

**Richborough Connection Project  
Landscape, Visual and Biodiversity Effects including  
Alternatives  
Issue Specific Hearing**

Friday 30 September 2016

Canterbury Cathedral Lodge, Clagett Auditorium, The Precincts,  
Canterbury, Kent. CT1 2EH

9.30am for 10.00am start

**Purpose of the issue specific hearing (ISH)**

To consider the landscape, visual and biodiversity effects of the application, including alternatives.

**Invited attendees:**

*All Interested Parties are invited to attend the hearing. The following parties are invited to attend because the Examining Authority (ExA) considers that the material they have submitted raises issues that the ExA may wish to explore at the hearing:*

National Grid, the Applicant  
Canterbury City Council  
Dover District Council  
Kent County Council  
Thanet District Council  
Broad Oak Preservation Society  
South East Water

**Clarity over content of this ISH agenda and other ISH agendas**

This ISH **will not** cover:

- landscape, visual, biodiversity and arboricultural matters associated specifically with the proposed Broad Oak Reservoir;
- alternatives proposed by South East Water (SEW) in the vicinity of the proposed reservoir at Broad Oak; and
- public rights of way (PRoW) diversions.

This ISH **will** consider:

- landscape and visual effects at the diamond crossover (even if the diamond crossover is also considered at the ISH on construction effects and farming); and
- sequential views along PRoWs.

## **Agenda**

(further detail is provided in the attached Annex)

**1. Welcome, introductions, arrangements for the hearing**

**2. Landscape and visual methodology**

To establish any change to last stated positions of interested parties (IPs) over differences of opinion regarding the way in which the methodology has been applied by the Applicant in the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA).

To understand the extent of those differences of opinion and whether additional work, mitigation or changes to the development consent order (DCO) are proposed or required.

To remind IPs of the Examination timetable and where comments have been made regarding ongoing review work, to understand what this is and when this would be completed and submitted to allow examination.

**3. Biodiversity**

To clarify outstanding points on matters to do with the Habitats Regulations, ancient woodland and any other biodiversity matters.

**4. Alternatives**

To consider continuing differences between IPs over the way alternatives have been considered.

**5. Mitigation and enhancement for landscape, visual and biodiversity effects (in the event the Secretary of State is minded to approve the proposed development – ie other than undergrounding)**

To consider points made on the embedded mitigation and landscape and habitat enhancement scheme.

**6. Updating of Statements of Common Ground**

**7. Action points arising from the hearing**

**8. Any other business**

# **Annex to Richborough Connection Project Landscape, Visual and Biodiversity Effects including Alternatives Issue Specific Hearing**

This Annex sets out the issues the Panel wishes to address during the ISH. Others may arise during the hearing.

## **2. Landscape and visual methodology**

### **LANDSCAPE**

#### **2.1 *The way in which special landscape areas (SLAs) have been assessed***

The Applicant's consideration of points made by KCC regarding the assessment of the Ash Levels landscape character area (LCA) (Response to Q2.7.1/ Q1.7.7) – in particular the suggestion that the susceptibility to change should be medium and thus the sensitivity should be medium. What, if any, change there would be to the overall effect; if it would be significant?

#### **2.2 *Construction stage effects***

Whether the respective positions over the way magnitude of effect has been assessed remain. KCC to confirm its response to Q2.7.1/ Q1.7.7 is that it considers (all?) receptors in Sections A to D would experience high adverse magnitude of effect.

#### **2.3 *Geographical extent of landscape effects***

For the Applicant to respond to KCC's suggestion it has not given sufficient weight to the 'larger scale' of effects (response to Q2.7.6) and that this would result in the overall significance of effect of the whole project being of high adverse significance (response to Q2.7.1/ Q1.7.7), including KCC's contention that there is under-assessment of the susceptibility of the landscape, its value, and the size and scale of impact of the development.

