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Subject: North Shropshire Reinforcement Project : Local Impact Report
Date: 29 March 2019 07:45:30
Attachments: [Local Impact Report March 2019.docx](#)

Dear Sian,

Please find attached a copy of Shropshire Council's Local Impact Report in respect of the above project.

Regards

Ian Kilby

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Reinforcement to North Shropshire Electricity Distribution Network by SP Manweb

Local Impact Report of Shropshire Council - March 2019

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Local Impact Report (LIR) has been prepared by Shropshire Council, acting in its role as statutory consultee, to inform the examination of the proposed reinforcement of the North Shropshire Electricity Distribution Network by SP Manweb.
- 1.2 The preparation of the report has been informed by positive discussions between various council officers and the applicant since 2016 on a range of relevant matters. The Council have considered the Planning Inspectorate Guidance Note 1 to inform the content and structure of the report.

Scope of the report

- 1.3 The LIR relates to the potential local impact to a range of receptors as a result of the proposed route of the North Shropshire Reinforcement Project, considering pylon design. It does not seek to replicate the information contained in the applicant's Environmental Statement.
- 1.4 It is acknowledged it is the role of LIRs to seek to reflect the views of communities within the area covered by the proposed line. However, in this case there has been very limited local response to the project and it is noted that no Parish or Town Councils have provided responses to the recent consultation carried out by the Planning Inspectorate. The one exception to this relates to the choice of line route around the village of Noneley, where earlier iterations of the proposed line route led to some local objections made to the Council. This issue is specifically covered in Section 5 of this report.

2.0 Project Description

- 2.1 The Proposed Development includes the following elements:
- Works within the boundary of the existing SP Manweb Substation at Oswestry including underground cable and the installation of electrical switchgear and associated equipment;
 - Approximately 1.2km of 132kV underground cable between Oswestry Substation and a 132kV terminal structure at Long Wood (SJ 31132 29877);
 - Approximately 21.3km of 132kV of overhead line supported by Trident wood poles from the terminal structure at Long Wood (SJ 31132 29877) to the existing SP Manweb Substation at Wem; and

- Works within the existing SP Manweb Substation at Wem including the installation of a new 132kV to 33kV transformer.

3.0 Relevant Development Plan Policies

- 3.1 It is acknowledged the National Planning Statements comprise the Government's objectives for the development of nationally significant infrastructure and are of primary consideration to this proposal. However, it is also considered relevant for the LIR to set out the local position regards Development Plan policies, and in particular those policies which are material to this proposal.
- 3.2 The Shropshire Development Plan for the area covered by the proposed DCO is covered by two adopted Development Plan documents:
- The Core Strategy, adopted in 2010; and
 - The Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan, adopted in 2015.
- 3.3 Taken together these documents form the Development Plan for the area. It should also be recognised the Council are undertaking an early Local Plan Review which will provide for an extended plan period to 2036. The Local Plan Review has recently been subject to a 'preferred sites' consultation in February 2019, and it is the Council's intention to submit this Plan for examination in late 2019.
- 3.4 With reference to the current Development Plan, there are a number of relevant strategic policies for this proposal relating to the protection and enhancement of environment assets, as well as supporting housing and economic growth aspirations both strategically and in relation to specific settlements.

Core Strategy Policy CS1: Strategic Approach

- 3.5 This policy establishes the strategic approach to development across the plan period, setting out the housing and employment requirements of around 27,500 dwellings and around 290 hectares of employment land between 2006 and 2026. The policy identifies indicative localised growth requirements within five 'spatial zones'; the North West and North East Spatial Zones being relevant to the proposed Development Consent Order.

