



Meeting note

Project name	Bramford to Twinstead
File reference	EN020002
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	3 May 2022
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

Statutory consultation took place between 26 January and 21 March 2022. The annual Network Options Assessment (NOA) had been published in January 2022 (after the commencement of the consultation), which reinforced the need for the project. The scheme was viewed as critical in all scenarios, to support government ambitions, including net zero targets.

Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) were being finalised following the agreement of principle issues with local planning authorities (LPA). The only remaining issue to resolve related to VAT recovery. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) application for the Grid Supply Point (GSP) substation had been submitted to Braintree District Council in April 2022. This was the first in a sequence of works required to support grid connections. This would allow for prompt progression to construction once the DCO application was decided. There was no requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A separate PPA was agreed for the TCPA application, which would be considered by the local authority's planning committee, rather than at delegated officer level, with an expected committee date in August 2022. The GSP substation would be included in the DCO application until there was certainty it could proceed under the TCPA permission, with the potential to remove it from the DCO at a later date if no longer required.

Processes were underway relating to the consents required for overhead lines under s37 of the Electricity Act 1989. Minor consents would be needed, consultations had begun and the LPA had confirmed receipt of the Form B. The Applicant had notified the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the s37 application was expected to be submitted to BEIS in the next month.

Engineering and environmental surveys were ongoing. Data was being collected with a view to preparation of the EIA. Discussions were ongoing with persons with interest in land. Survey access was obtained through voluntary agreements in approximately 95% of cases. Historical data had been obtained for the remaining 5%. It was considering the use of powers under s172 of the Housing and

Planning Act 2016 for compulsory access to undertake some engineering surveys, to support reducing the gap between consent and construction. These weren't expected to be necessary but the situation would continue to be monitored. Discussions had begun regarding voluntary agreements for freehold acquisition of the GSP substation site. Further discussions regarding the cable sealing end compound (CSEC) site and easements would follow. Draft heads of the terms were being discussed with land agents. Thematic groups were meeting on a regular basis, covering subjects such as ecology, landscape and historic environment. The non-statutory consultation for National Grid's East Anglia GREEN project started on 21 April 2022 and would continue in the wider context of National Grid projects.

Feedback on the Statutory Consultation

The Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) was discussed with five LPAs. Comments were considered, with the main request to extend the consultation period to eight weeks being adopted. Adjustments were made to the SoCC after the consultation due to Covid-19 restrictions. The potential for face to face events was retained and these were reinstated once restrictions were lifted. A request for a public meeting was declined as the consultation events were viewed as more inclusive. The Applicant allowed an additional seven days for postal responses to the consultation. The SoCC had allowances for targeted consultation if required.

A range of methods were used, including stakeholder briefings and meetings, webinars, ask the expert sessions, eight published notices, newsletters issued to approximately 10,000 households along the route, advertisements on social media and in local and national newspapers. Four face to face consultation drop in events were held at large venues across the route, which were attended by over 250 visitors. The events in Nailand, Hintlesham and Sudbury had the highest attendance. A local newspaper initially printed a draft notice, but this was resolved with more than 28 days of the consultation period still to run so no parties were prejudiced. A total of 573 consultation responses were received from a diverse age range (broadly in keeping with the demographics of the area) and 58% of feedback forms received were in hard copy. Positive comments were received about the regard to previous consultation responses. Views were put forward on options for the Hintlesham Woods area, CSEC locations, the extent of undergrounding for the project, alternative options for routing around the Stour Valley and potential tourism and socio-economic impacts from general construction.

The Inspectorate queried whether specific concerns about tourism and socio-economic effects had been raised. The Applicant advised that the matter had been raised by the LPAs, who considered that socio-economics, recreation and tourism should be included in the ES as a standalone chapter. The consultation feedback indicated it was a general concern but primarily related to tourism impacts and potential mitigation. The Applicant confirmed that it was intending to continue discussions on this matter through meetings and workshops with the LPAs. The Applicant would include baseline data within the Environmental Statement (ES) and the assessment of cumulative effects would include consideration of socio-economic, recreation and tourism impacts. As no significant effects were expected, there was no requirement for mitigation to be identified within the ES but the Applicant was proposing to explain mitigation that would be available outside of the EIA process, including employment opportunities, future skills and its community fund.

