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To: Norfolk Vanguard

Cc: susan.falch-lovesey@vattenfall.com; 'henry kilvert'; Simon Fowler; Paul Stebbings; Steve Treavett; Jane Harding; Malcolm Parker

Subject: Norfolk Vanguard Sub Station at Necton

Dear Sirs

I would refer to my conversation with your office yesterday at which time I informed you that Little Dunham Parish Council wished to make a representation on the Landscaping issue mitigating the visual effect of the proposed sub-station/s at Necton that will serve the Norfolk Vanguard project and Boreas.

I was made aware that the deadline for representations had passed but obviously you do have discretionary powers and I was very much given the impression that the Parish Council representation would be accepted – I would welcome your confirmation of acceptance.

Yours faithfully

Ian Harding (Parish Councillor) For and On Behalf of Little Dunham Parish Council.

Little Dunham Parish Council

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The Representation of Little Dunham Parish Council on Landscape Mitigation on The Proposed Vattenfall Substation

Introduction

The proposed substation lies within the National Character Area (NCA) profile number 84 for Mid Norfolk¹. The NCA profiles are “guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making...will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale and help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change”. The Mid Norfolk area is summarised as being “broadly flat, rural landscape... with a patchwork of cultivated land, numerous church spires, distant wooded horizons and big skies dominate the landscape.” The statement of Environmental Opportunities concludes “while conserving and enhancing the traditional rural character, long views and strong sense of tranquillity in this area of long-settled, ancient countryside...and to encourage a sympathetic approach to development that maintains traditional Norfolk character”. The area is summarised as being “a rural area with a long-settled agricultural character, with gently undulating land, interspersed with woodland and heath, and enclosed by winding lanes and hedgerows. It is a terrain of gentle variation”. This tranquil, rural idyll will be shattered by the imposition of the vast substation on this exposed site and will need to have a substantial array of mitigating measures to minimise its environmental impact.

Environmental Impact

The site is close to the A47 which is one of 2 major trunk roads that cross the county and is the major access road for visitors from the Midlands many of whom visit the county on holiday. Norfolk is perceived as being as a rural county so that if a vast industrial site can be seen from the road then this will damage this perception and harm the tourist industry.

It has been decided that the current to the site should be DC rather than AC. The effect of this is that all the converter equipment has to be housed in buildings up to 19 metres high and in solid structures which have a very large visual impact. There will be a great deal of electronic gadgetry situated outside these structures. The existing substation has a supply of AC current which means that the visual impact is much less with no solid structures and lower gantry heights consequently much larger mitigating measures will be required for the new development. The footprint of the

¹ Natural England 2014

electrical clutter the DC substation will be very much larger than if an AC had been selected.

This document will concentrate on the views as seen from the A47 trunk road.

Landscaping the Surrounding Area

There is a gentle downward slope away from the A47 so that it is extremely difficult to mask the site as it is been looked down on from the road. It has been noted that the area is gently undulating so that to create banks and bunds with steep sides would be out of keeping with the surrounding countryside. The only way to effectively obscure such large structures is to sink the tallest buildings a substantial distance under the existing ground level. This would have the added advantage that the material dug out can be used to create a natural looking bank to the north of the construction site being made sympathetic to the configuration to the surrounding countryside. More soil would be needed on broader gentler slopes than on steeper ones giving a greater reason to sink the buildings even lower. Care would have to be taken to strip the top soil back and kept separate so that it would be available to be reused as top soil on the reconfigured bank.

Local materials used in construction such as brick would help alleviate the visual impact.

Tree Planting

Historical Aspect

Necton Wood is illustrated on William Faden's map of Norfolk of 1797 and predates it possibly being defined as ancient woodland (woodland that is over 400 years old). James Grigor in 1841 notes that it "is of no great extent but the underwood is well managed... with much fine timber throughout the immediate district; oak in particular"². Barnes and Williamson show that in the tithe files Necton Wood was managed as a coppice with standards woodland. Two nearby woods West Bradenham Great Wood and Sporle Wood are ancient woods and have been managed as such³. It would seem appropriate that when new woodland is created it should reflect this traditional form of management. This would have the additional advantage of creating greater bio-diversity thickening out the cover in the understorey creating a better visual barrier over the winter months.

² James Grigor *The Eastern Arboretum or Register of Remarkable Trees* (1841)

³ G Barnes & T Williamson "*Rethinking Ancient Woodlands*" (University of Hertfordshire Press) 2015

Woodland Form

It is necessary to have a complete woodland screen on the north side of the site towards the A47. It would not be appropriate to the area to have a single sweep of woodland but to have a more fragmented approach with smaller distinctly shaped woods creating a patchwork of covers.

Planting

All stock to be of local provenance, if available, or otherwise of national provenance.

Mainly 60-80 transplants with up to 50% understorey planting.

Some larger bare root 2m high trees for greater early impact

Some semi mature trees for immediate impact especially along the sides of the enclosed buildings to break up the mass.

Species

It will be important to have a wide range of species so that if there is an outbreak of disease in one species it will not devastate all the planting.

To retain the traditional form of management of coppice with standards with predominately oak with a hazel understorey.

Species to include: -

1. Evergreen Indigenous Species
 - Ilex aquilifolium* (holly)
 - Taxa baccata* (English yew)

2. Standard trees
 - Quercus petraea* (sessile oak)
 - Quercus robur* (English oak)
 - Acer campestre* (field maple)
 - Carpinus* *Betula* (hornbeam)
 - Fagus sylvatica* (beech)
 - Betula Pendula* (silver birch)
 - Tilia Cordata* (small-leaved lime)
 - Sorbus Acuparia* (rowan)
 - Prunus Avian* (wild cherry)
 - Salix caprea* (goat willow)

3. Smaller trees/Hedging
 - Corylus avellna* (hazel)
 - Cretageous monogyna*(hawthorn)
 - Prunus spinosa* (blackthorn)
 - Sambucus nigra* (elder)
 - Cornus sanguinea* (dogwood)

4. Berried and fruiting species
 - Rose Canina (dog rose)
 - Viburnum Opulus (guelder rose)
 - Malus sylvestris (crab apple)
 - Euonymous europaeus (spindle)
 - Prunus Domestica (bullace)

Conclusion

The decision to create a DC sub station has introduced structures which are completely alien in scale and mass to the gentle rolling traditional rural landscape and careful and extensive mitigation will need to be introduced.

Henry Kilvert

Parish Councillor for and on behalf of Little Dunham Parish
Council

BSc. (Estate Management), MA (Landscape History)

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FWAG award winner for the sensitive management of ancient
woodland

Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee to the Forestry
Commission