Core Strategy Policy CS3

- 3.6 Policy CS3 identifies Shropshire's network of Market Towns and Key Centres and provides for broad additional broad level guidance for each settlement. Of relevance to this application are development aspirations in Oswestry, Wem and Whitchurch, and information on this is covered in para 5.53 below. Broadly, this policy sets out ambitious growth requirements for these

settlements, as well as the need to deliver supporting infrastructure improvements. The policy states *“The Market Towns and other Key Centres will maintain and enhance their roles in providing facilities and services to their rural hinterlands, and providing foci for economic development and regeneration. Balanced housing and employment development, of an appropriate scale and design that respects each town’s distinctive character and is supported by improvements in infrastructure, will take place within the towns’ development boundaries and on sites allocated for development.”*

Core Strategy Policy CS5: Countryside and Green Belt

- 3.7 This policy provides a strategic policy for the consideration of application within the Countryside and Green Belt. Whilst this DCO does not include any areas of Green Belt, the vast majority of the proposed line route runs through areas of open countryside. Within such areas, the policy applies a strict control over development in accordance with national policies protecting the countryside. The policy states that development proposals on appropriate sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character will be permitted where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing local economic and community benefit. The policy goes on to state that this will be achieved particularly where the application relates to required community uses and infrastructure which cannot be accommodated within settlements.
- 3.8 It is acknowledged the proposal needs to be accommodated in a countryside location. It is therefore considered important to determine whether the scheme will maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character and to assess the economic and community benefits of the proposal, both of which are issues covered in section 5 of this report.

Core Strategy Policy CS6: Sustainable Design and Development Principles

- 3.9 This policy provides the Council’s strategic approach to ensuring applications consider sustainability within their design and development. This includes the need to protect, restore conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment, as well as ensuring there is capacity and availability of infrastructure to serve any new development.

Core Strategy Policy CS8: Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Provision

- 3.10 This policy supports the timely delivery of infrastructure to support the development of sustainable places. This policy indicates that additional infrastructure should be positively encouraged where it meets identified needs and where this has no significant adverse impact on recognised environmental assets. The policy specifically refers to the working closely with network providers to ensure provision of necessary energy distribution networks.

Core Strategy CS17: Environmental Networks

- 3.11 This policy requires that all development protects, enhances, expands and connects Shropshire's environmental assets, to create a multifunctional network of natural and historic resources. Development must not have a significant adverse impact on Shropshire's environmental assets and must not create barriers or sever links between them.

SAMDev Policy MD2: Sustainable Design

- 3.12 This policy sets out additional sustainable design criteria (further to CS6), stating, amongst other things, that development proposals should contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character and existing amenity value.

SAMDev Policy MD12: The Natural Environment

- 3.13 This policy seeks to avoid harm to Shropshire's natural assets and to conserve, enhance and restore them. Proposals which are likely to have a significant adverse effect will only be permitted if they can demonstrate that there is no satisfactory alternative means of avoiding such impacts and the social or economic benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm to the asset. In all cases, a hierarchy of mitigation then compensation measures will be sought. Proposals which contribute positively to the special characteristics and local distinctiveness of Nature Improvement Areas and sites where development affects biodiversity or geodiversity interests at a landscape scale will be supported.

SAMDev Policy MD 13: The Historic Environment

- 3.14 This policy seeks to protect, conserve, sympathetically enhance and restore Shropshire's heritage assets. It states that proposals which are likely to have an adverse effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, including its setting, will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the adverse effect.

4.0 Relevant Development Proposals

- 4.1 There are no significant development's proposed or committed within the area identified as the proposed line route.

