



Meeting note

File reference	EN020021
Status	Final
Author	Steffan Jones
Date	24 May 2016
Meeting with	Scottish Power Energy Networks
Venue	Hirst Room, Temple Quay House
Attendees	Kathryn Dunne The Planning Inspectorate Katherine King The Planning Inspectorate Steffan Jones The Planning Inspectorate David Price The Planning Inspectorate Hannah Nelson The Planning Inspectorate Steven Edwards SP Energy Networks Jane Knowles AECOM
Meeting objectives	Meeting to introduce the proposed North Shropshire Reinforcement project
Circulation	All

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The participants introduced themselves and their roles. SP Energy Networks were made aware of the Planning Inspectorate's openness policy, that any advice given will be recorded and placed on the Planning Inspectorate's website under s51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (PA 2008). Any advice does not constitute legal advice on which the developer or others can rely.

Where this note refers to the developer, it means SP Energy Networks.

The North Shropshire Reinforcement project is for a 132kV wooden pole electricity line between Oswestry and Wem.

The developer confirmed that it internally received approval for investment in March 2016 to progress the proposal. The developer informed the Planning Inspectorate that a new energy generating scheme is **not** driving the proposal. The need case is driven by a need for additional network capacity to support development on land allocated in approved plans to 2026 for new homes and businesses and to attract future business and housing investment through to and beyond 2036.

The developer has been delivering presentations to the local authority, Shropshire Council (SC), and will be holding further stakeholder meetings with SC, Natural

England, Historic England, the Environment Agency and Parish Councils. The developer informed the Planning Inspectorate that it has received support for the proposal from local Councillors, which has been reported in local newspaper publications.

SC has been approached by the developer for comments on its consultation strategy for a non-statutory consultation stage in summer 2016. The Planning Inspectorate was informed by the developer that this consultation stage will take place over 8 weeks and will focus on four main areas; the line route; the likely impacts of the proposals; any issues around associated development and the consultation process to be followed.

The Planning Inspectorate advised the developer it should consider explaining, within the consultation documents, what it is not consulting on (the need and the line design) during this non-statutory consultation; this would provide clarity to consultees on what the developer is seeking comments on.

The developer informed the Planning Inspectorate that it has identified its preferred route corridor prior to going out for consultation and will explain the process followed in material being made available for the consultation; this is in order to avoid confusion with consultees and in the hope it will provide clarity and aid any later Examination process. The Planning Inspectorate advised the developer to be open and to explain to consultees why those route corridors which are 'not-preferred' were less preferable to the developer; the Planning Inspectorate requested the developer also provide them with its Route Corridor Options Report, which includes this information.

The preferred line route corridor which is the focus of the consultation is a corridor approximately 100m wide; the wooden poles likely to be used in the proposal are typically 12m high. It is likely the developer will hold two rounds of consultation, summer 2016's non-statutory consultation and a round of statutory consultation in autumn 2017, prior to submission of the application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate in early 2018.

In regard to the non-statutory consultation the developer is not intending on directly consulting with properties and owners/occupiers in Oswestry and Wem Towns, as the developer considers that the preferred route corridor does not directly impact both towns.

The Planning Inspectorate advised the developer to review their proposed consultation zone, as the developer currently intends to send letter drops to those persons to the north or south of the preferred line within a specified distance. However, at either end of the line running west to east, the consultation zone omits those persons living close to the line in Oswestry and Wem. The developer was advised to consider posters and other means of informing those persons in these areas. They were also advised to consider if local people would be impacted by any traffic disruption as a result of the scheme construction. A decision to take a pragmatic approach to consultation could be taken in accordance with DCLG Guidance if it is evidenced and if reasoning is provided. The Planning Inspectorate is happy to review evidence from the developer on this matter and also advises the developer to consult with SC specifically on this matter, as they will have valuable local knowledge.

A request for the Secretary of State to issue a Scoping Opinion is likely to be made to the Planning Inspectorate in winter 2016/17. The Planning Inspectorate discussed

with the developer how best to ensure a proportionate approach to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is taken and addressed with the developer practicalities with regard to scoping specific matters out of the Environmental Statement. The Planning Inspectorate reminded the developer of the necessity to provide clear justifications and (where possible) evidence of agreement with relevant consultations bodies within the Scoping Report.

The developer was directed towards the Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note 7: Environmental Impact Assessment: Preliminary Environmental Information, Screening and Scoping. This advice note can be viewed here:

<http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Advice-note-7v4.pdf>

The Evidence Plan process was discussed; a plan could assist in establishing areas of agreement and disagreement during the pre-application stage and setting the baseline agreements and content of Statements of Common Ground (required during the Examination stage) in respect to the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and which can also be adapted to include EIA matters. The developer was informed of an Evidence Plan produced for the Triton Knoll Electrical System covering both HRA and EIA matters which contained involvement from the Planning Inspectorate and was advised to review this. The developer was encouraged to begin considering its assessment process and methodology as soon as possible. The developer confirmed that they intend to commence their baseline ecological surveys in early 2017.

The Planning Inspectorate encouraged the developer to enter into discussions with persons with an interest in the land as soon as practicably possible with the aim to reach voluntary agreements (on any interference with land or rights) in the first instance; an appointed Examining Authority would require evidence of these discussions for the purposes of Examination.

The developer will be seeking wayleave agreements with persons with an interest in the land, to be delivered through the Electricity Act 1989 process (and therefore outside of the development consent process under PA 2008). The developer explained that this approach may provide them with further flexibility throughout their negotiations. The developer should make it clear that compulsory acquisition does not form part of the application for development consent under PA 2008 if that is not the case. The developer and the Planning Inspectorate agreed to set up a meeting to discuss this further.