Potential changes were being considered on the basis of consultation responses. The Applicant would evidence any changes that were considered but not acted upon and the reasons for this. Two options for routeing at Hintlesham Woods were being considered (either routeing to the north of the woods or through the woods, parallel to the existing overhead line (OHL)) and could result in optionality to be included in the DCO application. The Applicant noted that key stakeholders had not expressed a preference between the two options at Statutory Consultation. At this stage the

Applicant did not have a preferred option but was undertaking further survey work and developing an understanding of the likely mitigation packages for each. The Inspectorate advised to prepare work for alternative routes to allow for comments on all options during the Examination. The Applicant queried any other projects where optionality was included without an expressed preference. The Inspectorate confirmed it would look into this. The Applicant noted that Natural England (NE) had also request a third routeing option to the south of the woods, parallel with an existing 132kV OHL to be considered but this had a number of challenging constraints. The Applicant was considering the length and extent of the underground section in the Stour Valley Project Area, which is located outside of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) but forms part of its management plan and contributes towards its setting. The Applicant advised that NE had provided an update on the application to extend the AONB designation to cover the Stour Valley Project Area, noting that it was not currently one of NE's priority areas but it should be treated as a highly valued landscape in the assessment in the ES. The Applicant stated that there would be landscape and visual benefits with the removal of the existing 400kV OHL. Options had been included in the consultation on the underground cable route, and a variety of alternative routes had been put forward by the local communities and LPAs. These were being considered by the Applicant with its design and engineering team and feedback would be provided. The Applicant was aware that if it selected an option substantially different to those put forward at consultation a further targeted statutory consultation would be required in the Summer of 2022. It would be a proportionate 28 day consultation period, focused on the specific areas of any changes. Further minor changes were being considered regarding pylon alignment and temporary access arrangements.

The anticipated submission date would be in the latter half of winter 2022/23. The Inspectorate highlighted the impact on LPA resources to respond to requests for information on the adequacy of consultation, if submitted around the bank holidays.

Naming conventions

The Applicant explained that the project had always been known as Bramford to Twinstead, running from east to west. As a result, this would be reflected in application documents including drawings, work plans, land plans, descriptions in the ES and Schedule 1 of the DCO, which would all present information from east to west, rather than the usual west to east. The Inspectorate acknowledged this could pose an issue in hard copy plans but this was less of a concern in a digital space. Technicalities should be clear and support the Examining Authority's consideration of the application. The Applicant acknowledged the hard copy plans and documentation used in the statutory consultation had been set out in the same way, so this would be a consistent approach.

Draft documents review

The Applicant intended to submit draft DCO and Explanatory Memorandum in early August 2022, subject to any targeted consultation. The Inspectorate advised an estimate six to eight week review period, dependant on the documentation supplied and the Applicant should specify any novel issues or particular areas of advice required. It also queried the likelihood of changes to the DCO following any targeted consultation. This was not anticipated by the Applicant due to the previous rounds of consultation. The Inspectorate advised that submission of the draft consultation report can be useful. It requested advanced notice in relation to submission date.

Possibility of fast-tracking projects

The Applicant highlighted the recently published British Energy Security Strategy and its reference to establishing a fast track consenting route for priority cases. The Inspectorate advised there was no reason why this couldn't be completed under the current Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) and more work

in the pre-application stage could de-risk the potential for longer Pre-Examination or Decision periods. The Inspectorate was having discussions with wider strategic bodies about where time-savings could be achieved. If an established framework was in place, Applicants would need to look at the potential benefits and risks of being able to inform the ExA consideration in a shorter time frame. This could impact project teams and external parties, with resources needing to be made available for all parties concerned. The Inspectorate advised it would be useful to have a prioritised portfolio for the Applicant.

Update from PINs

Blended events were taking place for the Net Zero Teesside Project within the next week. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider potential suitable venues and audio visual companies for use during Examination if required. The Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) was ongoing. Resource concerns had been identified for a number of LPA's and statutory bodies within the east of England, due to the number of forthcoming National Significant Infrastructure Projects in the area. The Applicant advised it was chasing consultation responses from National Highways and Historic England but it did not believe these were delayed due to resourcing issues. This would be evidenced in the consultation report.

Post Meeting note

Following the meeting, the Inspectorate looked into precedent DCO examples where there were two options for routeing without an expressed preference from the Applicant. Hinkley Point C Connection was identified but circumstances may have been different. If both options were taken forward then the ES should assess the likely significant effects associated with both options, identify any mitigation required and how it would be secured. Regard should be had to guidance in [PINS Advice Note 9: Rochdale Envelope](#).

AOB

It was agreed the next meeting would be arranged after the completion of the draft documents review period, and the Applicant would contact the Inspectorate to confirm timescales for this.