5.0 Local Area Characteristics and Considerations

Heritage Considerations

- 5.1 This section of the Local Impact Assessment provides Shropshire Council's opinion on the effects of the Proposed Development on the historic environment. It is understood that this infrastructure is part of the Council's current capacity improvement programme and supports the economic development within the north of the county.
- 5.2 The Council considers that section 8.2 of Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement provides a comprehensive overview of the legislative and planning policy background as it applies to the historic environment. In providing this Local Impact Assessment, this Council has had due regard to the following local and national policies, guidance and legislation is required in terms of historic environment matters: CS6 Sustainable Design and Development and CS17 Environmental Networks of the Shropshire Core Strategy, Policies MD2 and MD13 of the SAMDev component of the Local Plan; National Policy Statements EN-1; Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and the National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 5.3 The effect of the Proposed Development on the settings of both designated and non-designated heritage assets has also been considered in line with local and national policy requirements and the Historic England's guidance on the subject (GPA 3: the Settings of Heritage Assets). This includes the effects on the settings as listed buildings in relation to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 5.4 The Council had substantial pre-application discussions regarding the effects of the Proposed Development on the historic environment with the Applicant and their consultants. We are pleased to see that the Proposed Development has responded to and has taken account of this advice, particularly in relation to the routing of the overhead line near the settlements of Cockshutt and Noneley (see paras 5.57-5.64 below). The Council also commented on the findings of the Preliminary Environment Impact Report (PEIR) in relation to the effects on the historic environment and are likewise pleased to note that the Environmental Statement Chapter 8 has taken account of these comments.
- 5.5 In overall terms we are therefore in full agreement with the findings of Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement and the content of the associated Appendices, and therefore wish to raise no objections to the Proposed Development. In particular, we concur with the Statements assessment of the significance and effects upon the designated and non-designated heritage assets concerned. As a consequence we are particularly pleased to agree with the overall conclusion in Chapter 8 that during the construction and operational phases the Proposed Development will have no significant effects on the historic environment. We also agree that no further mitigation measures are necessary, other than those already outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.
- 5.6 In terms of the effects on specific assets, we previously provided advice in relation to the effects of the scheme on the significance of the Grade II listed Malt Kiln Farm and The Shayes farmhouse as a consequence of indirect impacts

on their settings. We note that these effects have been comprehensively assessed in the Environmental Statement (Appendix 8.2 and 8.4). We are pleased to note that as result of the routing of the proposed development that in both instances the Magnitude of the Effect on these assets has been reduced to 'Minor – upper end' and the Significance of Effect to 'Slight/Moderate'.

- 5.7 In response to our consideration of the PIER, we requested that an assessment of effects on the Proposed Development on the on setting and significance of non-designated heritage assets of Montgomery Canal, Rednal Mill and Stanwardine Grange should additionally be included in the Environment State. We are therefore pleased to note that this has been done (at Appendix 8.2 and 8.4) that in each instance the effects Magnitude of the Effect of the Proposed Development on these assets has been assessed as being to 'Minor – lower end' and the Significance of Effect to 'Slight'.

Landscape and Visual Impact Considerations

- 5.8 The principal issues of concern relate to the effects associated with the loss of hedgerows and mature trees in the route corridor, and the potential for adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity arising from the permanent presence of poles and cables.
- 5.9 Direct losses to landscape features such as woodland, trees and hedgerows has been considered as part of the assessment of direct landscape effects in the Environmental Statement (ES) (Appendix 6.2). Losses can result during the construction phase as a result of clearance activities to ensure adequate safety and clearance distances between the overhead line and vegetation, or to accommodate poles.
- 5.10 Based on the Proposed Development presented in the ES, some 42 trees would require felling along the 21.3km length of the overhead line alignment. Of these, 2 have been identified as veteran oak trees in Chapter 7 'Ecology and Biodiversity' (DCO Document 6.7). In addition, 7 trees have been identified for 'felling as low as reasonably practicable', and 2 of these are veteran oaks. The ES notes that the effects arising from these losses would be felt at a local scale rather than across the wider landscape character areas identified. In addition, 3 trees are identified for crown or branch reduction, and 19 other trees would require some work subject to necessary safety clearances to accommodate the line.
- 5.11 Short sections of hedgerow at 22 locations along the alignment would need to be lifted and replaced to accommodate double wood poles in hedgerows, one of which is identified as species rich in Chapter 7 'Ecology and Biodiversity' (DCO Document 6.7). Species rich hedgerows are those that support a greater diversity of species but which do not meet the ecological criteria for 'importance' as defined in The Hedgerows Regulations 1997. All 22 hedgerows are classed as important in terms of the historic environment, i.e., boundaries which meet

the archaeological criteria of The Hedgerow Regulations 1997, as identified in Chapter 8 'Historic Environment' (DCO Document 6.8).

