



Meeting note

Project name	Bramford to Twinstead
File reference	EN020002
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	16 December 2021
Meeting with	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
Venue	Microsoft teams
Meeting objectives	Project update meeting
Circulation	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.

Project update

The Applicant was preparing for its statutory consultation to commence on 25 January 2022. Draft Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) were shared with local planning authorities (LPAs), who were discussing options for joint approaches to documentation such as SoCG's and Local Impact Reports. There were five local authorities engaged, two of which had shared services (Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council). The Inspectorate advised joint working with clear remits should be encouraged, but LA's should be mindful of governance arrangements for amending shared documents during Examination. The Applicant expected there to be some shared outsourcing for specialist advice. The Inspectorate cited Richborough Connection project as an example of LA's agreeing areas of topic specific responsibility, joint response and areas for deferral. Thematic meetings with stakeholders continued for topics such as biodiversity.

The Applicant responded to the revised draft energy National Policy Statements (NPS) consultation. Ecological surveys and trial trenching continued.

The Applicant was aware of a letter to Ministers in September 2021 from Suffolk County Council regarding socio-economics and scoping. The Inspectorate agreed to look into whether a formal response had been issued.

Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) and strategies for Covid-19 variants

The Applicant outlined its broad approach to the SoCC to LPA's in July 2021 at a workshop and again in the early autumn as part of an informal consultation, with the formal consultation between 9 November and 7 December 2021. Main points of feedback were highlighted. An extension to the consultation from six to eight weeks had been

requested and agreed as part of the formal consultation, with one authority suggesting that issues around Covid justified this. Printing charges and the potential impact on consultation engagement were being considered. Consultation with parish councils was reviewed to ensure it included all non-quorate parish groups. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council had indicated that they would request an all-councillor briefing event. The parties had expressed satisfaction that comments made on the earlier draft SoCC had been addressed.

The SoCC in its current form stated that subject to government guidelines, eight public exhibitions would be held. However, in light of recent government announcements due to the fast-emerging Covid-19 situation, the Applicant was considering options. Original intentions were for eight physical exhibitions and five pre-bookable appointment sessions, supported by two webinars, telephone appointments, online information and postal information. The Applicant would need to determine its position in early January 2022 to meet requirements for print deadlines. The Applicant had not yet had the opportunity to discuss emerging guidance with LA's. The Inspectorate advised that should physical elements be changed to virtual, the Applicant should set out what different or additional opportunities were available, to demonstrate that engagement had not been reduced. Access to experienced and expert staff should be the same at physical and virtual/ telephone events. Consideration should be given to introducing additional physical events later in the consultation period, should the situation improve. The Inspectorate signposted its [Advice Note 14](#), particularly in relation to virtual consultation methods and ensuring the consultation report clearly referenced how digitally disadvantaged parties were supported.

The Applicant explained that the programme's 2028 delivery date was a key enabler to the government's 2030 energy targets.

Scheme at Statutory Consultation

The Statutory Consultation was aligned to coincide with the soft launch regarding the East Anglia GREEN project (reinforcement between Norwich and Tilbury via Bramford, known as AENC and ATNC in the Electricity System Operators Network Options Assessment) in response to stakeholder feedback.

On Bramford to Twinstead project newsletters would be issued to all properties within the primary consultation zone along with a paper feedback form. There would be targeted print and social media advertising, telephone surgeries and printed material at deposit locations and on request. The Applicant advised that two thirds of the 537 responses during the non-statutory consultation were paper, with 10% of paper forms issued being returned.

The Applicant was consulting on two options for the scheme in relation to Hintlesham Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which contained various schedule 1 birds. Option 1 would involve the existing 400kV overhead line diverted onto new pylons to the north and west of the woodland, with the proposed 400kV overhead line using the existing pylons through the woodland. Option 2 would involve the existing 400kV overhead line remaining, with a new 400kV overhead line constructed to the south of this line within the woodland and in parallel to the existing lines, but with pylons either side of the woodland. The new 400kV pylons would therefore be slightly taller to allow for the new overhead line to cross the trees. Option 1 was presented during non-statutory consultation, and option 2 was produced as a result of the feedback received.

Surveys and management schedules were required. The options had been discussed with technical stakeholders with mixed views on the risks/ benefits for each. Technical discussions with ecologists were ongoing regarding maintenance of the integrity of the ancient woodland if new conductors were required. The Applicant hoped to resolve this prior to submission of the application but it could be an area for optionality in the Development Consent Order (DCO). Limits of deviation would be applied to allow for flexibility of pylon placement. Hintlesham Hall views would be preserved due to its protected status.

