in turn

2 – Just who is responsible and accountable for the decisions and implementation?

Twelve months later after an exhausting but highly informative Examination, for which many thanks are attributable to you and your Panel colleagues and support team, there are huge issues outstanding.

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE DCO APPLICATIONS

The Planning Inspectorate has the following DCO Applications in progress:

- EDF Sizewell C – two nuclear reactors.
- SPR EA1N and EA2 Offshore Windfarm and National Grid substations at Friston
And in due course
- National Grid Ventures (NGV) Nautilus Interconnector and connection point (Public consultation due to start in September 2021)
- NGV Eurolink Interconnector.
- There remain also potential connecting points for further offshore windfarms including North Falls and Five Estuaries.

It is wrong that these projects be assessed individually when their separate aspects are so complex and wide-ranging.

EAST SUFFOLK COAST INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

And their impacts must be considered in relation to the other major infrastructure developments affecting the East Suffolk Coast:

- Bramford-Twinstead South Suffolk network reinforcement.
- Felixstowe Freeport
- A14 corridor of warehousing and housing developments
- Brightwell Lakes project – 2,000 homes and

- Aداstral Park expansion

These already cause severe congestion to the road network in and around Ipswich affecting access and traffic flows along the A12 to

- Woodbridge and Melton and substantial housing developments.
- Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan and 900 houses
- Expansion of Lowestoft to accommodate support services for the offshore wind projects and the impact of the opening of Gull Way Bridge.

A recent press report forecast a need for 20,000 workers just to accommodate the above projects. Quite how are these to be filled?

And these are over and above the 7,500 Sizewell C workforce over a 7–12-year period from 2025.

SPR/NG PROPOSALS

The SPR/NG proposals do not create substantial construction job opportunities in relation to the above, but have disproportionate impacts on the area in respect of land use, loss of landscape, heritage, environment, biodiversity and quality of life.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The influx of new residents presaged by the developments poses all manner of concerns which include:

- The highway network and sustainability
- Demands on social and health care facilities
- Amenities for leisure, sport, entertainment and dining
- Preserving the natural environment and heritage which contribute in turn to health and well-being and overall impact on the social fabric.

These are further brought into focus for this area, the Suffolk Heritage Coast.

The geographical stretch of Sizewell C extends beyond its site to allow for the new infrastructure to bring in materials and 7,500 workforce.

You then overload the SPR/NG projects (30+ acres). Each NGV Interconnector requires 12 acres and the destruction and disruption caused by digging cable trenches across AONB.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

This area meets a growing need for escape from the increasing urbanisation. It is not an easily accessible area because of the historic rural network of lanes and by-roads. Congestion arises at entry points, particularly the junction of the A12/A1094 at Friday Street leading to Snape Maltings and Aldeburgh. People need access to the peace, tranquillity and therapeutic benefits of the country and seaside. Government policy acknowledges that these need preserving.

Arguments are pressed for the socio-economic benefits of the energy projects, but based on Sizewell these are questionable.

The nearest towns are Leiston and Saxmundham which are under-developed (as acknowledged in the Local Plan), not least in relation to the housing expansion. Both have substantial pockets of deprivation and town centres which lack sufficient parking to attract people and create a more vibrant centre – diversity of retail; leisure and hospitality. Local social and healthcare services are stretched and Leiston (popn 5,000) does not even have a dentist.

House prices have soared as a result of the attraction of country living which has exacerbated the affordable housing problems for those who work in the lower paid care, retail and hospitality sectors. We have a higher proportion of those over 65 and who are vulnerable, and a visitor economy which is a major economic driver albeit it is comprised mainly of small and medium sized businesses.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS FOR FRISTON

This stretch of the Suffolk coast is unlike Cornwall. Hinkley Point is in a remote area so the impacts of Sizewell are much greater.

Which makes it impossible to accommodate further energy projects without destroying the landscape within this area.

Both SPR and NG fail to understand (or rather do not care) that the decision to locate their developments at Friston magnifies the negative impacts.

Even now the negative impacts and issues outstanding are substantial and include:

- Loss of agricultural land, landscape, heritage, environment and biodiversity.
- Safety and health risks from traffic impacts especially within the village of Friston; flood risk; noise; loss of amenity; isolation. These all over an extended construction period depending on project sequencing (and cumulative impacts of other projects) which will delay mitigation planting which is subject to uncertain growth rates and at best 15 years after construction.

LACK OF LOCAL AND ENERGY INDUSTRY PLANNING

Amidst all this, who is concerned? All the energy projects are considered on a piecemeal free for all with at present no overarching policy framework. The energy industry needs this to rise to the challenges of climate change targets. These on top of the developments elsewhere.

There is no apparent coordinating policy at any level of Government. Local councils absolve themselves from much responsibility since they argue the decisions rest with the Secretary of State yet still fail to consider them as part of the overall Local Plan.

CONCLUSION

Which is why I refer back to the Planning Inspectorate. We face, if not the absence of planning, then, the lack of co-ordinated planning. You seem to be the only body in a position to understand the impacts by virtue of receiving detailed representations from those most

affected. How are these communicated to the necessary levels of government that they can better influence, devise and implement policy?

For the energy projects, there remains the current Network Transmission Review which might lead to better co-ordination, technology and integration. No decision on these and other outstanding projects should be consented until that has been completed.

NG has absented from any meaningful involvement in the Examination. SPR are inflexible and insensitive to the characteristics of the area, the village and human impacts in particular.

If the projects are to be consented, there is a need for better and sensitive design and mitigation; reassurance on the management of the construction process. It has been bad enough during the investigation works. Heaven help us when the amount and scale of the heavy stuff and 200 workforce descend on the village.