- 5.12 The ES notes that the locations at which landscape features can be lost as a result of the introduction of the Proposed Development are restricted to within the Order Limits, which excluding the substations, is on average 25m wide for the overhead line section and 20m wide for the underground cable section. Since much of the landscape within the Order Limits comprises arable fields or pasture, direct loss of landscape features to accommodate the Proposed Development is only likely to occur at field boundaries, on the edges of field ponds or water bodies, or in small areas of woodland within the Order Limits. It concludes that such localised losses are unlikely to result in a significant effect on the character of the Landscape Character Areas identified within the study area, since the features that contribute to their individual character cover a much larger area of land.
- 5.13 The ES concludes that there are no landscape character areas or receptors that would be likely to experience significant effects during construction, and no local, regional, national or internationally designated landscape receptors that are likely to experience significant effects during operation.
- 5.14 No likely significant visual effects are identified in the ES during the construction process for the development, primarily due to the short-term nature of the construction at each individual pole. However, some potentially significant visual effects are identified during the operational stage, and these are the same as those raised in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report. Moderate adverse (significant) visual effects are predicted to be experienced at 4 viewpoints (14, public footpath near Kenwick Oak; 32, public footpath near Malt Kiln Farm; 70, Dandyford Farm, Lower Hordley; and 72, public footpath near The Shays). In addition, of the 11 public rights of way assessed for visual effects, public footpath 0217/5/1 near Malt Kiln Farm is predicted to experience moderate adverse (significant) effects.
- 5.15 The Council and its landscape consultant have engaged fully with SP Manweb over route options, the proposed methodology for the assessment of landscape and visual effects, and over the detail of viewpoints and photomontages. No significant concerns have been raised by the Council to the preferred line route option on landscape and visual grounds.
- 5.16 The Council and its landscape consultant expressed some concern during their review of the PEIR that the proposed viewpoint no. 8 did not fully consider the visual effects that might be experienced by users of the Montgomery Canal which forms part of the Shropshire Way at this point and who are likely to have an enhanced sensitivity to visual change. Viewpoint no. 9 in the ES includes an additional assessment so that the ES now assesses the predicted visual effects of the Proposed Development in the vicinity of the Montgomery Canal from both the north and south and predicts a level of effect at construction and operation as minor or negligible adverse (not significant). It is considered the level of assessment of visual effects in this location, along with viewpoint no. 10 to the north, is of assistance in addressing the concerns that have been raised by the

Inland Waterways Association and the Canal and River Trust in respect of visual effects predicted at the Montgomery Canal.

- 5.17 The assessment of landscape and visual effects has been carried out in a robust and transparent manner in accordance with the best practice set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third edition) and with the Council's SAMDev policy MD12. Given this, and the small number of significant effects taken in context of the whole proposal, it is considered that the predicted landscape and visual effects are at a level which is compliant with the relevant local policies.

Ecology and Biodiversity Considerations

Relevant legislation, National and Local Policies

- 5.18 International – Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and National W&CA and CRoW Act 2000.
- 5.19 NPPF paragraphs particularly relevant to the Proposed Development with respect to biodiversity are: 11 (plus footnote 6), 170, 171, 175a,b,c (footnote 58) and d.
- 5.20 Core Strategy Policy CS17: Environmental Networks and SAMDev Policy MD12: Natural Environment are particularly relevant to this section.