### **VISUAL**

#### **2.4 *Distance of visual receptors from pylons and amenity assessment***

To understand from the Applicant if/ how it has considered the difference between a specific receptor's view of conductors versus a view of a pylon(s) in the way in which the visual assessment was undertaken.

To understand the purpose of the suggested submission of the distance from pylon material by KCC. How it is proposed it would be used; what checking against the guidance document '*Wind Turbines and Pylons, Guidance on the Application of Separation Distances from Residential properties – Executive Summary, 2014*' would achieve, what forms of mitigation it might lead to, how it would be helpful in triggering arguments for undergrounding.

To understand from KCC what would be contained in a "*visual residential amenity assessment*", which is not already contained in the Applicant's LVIA (response to Q2.7.21 [REP4-026]).

## **2.5 *Sequential effects on views from public rights of ways***

To hear from the Applicant whether it has averaged out the assessment of sequential views along PRoWs (as suggested in KCC's response to Q2.7.13 [REP4-026]), and whether it considers mapping indicating which particular lengths of footpath would experience what effect would result in a finer grain assessment which would direct mitigation accordingly. Whether that level of detail has been used in designing the mitigation. If so how; if not why not.

To understand from KCC (and others) if there are specific views from particular PRoWs which it considers require mitigation (or where enhancement would be appropriate), which are not currently shown in the application documents.

## **2.6 *How professional judgement has been applied***

To understand how professional judgement has been applied in reaching assessments for 'value' and other elements of the assessment.

## **2.7 *Any other landscape or visual methodology matters***

What the ongoing review work is to which KCC refers in its response to Q2.7.1, if not already covered.

## **3. *Biodiversity***

### **3.1 *HRA matters***

To seek confirmation of the ongoing updating of the matrices and No Significant Effects Report (NSER) and liaison with Natural England including correct versions of conservation objectives regarding the points made in Q2.2.2 and Q2.2.3.

### **3.2 *Ancient Woodland***

For the Applicant to update the Panel on the outcome of the meeting with the Woodland Trust held in mid-September and to set out any sustained areas of difference of opinion. To understand if a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is planned between the Applicant and the Woodland Trust.

To consider whether there are any outstanding matters relating to ancient woodland.

### **3.3 *Any further matters on biodiversity***

## **4. *Alternatives***

### **4.1 *Consideration of alternatives in light of law and policy NPSs EN-1 and EN-5***

Any further points parties wish to make about how the Secretary of State should consider the question of alternatives in light of the law and policy.

### **4.2 *Extent and nature of harm***

Whether parties agree that the starting point must be the extent of harm in planning terms that would be caused by the proposed development.

Whether SEW or any other IPs wish to comment further on the Applicant's response to Q2.12.24/ Q2.12.27 [REP4-014] on when alternatives become important and relevant.

Any further points on the harm in planning terms that IPs consider the proposed development would give rise to.

**4.3 *The scope for alternatives which could satisfy the need and the extent to which the feasibility of these have been considered***

The extent to which there is continued disagreement between the Applicant and IPs regarding the alternatives that have (or have not) been considered in the evolution of the design of the proposed development as set out in the application.

The Applicant's response to the suggestion by SEW that alternative(s) could have been included in the application, (eg as an option was on the Hinkley Connector) for the ExA to recommend and the Secretary of State to decide [REP4-042].

**4.4 *Holford Rules compliance***

To understand from the Applicant the degree to which its *"efforts to synchronise overhead line alignments within Sections C and D as closely as possible"* (response to Q2.7.18 [REP4-014]) have met Rule 6, referring to KCC's view [REP4-026] that a double line of pylons of different sizes and uncoordinated spacing would lack balance and is not compliant with the Holford Rules and the Applicant's statement that the proposed pylons are considered to be consistent in appearance (Response to Q2.7.22 [REP4-014]).

Any other further points on Holford Rules compliance including the weight the Applicant has given them and the extent to which it has complied with the Rules (Applicant's responses to Q1.7.43 [REP2-017, Appendix O] and Q2.7.18 [REP4-014]).

