



Winchester
City Council

**Development
Management**

City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 9LJ

tel 01962 840 222

fax 01962 841 365

telephone calls may be recorded

website www.winchester.gov.uk

Mr Hefin Jones
Case Manager
National Infrastructure House
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN
GL5 3BY

Enq to: Mr Stephen Cornwell
Direct Dial:
Email: SCornwell@winchester.gov.uk

Sent by email only.

24 July 2020

Your Reference: EN020022
My Reference:

Dear Sir

Subject: Registration Letter to Speak at Preliminary Meeting

Planning Act 2008 – Section 88 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedures) Rules 2010 – Rule 6

Application by AQUIND Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Aquind Interconnector Project.

Notice of appointment of the Examining Authority and the date, time and place of the Preliminary Meeting.

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 3 July 2020 together with the attached annexes, in which you invite interested parties to register to speak at the Preliminary Meeting. You also invite comments on the draft Examination Timetable. That letter follows the postponement of the Preliminary Meeting which was originally scheduled to take place on 22 April 2020.

Please accept the following as the formal response of Winchester City Council (WCC).

Winchester City Council does wish to attend and speak when the online Preliminary Meeting takes place on 18 August 2020 and 8 September 2020.



The individual wishing to speak will be:

Stephen Cornwell (Planning Officer) Winchester City Council

Your letter also invites comments on the provisional agenda and an indication of the issues to be raised. In response I have set out the following:

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- 1 General Approach to Preliminary Meeting
- 2 Venue
- 3 Structure of Discussions at Issue Specific Hearings
- 4 Principle Issue
- 5 Additional Topic Issue
- 6 Request for Site Visits

1 General Approach to Preliminary Meeting

- 1.1 It should be noted that this response has been limited to addressing the specific issues around the Preliminary Meeting and should not be interpreted as outlining the full extent of the matters WCC wishes to comment on during the Examination Stage. This will be outlined at the appropriate stage in the Local Impact Report.
- 1.2 The general difficulties associated with the online process are acknowledged, but it is felt that these should not undermine the ability for parties to engage in the process. In this spirit it is felt that the host local planning authorities (East Hampshire, Hampshire CC, Havant, Portsmouth & Winchester) and the South Downs National Park Authority because of their clear interests in the scheme should be given “preferential status” at the Preliminary Meeting. This would allow them to register one officer to speak on any issue should they feel inclined to do so. This is the meeting when issues may arise from entirely unexpected quarters. From my experience of Preliminary Meetings, a local planning authority may attend without specifically registering to speak in advance, but find it beneficial to do so on matters raised by other parties or to respond to direct questions from the ExPanel. The proposed structure to allow comments from observers to be submitted in writing and then possibly speak at the second date (8 September) is noted, but this will result in disjointed dialogue on procedural issues. The change suggested to the proposed format is considered to actually enhance the process. The ExPanel is therefore requested to review the intention of restricting speaking to those who have registered in advance and allow the above six authorities the ability to speak if they wish to do so during any part of the meeting.
- 1.3 In accordance with the request in the Rule 6 letter I have identified the agenda item on which I wish to speak and explained why these points need to be made orally rather than in writing where relevant.

(Agenda Item 2: Remarks on Examination Process)

2 Venue

- 2.1 The intention to progress the application through the online process is noted. The possibility, if circumstances ease further for later hearings in the examination to be held in public is also noted (Annex D paragraph 3 Virtual events). It is not clear, what opportunities may exist at that time to influence the choice of any location so I will make the following point now. This may be an issue that could be clarified at the online PM.
- 2.2 If circumstances do allow a return to a public event, WCC would request that consideration is given to a location or locations for the hearing(s) that would reflect the linear nature of this proposal and would best reach out to and engage with the local communities along the whole of the route. This would result in a venue close to Lovedean when discussing the issues around that site.

3 Structure of Discussions at Issue Specific Hearings (Time allocations)

- 3.1 Whether circumstances allow for public meetings to take place or not, some of the topics do lend themselves to a north/south division and WCC would ask the Examination Panel to have regard to this fact when structuring any agenda for Issue Specific Hearings (ISH) or Open Floor Hearings (OFH). In our view, there should be a clear separation in the agenda for consideration of north and south topics where such a distinction is relevant. Suitable time slots should be allocated reflecting this separation. This request is not suggesting a total 50-50 split of time but one that is proportionate to benefit the general progress of the examination. The concern behind this request is to avoid the discussion relating to one area dominating the hearing at the expense of the consideration of impacts elsewhere on the route.
- 3.2 I am happy to talk on the above two points at the PM but would be content for them to be noted and acknowledged by the ExPanel if this helps speed the process along.