Key issues

- 5.21 The protection, restoration and enhancement of Shropshire's biodiversity is considered to be of high importance. Shropshire Council has expressed some concern that although trees thought to be at risk from felling, partial felling or pruning works have been assessed for bat roost potential, climbing inspections/activity surveys have not yet been carried out on trees with moderate or high bat roost potential. Without these surveys, loss of important roosts and/or rarer bat species could occur without their favourable conservation status being considered at the decision-making stage, as required by ODPM Circular 05/06 paragraph 99 and the '3tests' under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
- 5.22 A number of veteran trees have been identified for felling. Under the NPPF (paragraphs 11, including footnote 6 and paragraph 175c, including footnote 58) veteran or ancient trees are considered to be 'irreplaceable habitats' and normally permission should be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 5.23 The ES states that c. 1.5ha of low biodiversity grassland and arable land, and 0.5ha of woodland will be lost through the development. SC appreciates that this a relatively low loss considering the extent of the development and is due to careful consideration of alternative routes. However, in line with the NPPF the principle of biodiversity net gain should be followed and ensured via the proposed enhancement measures.

Adequacy of application/DCO

- 5.24 Following careful choice of the routing, it is considered the proposed Development does not have direct impacts on international sites (SACs or SPAs or Ramsar Sites) and SC agrees with the applicant's findings in DCO Document 6.7 in that there are no likely significant adverse impacts on such sites, either during construction or operation. Similarly, the Council considers that no likely significant effects from the Proposed Development have been identified on Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 5.25 The Council considers that the routing chosen from the various alternatives is the least damaging for biodiversity. No internationally, nationally or locally designated wildlife or geological sites will be directly impacted by the Proposed Development. The Council agrees with the findings of the NLSER (DCO Doc 5.4) in that there will be no likely significant effects on Brownheath SSSI, part of the Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2, or on any other international sites. Also, with appropriate pollution prevention measures in the CEMP, there should be no indirect effects on any of the above designated sites.
- 5.26 The ES states that up to 5 veteran/ancient trees are to be lost to the Proposed Development, although the Arboricultural Report indicates higher numbers will be affected. It would be useful if this was clarified. Normally, damage to veteran trees would be contrary to paragraphs 11 and 175c of the NPPF as they are considered to be irreplaceable habitats. However, we note the footnote 58 to paragraph 176. Micro-siting to avoid trees if they are found to support bat roosts is mentioned in the ES (1.4.72). Micro-siting to avoid loss of veteran trees should be revisited.
- 5.27 The Council supports the proposed method of lifting and replanting within 48 hours of hedge sections to minimise impacts and retain connectivity of hedges.
- 5.28 The Council has raised its concerns over the lack of bat roost surveys of trees identified to be felled or lopped. The applicant has informed us that these surveys will be carried out in the 2019 active season for bats, and that the results of the surveys should be available for consideration before a recommended decision is provided to the Secretary of State in September 2019.
- 5.29 The Council notes the results of the surveys for protected and priority species and the Risk Avoidance Measures proposed in the CEMP. The avoid, mitigate, compensate hierarchy has been followed in line with SAMDev Plan policy MD12, minimising any adverse impacts.
- 5.30 Paragraph 7.8.7 of Chapter 7 of the ES states that a Habitat Improvement Strategy is being developed between SP Manweb and Shropshire Wildlife Trust to deliver biodiversity enhancements allied with the proposed development. Details of types and locations of habitats to be enhanced should be submitted as part of this document. Ideally it should provide compensation

planting for trees 0.5ha, scrub and other habitats lost (1.5ha or a smaller area of higher biodiversity habitat) as well as enhancements providing biodiversity net gain and these should link to the Environmental Network in accordance with CS17 and MD12.