An overview of sections D – G of the route had been provided at non statutory consultation. Feedback from this consultation supported undergrounding in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Following a change of location for Stour Valley West cable sealing end compound (CSEC) and Dedham Vale East CSEC, increased undergrounding was confirmed to reduce setting effects on the AONB. Dedham Vale East CSEC had also been moved 1km away from the boundary of the AONB as a result of feedback. Stour Valley West CSE would now be to the south of Henny Back Road, to allow for greater removal of the existing 400kV line to the north, and to support undergrounding an improved route in the Stour Valley. The revised route resolved concerns raised at consultation and engineering concerns regarding horizontal directional drilling (HDD).

The grid supply point substation was required to facilitate the removal of UKPN lines. It would include a fenced compound approximately 270 metres by 50 metres in size, which would provide UKPN with an alternative supply. The statutory consultation would include further information about the proposed substation and its layout. It would include a number of small, modular container type buildings to house electrical equipment and provide office/welfare units, two Super Grid Transformers with reinforced concrete bunds and noise enclosure. The Applicant intended to submit a Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) application to Braintree District Council (DC) for the substation alongside the DCO application, but it expected earlier determination as the programme required earlier construction. Pre-application discussions had been held and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening request had been submitted to Braintree DC. A number of related s37 Electricity Act consents would also be required from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Applicant had a corporate commitment to 10% biodiversity net gain and this would form part of the statutory consultation. It proposed to include this within the DCO with any accompanying compulsory acquisition powers. Up to 14 environmental areas for net gain had been identified.

S46 letter

The Applicant intend to set up a sharepoint site to allow for the transfer of larger files, and requested the names of Inspectorate staff who should be granted access. The Inspectorate confirmed it would advise in due course. The Applicant intended to submit the s46 letter on 21 January 2022.

Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) update

Draft heads of terms for PPA's were issued in February 2021, with further full drafts circulated during the year, and separate discussions regarding costs were underway. The Applicant requested justification for financial calculations and had included an annex of

non-fundable activity (mostly relating to statutory responsibilities during Examination). The Applicant advised that a high-level meeting had been requested by the local authorities and fundamental issues of concern remained. The PPA approach had been used on other schemes such as Thames Tideway Tunnel, Richborough Connection Project and Hinkley Point C Connection Project. The Applicant acknowledged the Inspectorate did not engage with negotiations for PPA's. The Inspectorate advised it could be useful to separate pre-application and examination duties and acknowledged the need for more guidance for all parties.

Timelines until submission

a) Draft document review

The Applicant confirmed its intention to share draft documents for review during the summer of 2022. This would include the draft DCO and Explanatory Memorandum (EM). The Inspectorate advised that six to eight weeks should be allowed for the review period, but this would be dependent on the volume and complexity of documentation supplied. It advised to focus on specific issues for advice or novel approaches and requested as much notice as possible. This would be kept as a standing item for discussion at future meetings.

b) Preparation for submission

The Inspectorate advised that hyperlinks were no longer accepted and that the Applicant should consider the information submitted so it focussed on evidence to justify the project need.

The Applicant queried submitting the application in mid-December 2022. The Inspectorate advised it would consider the application whenever it was submitted. However, submission near the holidays could impact LA ability to review the Consultation Report and respond to the Adequacy of Consultation requests. It could also present challenges if the Inspectorate needed to request any signposting or further information from the Applicant. As such, a January 2023 submission would be preferred. A limited pre-examination period would de-risk the overall programme, and the length of this period could be impacted by issues requiring the Applicant's attention.

c) Examination (virtual and hybrid hearings)

The Inspectorate expected that following government announcements, hearings and events would be virtual, reverting to blended events when safe to do so. It advised the Applicant to review live projects and notifications for hearings (for example the A417 Missing Link) and other Rule 13 letters to identify the rationale for virtual hearings. Closer to submission, it would need to identify potential venues for Preliminary Meeting and Hearings and would approach the Applicant for its knowledge of the area. The Inspectorate expected a move to blended Examinations, which could involve both blended and virtual events dependent on type and suitability.

Update from PINs

The Inspectorate queried whether the recently issued Norfolk Boreas decision had any direct or in-direct impacts on the project. The Applicant advised that the overall need case for reinforcement was strong due to the range and volume of related projects that

would require it. In support of 2030 targets, Network capability reinforcement would be required to export power from the coast to centres of population. Indications from the Committee for Climate Change were that the government ambitions of 40GW of offshore wind energy by 2030 would need to further significantly increase by 2050. The Applicant was undertaking further work to increase capacity through improvements in the next five years, including upgrading various lines.

AOB

It was agreed the next meeting would be arranged after the completion of the statutory consultation, in April 2022.