

# Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Bramford to Twinstead
<b>File reference</b>	EN020002
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	9 December 2020
<b>Meeting with</b>	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Inception meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

## ***Summary of key points discussed and advice given***

The Applicant and The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) Case team introduced themselves and their respective roles. 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). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted, if requested by an Applicant for commercial reasons.

## ***Proposed Development***

Bramford to Twinstead would be one of a number of key projects set to reinforce capacity in the area to enable delivery of 30GW of offshore wind energy by 2030. The Applicant described the current transmission system in place, built using 400kV pylons. Generation in the area was planned to increase from 3192 MW to a total of 22,801 MW by 2030.

The network capability needs have been established through the publication by National Grid ESO (a legally separate company) of the Future Energy Scenarios, Electricity Ten Year Statement, and Network Options Assessment report, and also the Network Development Policy of NGET. The Applicant advised that the government white paper and any future government commitments would feed into this annually repeated cycle. The Network Options Appraisal 2020 recommended proceeding with an AC connection between Bramford and Twinstead to relieve circuit overloads and utilise spare capacity in routes beyond Twinstead.

When paused in 2013 the project proposal was:

- The removal of an existing UK Power Network (UKPN) 132kV overhead line, to make way for a new 400kV connection.
- 21km of 400kV overhead lines.
- 8km of 400kV underground cable in two sections.

- Construction of a grid supply point substation, to keep UKPN supplied for the duration of works.

Between 2008 – 2013 the Applicant completed significant design, survey and consultation work, to inform preparation of its Environmental Statement and draft Preliminary Environmental information Report (PEIR). The Applicant stated that it is currently considering what elements of this material would need to be revisited due to time elapsed and changes to the scheme. It was also reviewing the 2013 proposals. Conversations were ongoing with UKPN regarding their line removal and the developer was considering their approach to consenting and land rights. Land referencing, ecological surveys and consultation approaches were also being reviewed. The Applicant is considering options for approaches relating to the key focus areas of Stour Valley, Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Hintlesham Hall and Hintlesham Woods and Dollops Wood. These required further assessment and engagement from a technical and stakeholder perspective. The Applicant highlighted the technical challenges posed by the significant changes in gradient in Dollops Wood. The Inspectorate advised of the importance of presenting realistic options to approaches during consultation. The Applicant queried whether the options for approaches could be included in the application if they have not been finalised at that time. The Inspectorate advised a fully informed and evidenced final option would be preferable.

Butlers Wood to the south of Sudbury was the location previously identified for the new grid supply point, to keep the local network supplied and facilitate the UKPN line removal. The site selection was still considered valid and the design will be finalized with UKPN.

A standalone Town and Country Planning (TCPA) application was being considered in advance of the DCO application.

Further improvements to capacity in the area were planned prior to the development, through reconducting some lines under permitted development rights (changing configurations to increase surface area conductors) and additional equipment at substation sites. Further work was also required to derive network capability, to meet climate change commitments by 2030. The Applicant advised of the additional capability required to support a double circuit independent route in surrounding areas and the need to consider the environmental impact of the work.

***Programme key dates:***

The Applicant advised of the following expected timetable:

- Submission of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping: Q2 2021
- Non statutory consultation: Q2 2021
- EIA surveys: Q2 2021
- Statutory consultation: Q1 2022
- DCO submission to the Inspectorate: Q1 2023
- Available for commercial load: Q2 2028

The Applicant queried the acceptability of a December 2022 submission. The Inspectorate advised of no restrictions on this, however they should consider any potential restrictions the public holidays place on statutory bodies and the public, and any subsequent impact on consultation. The Applicant advised they have not yet re-established contact with land owners.

### ***Consultation strategy:***

The Applicant provided an overview of the previous consultations between 2009 – 2012, on the basis of siting options at that time. These included a review of strategic options and identification for a preferred approach for a line parallel to the existing line, with removal of the UKPN 132kv line as mitigation. Consultation would be repeated, with previous consultation (now published) referred to, but not relied upon. Early engagement was planned with local authorities and statutory bodies, starting in December 2020. Engagement with relevant members of parliament, councillors, parish councils and land owners was planned for Q1 2021 in advance of planned surveys in March 2021. Primary and secondary consultation zones had been defined by proximity with initial strategies developed for each. The Applicant described the special consideration of hard to reach groups and ways of ensuring information was accessible. They were also considering how to visualize the proposal for consultees. They proposed to develop the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) in advance of the Statutory Consultation. The Inspectorate advised to keep the SoCC as flexible as possible, taking into account potential Covid-19 restrictions.

### ***Status of EIA***

The Applicant advised that it had previously received an EIA scoping opinion, however it would be submitting a new request for a scoping opinion due to updates to the EIA regulations and time elapsed since the last scoping exercise. The new scoping report would broadly follow the previous structure and take into account the previous work to inform the PEIR as background data, allowing for a more proportionate approach to the EIA. The Inspectorate advised that it supported a proportionate EIA approach, noting that uncertainty or insufficiently robust justification were normally the cause of not scoping out aspects or matters from further consideration. The Inspectorate advised that any evidence of agreements with statutory consultees would be useful pre-scoping, to add weight to any arguments for scoping out. The Inspectorate requested an update meeting prior to the submission of the scoping request to enable the Applicant to run through any key scoping out aspects or matters.

The Inspectorate noted its support for digital approaches in line with the ambitions of Project Speed and asked the Applicant whether it has considered digital EIA approaches. The Applicant stated that it was keen to look at opportunities for digital submissions and would engage with the Inspectorate on its approaches in future.

### ***Compulsory acquisition (CA)***

The Applicant previously commenced land referencing and identified no crown land to date. They anticipated the use of CA of land in the DCO rather than easement rights in approximately five sites. They queried the requirements on acquisition options for biodiversity net gain and said despite there being no formal requirement it may be that a future NGET licence could commit to a 10% net gain. The Applicant noted that it was possible that there be a national policy statement update during the lifespan of the project. The Inspectorate advised that reviews in line with the Energy white paper were expected. The Inspectorate advised early engagement with landowners and their agents, plus any associated farming bodies could be useful during the Examination.

### ***Case Management***

The Inspectorate asked the developer to supply a letter explaining the re-launch of the project in general terms so this explanation can be published on the existing project page. The Applicant's project page would also require updating, to ensure all links are working. The Applicant queried the frequency of meetings. The Inspectorate advised that there is a pilot project using "project speed" testing out enhanced pre-application process and an accelerated examination with frequent meetings, but not all projects would be appropriate, or wish to utilise this process. Both parties agreed to keep up to date with how the project evolves and strategic discussions could be held if this, or any other of the Applicant's forthcoming projects could be considered. Both parties agreed regular project update meetings would be arranged following completion of the pre-EIA/scoping meeting.

### ***Specific decisions/ follow-up required***

#### **The following actions were agreed:**

- Pre-scoping meeting to be arranged.
- Applicant to prepare project update letter for publication.