Noise and Air Quality Considerations

- 5.31 The potential impact on the noise scape and air quality of the proposal has been reported in Document Reference: 6.4.1 of the application information submitted to Shropshire Council for review. Shropshire Council's Environmental Protection Team have considered this report and have the following comments.
- 5.32 In respect of the air quality assessment and conclusions the report notes that no significant impacts are likely. Having reviewed the report methodology, assumptions and conclusions Shropshire Council's Environmental Protection Team confirm that they agree with the report content and do not consider any significant impacts on air quality are likely in respect of the construction phase and operational phase of the development. It is not considered necessary for any mitigating features to be included. However, it would be considered generally advisable for construction traffic to avoid driving through the town centre of Wem where there have in past years been concerns regarding air quality.
- 5.33 Having considered the information on applicant's reports it is noted that the noise from construction work will be transient as it passes through an area relatively quickly. As noise reduces with distance from the source it is not anticipated that construction noise will have a significant impact on residents found in closest proximity to the construction operations. However, it is common practice for temporary depots for equipment and material storage to be located close to the site. These depots would be used at the beginning and end of a working day as well as throughout when materials are required. These depots may be the source of noise for several months and those close by could be impacted for a more prolonged time than those close to the power line route who will only be exposed to noise when the construction is on the part of route closest to them. As a result, it is suggested that times of operation in any depots is limited to 07:00 – 19:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00 – 13:00 Saturdays with no use on Sundays and bank holidays. It is recommended that these times are adopted as the working day.
- 5.34 The noise assessment submitted has been considered in detail. The focus of the assessment is noise from a proposed substation extension off Ellesmere Road close to Wem. To the north west is a residential property. This property is set further back from the road than the proposed substation. The assessment has taken background noise levels from a location approximately 26m distance from the road where a modal average LA90(15min) of 36dB was recorded. The façade of the property to the northwest of the development

is approximately 68m from the road. It is considered likely that the LA90(15min) at the residential façade in question may be less than 36dB.

- 5.35 The noise assessment has stated that it will procure plant and equipment that will produce a rating level of 40dB at the façade of the residential properties. This rating level will be several decibels higher than the monitored background LA90(15min) when altered for additional distances.
- 5.36 At this noise level it is considered possible that the proposal is likely to have a detrimental impact on the property to the northwest in the day and potentially at night where it will be the dominant noise source. However, at night it is noted that the noise would be likely to create a rating level of 30dB inside the property. This level of noise is considered acceptable in relevant guidance. Although the application may increase noise, the absolute noise level inside the residential property at night is not considered likely to have a significant detrimental impact on the ability to sleep and is in line with World Health Organisation and British Standard guidance on this aspect.
- 5.37 When considering the potential impact on the residential property to the north west of the proposed substation in daytime hours it is noted that the applicant has stated that noise will be no more than 40dB at the residential façade. Although this is significantly more than the background noise level this noise level allows World Health Organisation and British Standards guidance in respect of acceptable noise levels to be adhered to and can accept this noise level as appropriate. It is recommended that this element is suitably conditioned by the appropriate authority.

Highways Considerations

- 5.38 As decreed by the Highways Act 1980, Shropshire Council is the Highway Authority for the County of Shropshire (excluding Telford and Wrekin). In accordance with The Local Transport Act 2008 Provisional LTP Strategy 2011-2026 sort to implement the communication and transport strategy for Shropshire for the period from 2011 to 2016.
- 5.39 Shropshire Council is the lead Local Flood Authority as defined in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and is therefore responsible for dealing with flooding of surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses and co-originating a partnership approach to flood management in Shropshire. The Act requires Shropshire Council to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area.
- 5.40 Provisional Local Transport Plan Strategy 2011-2026, sets out key objectives relevant to the consideration of this application;
- reduce transport related carbon emissions

- minimise the impacts of transport on our local environment and communities.
- Maintain the condition of the Highway network
- Reduce the risk of death or injury due to transport accidents
- Help people feel safe and secure when travelling and protected when travelling in their communities.

5.41 Shropshire Council's emerging LTP4 which is intended to cover the period between 2018 to 2028, is currently being developed and should be published by the end of 2019. It will supersede the Provisional LTP Strategy 2011-2026, and will continue to promote and encouraging safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services.