**4.5 *Undergrounding***

Any points not already made concerning undergrounding regarding NPS EN-5's reference to *"where there are serious concerns about the potential adverse landscape and visual effects of a proposed overhead line..."* and the need to balance these against other relevant factors (para 2.8.8).

For KCC to set out its arguments for undergrounding in terms of serious harm to add to the response it has given to Q2.7.6/ Q1.7.38 and in the context of the policy (para 2.8.9) which states that Government has not laid down any general rules about when an overhead line should be considered unacceptable and places particular emphasis on residential areas and those of natural beauty or historic importance such as National Parks, AONBs and the Broads.

Whether there are any further points on the benefits associated with the adoption of a non-overhead line alternative for all or any part of the route in light of the Applicant's response to Q2.7.16 [REP4-014].

Any matters to do with cost and lifetime costs.

#### **4.6 *The proposed diamond crossover***

To understand from the Applicant whether undergrounding of the 132kV PY line was part of the proposals at preliminary environmental information (PEIR) stage, as mentioned by KCC in response to Q2.7.21 [REP4-026], why it was considered then (ie was there a need for a crossing of the PY line with the proposed 400kV line) and how this fits with the Applicant's response to Q2.7.33.

To understand from the Applicant if undergrounded lines are less likely to be susceptible to faults arising eg through weather impacts; and how this relates to the arguments set out regarding the longer restoration times stated in the Applicant's response to Q2.7.33 [REP4-014].

Whether KCC has further comment in light of the Applicant's response to Q2.7.33 [REP4-014], which sets out the reasons for the evolution of the proposed diamond crossover design.

Any other points regarding the proposed diamond crossover.

### **5. Mitigation and enhancement for landscape, visual and biodiversity effects (in the event the Secretary of State is minded to approve the proposed development – ie other than undergrounding)**

#### **5.1 *Landscape and visual mitigation***

To understand if any new matters are to be added to the SoCG between the Applicant and KCC, further to Applicant's response to Q2.7.24. To understand if the SoCG as submitted stands.

To understand which particularly adversely affected areas KCC considers could be improved by layout and additional landscape proposals; and how (KCC response to Q2.7.24).

#### **5.2 *Concept mitigation planting plans and embedded mitigation***

For the Applicant to respond to SEW's interpretation of the concept mitigation plans [REP2-014], namely that mitigation is provided only for biodiversity and arboricultural effects (response to Q2.3.5 [REP4-049]).

Whether the relevant local authorities for Requirement 8 approvals and KCC are content that the Applicant's concept mitigation planting plans are fit for purpose in light of the requirement to submit detailed planting plans for approval at a later date under Requirement 8.

Whether KCC is content with the Applicant's response to KCC's points [REP4-019, Appendix A] and what has changed KCC's view of suitability of planting mixes between an earlier meeting 21 October 2015 and recent submissions (Applicant and KCC responses to Q2.7.24).

To understand in more detail from the Applicant the process for ongoing assessment by the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) which would determine the eventual scope of replacement planting (as described in response to Q2.7.26), when the changes could/ would be undertaken, how they would be agreed, how the final scheme would be reported and

checked and monitored and what the guaranteed relevant qualifications of the ECoW for this assessment role are. To seek the views of the relevant local authorities for Requirement 8 approvals on these matters.

**5.3 *Landscape and habitat enhancement scheme (LHES)***

Any further points regarding the LHES.

**5.4 *Any further points on mitigation and enhancement***

**6. *Updating of Statements of Common Ground***

To understand if matters agreed and reported in second round questions will be updated in relevant SoCGs (eg the Councils on ancient woodland Q2.2.13, Q2.2.14, Q2.2.18, on water voles Q2.2.28, Environment Agency Q2.2.25, Natural England Q2.2.27 on an understanding that the proposed development will not result in licensable activities affecting water voles).