

BICKER PARISH COUNCIL



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The Planning Inspectorate EO20019

Response for deadline

1. Cumulative effect.

The Council does not accept that the Cumulative Effect of existing and known future developments on Bicker Fen, including the existing National Grid sub-station (which is to be expanded by about one third) is other than major, and against Government Policy as set out by the Department of Local Government and Community Affairs.

The applicant is wrong to exclude the effect of the new Heckington turbines, as their wiring will come across Bicker Fen from the Forty Foot Drain to the existing Western Power Distribution sub station . There has been no information on what work is needed by W.P.D. The new wiring, according to the planning application, will be above ground on “H” poles. This will increase the Cumulative Effect, visual intrusion and loss of top grade agricultural land.

2. Visual Impact.

It is not agreed that the visual effect of all the existing and planned industrial development on Bicker Fen has other than a major impact. Bicker Fen is being changed from an agricultural area into an industrial area by stealth.

3. Loss of Agricultural Land.

It is not accepted that the loss of green belt agricultural land is negligible. When the industrialised area of land is calculated across Lincolnshire the loss is significant. Along the cable route, including Bicker Fen, the land cannot be reinstated just by pushing back the soil. There will be considerable damage to drainage that will have to be repaired again once the soil has settled. Large areas will be waterlogged for 3 -5 months of the year, and the land will be lost to cultivation.

4. Electromagnetic Radiation and damage to residents health.

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It is noted that the applicant states that the effects of electromagnetic fields have been assessed for this scheme. What has not been assessed is the cumulative radiation effects of the mass of existing overhead and underground wiring in conjunction with what is to be added by National Grid, Western Power Distribution, TKOWFL and Ecotricity. A full comprehensive report on all existing and new wiring on Bicker Fen is needed before any planning permissions are granted.

5. Impacts on Agricultural Businesses.

The impacts are major across Lincolnshire and are now being properly assessed by the NFU and others. No planning permissions should be granted until a new full and proper assessment of infrastructure impacts across Lincolnshire has been undertaken.

6. Traffic Impacts.

The Council accepts that the use of the two new permanent roads, from the A17 to the new sub station and onwards to the existing connection points, for all traffic connected with this project, is a major step forward. The Council is confident that Boston Borough Council (in this area) will take all appropriate measures to stop any traffic from using unsuitable minor roads and tracks out of Bicker village, including Cowbridge Road.

The stated stance by Boston Borough Council that “the existing highway networks is unsuitable to take traffic associated with any other major infrastructure projects” is strongly supported by Bicker Parish Council. The Planning Inspectorate should include the specific exclusion to existing road use in any planning permissions granted. This will of course also apply to Ecotricity (Heckington turbines wiring) and National Grid (Viking Link and the large expansion of the existing sub station). This is vital for the health and safety of residents.

7. Interface Connection Point

It is clear that there are suitable connection points near the east coast which would alleviate the need for the high level of environmental destruction across Lincolnshire which is now proposed. The only reason for the existing plan is cost-saving by the applicants. It is wrong that their savings are funded by the environmental costs borne by Lincolnshire's environment and its residents and businesses. The Fens is a unique environment that should be protected from this kind of environmental damage and creeping industrialisation. The Council requests a full reappraisal of the interface connection now that additional spare capacity is available at more suitable places near the east coast.

8. Increased Flood Risk.

The position has changed now that the Environment Agency has confirmed an increased flood risk on Bicker Fen (and other areas) because of the imminent closure of the last two major pumps (out of five) at the Black Sluice Pumping Station at Boston. The applicants do not appear to understand the drainage system. The fen is drained by numerous drains under the control of the Black Sluice Drainage Board. The water eventually arrives at the pumping station on Bicker Fen to be pumped into the Forty Foot Drain. This is then pumped out to sea via the Haven at Boston. Thus the increased flood risk is factual and could affect this development. The Forty Foot drain has not been dredged since it was built.

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With many hundreds of thousands of tons of stone, concrete, steel etc being dumped into Bicker Fen the topography will undoubtedly change to the detriment of Bicker residents because of increased flood risk, insurance premiums etc.
This is unacceptable to the Council.

9. Consultation

The Council does not accept that adequate consultation was undertaken. The system was flawed, with alternative sites not fully assessed. The consultation should be rerun on a wider and fair basis.

Diane Fairweather
Clerk to Bicker Parish Council