Key Local issues

- 5.42 The number and type of vehicles anticipated to be required for the construction of the works have been outlined within the submitted Transport and Highways Technical note. It is not considered that the movements likely to be generated will have a significant impact on the local highway network. However, due to Shropshire's rural network, some proposed access routes, require vehicles associated with the construction to use sections of the network that are restricted in terms of available width, footway provision, and forward visibility. A proportion of access route will also require vehicles to travel through local settlements to include Primary Schools and other local amenities. Therefore, it is considered that the construction of the works needs to be carefully managed in accordance with the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) submitted, to include a Traffic Management Plan. Details of proposed vehicles and timing of delivery should be submitted for approval
- 5.43 The location of the access points are detailed on the revised plan It is proposed that existing agricultural accesses will be utilised and will be sufficient to accommodate vehicles associated with the works. The submitted Transport Plan indicates a small number of accesses may need to be widened. Any access directly on to Highway will need details of any alternations will need to be agreed with the Local Planning and Highway Authority prior to works commencing.
- 5.44 Details of any proposed Traffic Management should be submitted for approval prior to undertaking works, as outlined within the submitted Transport Plan.
- 5.45 A Programme of works should be submitted and updated throughout the construction process to ensure that there is no conflict between other works taking place on the highway, road closures, or major events.
- 5.46 Shropshire Council as Highway agree that the Levels of construction traffic would have no significant adverse impact on traffic using the local highway network and proposed use of construction traffic routes would not require works to the local public highway to make the development acceptable, this is reflected in the SOCG.

- 5.47 Ongoing discussion regarding the contents of DCO are relevant, relating to the permissions to carry out any work on the Highway, which include alterations to accesses, erection of scaffolding, and the installing of LV cabling in the carriageway are all subject to additional permissions, that require the prior notification of works to the Highway or Street Authority whichever is relevant.
- 5.48 In summary, it is considered that the transport and traffic implications of the development can be adequately controlled through the implementation of the measures set out within the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) submitted, to include a Traffic Management Plan. Details of proposed vehicles and timing of delivery should be submitted for approval which will minimise the impact of vehicle movements and respond to local network conditions.

Socio-Economic Considerations

The Need for Additional Electricity Provision

- 5.49 The provision of additional electricity supply has been a significant infrastructure issue in the North Shropshire area for a number of years. The issue has led to disproportionality in the cost of new electricity connections for local businesses seeking to expand their operations, and to new companies seeking to invest in the area. This has directly led to a loss of job opportunities for the area. Shropshire Council has therefore been in constructive dialogue with SP Manweb about this issue for a number of years before. From a socio-economic perspective therefore, the Council welcomes the proposal and the knock-on economic benefits this will bring.
- 5.50 By way of background, in 2013, Scottish Power began preparation of their business plan and stakeholder consultation as part of the Ofgem Price Review for the period 2015-23 (ED1 Business Plan), with Shropshire Council making the case for further investment in the network in this area. In response, SP Manweb included plans for a major reinforcement of the 132kv network. This has now evolved into the current proposed DCO.
- 5.51 Despite some interim upgrades to the network, there remains a significant need for longer term and resilient electricity capacity improvements in the north of the county to reflect Shropshire's strategic economic growth aspirations, and specifically to provide efficient and cost-effective infrastructure to residents and businesses.
- 5.52 Shropshire's SAMDev Plan identifies growth strategies in a number of towns and villages in the north of the County up to 2026 within the area covered by SP Manweb, and in many cases identifies a significant amount of land for both housing and employment uses to achieve these aims. It is crucial that Shropshire can now move forward to deliver these aspirations to support delivery of balanced growth.

