

Meeting note

Project name	Flixborough EfW
File reference	TBA
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	3 May 2019
Meeting with	Solar 21
Venue	Temple Quay House
Meeting objectives	Project update meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008), although noted that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, at the request of the applicant, if there were commercial sensitivities/ confidentiality reasons. Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Project update

Solar 21 (S21) provided an introduction to their company, setting out their track record and purpose. They currently have one Energy from Waste (EfW) site consented and five under consideration. S21 explained that they have assembled a team of consultants and partners.

With regard to the project, they explained that they are designing for maximum energy efficiency. The proposal site has existing rail link, road and waterways connections. The proposed EfW plant has a thermal output circa 380MWth and an electrical output circa 95MWe. It can incorporate battery storage and hydrogen production, alongside exported heat and CO₂, for use by greenhouses, existing housing and associated development.

S21 explained that they had land options for the majority of the site in place. Proposed associated development includes a restored railhead and wharf, a new road link, a grid connection (some capacity has already been already secured, but will need to be enhanced), steam storage, ash treatment works and an associated office complex and educational centre.

The restored rail connection will need work to improve signalling, and other associated works. If there was a proposal to include up to 500 units of housing with 50% affordable housing, on the basis of its geographical proximity, S21 asked about the level of detail required to describe the housing element of the scheme in any application; the Inspectorate confirmed that whilst a DCO is not an outline consent, a parameters approach with detail to be confirmed by a requirement has been found acceptable in the past on other projects.

The project may be subject to a s35 direction to incorporate a business park – it is likely that any s35 direction requested would cover the whole scheme. The Applicant was advised to consider how the application would be framed and was advised to speak with the relevant SoS departments.

S21 acknowledge that the Proposed Development would be Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and propose to submit an EIA Scoping request around September 2020, followed by formal consultation in spring 2021, and a DCO application in autumn 2021. The Inspectorate emphasised the importance of an effective scoping process to ensure more proportionate EIA. The Inspectorate requested a meeting and potential site visit prior to S21 making the formal EIA Scoping request. It was acknowledged that the Proposed Development was located within a flood risk area(s) and that this would be a relevant constraint to the proposal. S21 indicated that work remains ongoing to address this and that further collaboration with relevant stakeholders is required to inform the overall approach. S21 was advised about the need to consider flood risk in line with most recent climate change projections from the Environment Agency.

There was a discussion regarding the approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and whether mitigation would be required. The Inspectorate noted that if the mitigation was considered as a measure to avoid or reduce effects on a European Site that Appropriate Assessment (AA) would be required.

The Inspectorate noted that on the indicative programme informal consultation currently coincided with consultation on the scoping request. This could confuse statutory consultees, and the Inspectorate advised that these two consultations should be programmed apart.

The Inspectorate noted that the scheme will require a Deemed Marine Licence and should therefore be treated as having an offshore development for the purposes of notification under s48 of PA2008.

S21 and the Inspectorate agreed to a further meeting prior to scoping; potentially to be combined with a site visit.