- 5.53 By way of illustration, the current SAMDev Plan (adopted in 2015) proposes the following levels of growth for a number of Principal and Key Centres that will benefit from increased capacity:
- Oswestry (Shropshire's second largest town): 2,600 dwellings and 45 hectares of employment land
 - Whitchurch: 1,200 dwellings and 26 hectares of employment land
 - Wem: 500 dwellings and 4 hectares of employment land
- 5.54 With the exception of Oswestry, housing completions have come forward at a steady rate in these settlements in the first half of the plan period. However, there remains significant housing and employment development required up to 2026 to deliver the full extent of the growth aspirations for these areas equating to approximately 2,850 dwellings and 60 hectares of employment land to be delivered up to 2026, as well as other 'windfall' development in the wider rural area. It is therefore considered further investment in infrastructure is required in order for the full extent of these growth strategies to be properly realised.
- 5.55 These market towns act as service centres serving the local population and a wider rural hinterland. They are the focus of transport networks, employment opportunities and services. Co-ordinated housing and employment development in the market towns supports the rural economy in a sustainable manner by reducing the need for commuting, strengthening local markets and resilience, and reducing carbon emissions. The availability of power is a crucial factor in the delivery of the Council's development plan and Economic Growth Strategy. There are also a number of villages in the area where growth is proposed, such as Shawbury, Prees and Gobowen, and it is important sufficient capacity is available in these areas to support the Council's approach to improving the sustainability of rural areas such as these.
- 5.56 Looking beyond 2026 the Council is currently preparing the Local Plan Review which takes the Plan up to 2036. The Council has completed a 'Preferred Sites' consultation in February 2019 and is scheduled to submit the Plan for examination in December 2019. As well as the outstanding commitments outlined above, this Plan seeks to deliver an additional 1,200 dwellings across Oswestry, Whitchurch and Wem. It is considered that without sufficient upgrades to the electricity network the overall sustainability of these market towns will be reduced, particularly in relation to their roles as centres for additional employment, tourism and leisure opportunities.

Consideration of Route Options Around Noneley Village

- 5.57 It is recognised that the proposed line route includes a section around the village of Noneley. This has been an issue of some local concern during the pre-submission consultation stages.

- 5.58 Initially, as part of earlier stages of pre-submission consultation, the applicant preferred a route located to the south of the village. However, in June 2017, having considered the heritage, landscape and ecological impacts of the competing options, Council officers expressed a marginal preference for an alternative option located to the north of the village.
- 5.59 In 2018, as part of the S42 stage of consultation, SP Manweb adapted their route option to give preference to the council officer preferred northern route option. This route option remains the current preferred route around Noneley, and on this basis Shropshire Council officers continue to support this preference, although it must be emphasised this does not represent the view of the local Councillor for the area, who does not express a preference for either option.
- 5.60 In late 2017 the Council received a number of objections from residents of Noneley and the immediate surrounding area when SP Manweb's preferred route was proposed to be to the south of the village. In summary, these local objections included the impact on landscape and visual amenity, heritage and ecology, with concern also raised over the potential for safety risks associated with Sleaford airfield. However, it is equally accepted the northerly route option has also raised similar concerns from other residents. In acknowledging that there is likely to be an element of local objection to whatever route is preferred, it continues to be important to assess the likely environmental impacts of each option. With this in mind Council officers consider it would be beneficial to reiterate the reason for their marginal preference for the northerly route option.
- 5.61 The Council's Historic Environment Officer has previously provided comments to SP Manweb's heritage consultant regarding the route options around Noneley. For clarity, these comments, which have been informed by a site visit to the area, raised the issue of the potential impact on listed and non-designated buildings resulting in the Noneley South route. Specifically, it was considered that a southerly route would be visible from first floor windows of the two Grade II listed farmhouses, as well as from Noneley Hall which benefits from a southerly principal elevation.
- 5.62 With regard to visual impact more generally, it is noted that arable farmland to the south of the settlement is fairly open in character. It is also considered that when compared to the southerly route option, the northerly route benefits from more hedgerow cover, and thus enabling a greater potential to mitigate the visual impacts of the new line. Additionally, it is now also noted the northerly route offers the opportunity to co-locate the new line with the existing 33kv line, which could further mitigate adverse impacts.
- 5.63 Clearly, the choice of route must take into account all material considerations and include an assessment of impact across all topic areas. With this in mind, the County Ecologist has also undertaken an initial desktop comparison of the two Noneley route options based purely on the aerial photos.

5.64 In summary, based upon current information provided officers continue to consider there to be a slight preference for the Noneley North route option, in particular when considering the likely heritage and visual impacts of the route. In this basis the Council continues to support the applicant's preferred route option around Noneley.



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