(Agenda Item 3: Principle issues)

4 Principle Issue

Consideration of Alternatives

- 4.1 The applicant has indicated that they have voluntarily committed to submit an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in support of the application (Library document APP-116 paragraph 6.1.4.1.3). In doing so, it follows on that they will adhere to the requirements of the regulations governing the submission of any EIS. Schedule 4 of the EIA regulations 2017 relates to the consideration of alternatives.
- 4.2 From the details submitted, (Library document APP-117 paragraph 6.2.4.1.2 Table 2.1) there is considered to be a lack of evidence to suggest that the applicant has considered in sufficient detail, the option of taking the cables up through the open countryside west of the A3 corridor or by following a part A3 and then countryside route. This oversight must be corrected by a more thorough review of the merits of the two routes (pros and cons of the countryside and road

routes). This is not to imply that the Countryside Route is without any problems. However, we cannot see how a balanced assessment of the two options has been undertaken when the limited cross country route was considered in August 2014, at a time when the constraints associated with the road route were not known in any detail.

- 4.3 It should also be noted the cross country route did not form part of any detailed consideration available to the public in either the PEIR consultation exercise or in the consultation exercise undertaken when the current application was formally submitted.
- 4.3 This is considered a matter of principle and needs to be reviewed at the Preliminary Meeting for inclusion as part of the assessment of the application.
- 4.4 In the event that the ExPanel accept that the countryside route should be considered in more detail, the question then arises at what stage in the examination process this matter should be addressed. When making this decision, due regard should be given to the degree of public engagement that any assessment needs to include.
- 4.5 Aquind has been aware for over 15 months of the concerns held by WCC regarding the lack of investigation of the countryside route and its assessment against the road option. WCC advised Aquind that they sound out PINs on this issue at one of their project update meetings, but that suggestion was not followed through. I attach as an appendix to this letter the notes from a meeting between WCC and Aquind dated 13 June 2019 when the situation relating to the cross country route was discussed under item 2 page 3.
- 4.6 In the spirit of positive engagement, WCC has been in discussion with Aquind over the past few months seeking to clarify and address a range of concerns it holds regarding the project. The countryside versus road issue is one of those matters under discussion. In the spirit of positive engagement, WCC has alerted Aquind to the contents of this letter so that they are not faced with the Council's comments for the first time on the day of the Preliminary Meeting.
- 4.6 With the ongoing dialogue between WCC and Aquind, it is possible that further detail may be made available to the Council before the PM which answers some or all of WCC's questions. However, that does not preclude the need for the issue to be part of the overall assessment process.
- 4.6 For the sake of clarity, in discussing the cable route, WCC makes no judgement on the merits of the countryside route or the road route or of Eastney as a landfall point. The discussion also assumes that Aquind have been able to more clearly justify the choice of Lovedean as the connection point to the grid.

(Agenda Item 4: Draft Examination Timetable)

5 Additional Topics Issue

- 5.1 It is noted that the Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) dates have been removed from the provisional timetable and replaced with intended block dates for hearings. This has had the consequence of removing the specific topic headings from the

calendar. Whilst the circumstances behind this action are noted, it should be obvious that it has the consequence of removing any discussion at the PM of the list of topics to be chosen for ISH. It is assumed the Timetable will adopt the same topics as previously outlined. The following topic is put forward on the basis that it did not appear in the previous list of ISH.

- 5.2 Chapter 28 of the submission relates to Carbon and Climate Change (Examination Library reference APP-143). This is an important issue for the Council as reflected in the recently adopted Carbon reduction plan. WCC are currently seeking clarification on elements of the submission including how the actions to reduce the carbon emissions associated with the construction phase will be embedded and enforced in the DCO and what other actions will be undertaken to reflect the Councils target of being carbon neutral by 2030. We are also seeking detail on whether any further offset actions are required. Whilst it may be viewed that this subject is embedded into all other considerations, it is the view of WCC that this topic should be allotted some time at a hearing for wider discussion.

(Agenda Item 6: Site Inspections)

6 Requests for Site Visits

- 6.1 Winchester City Council notes the unaccompanied site visits (USV) already undertaken by the Examining Panel to date and recorded in the Examination Library. WCC requests that the following two sections of the site are walked and that officers from the council are in attendance.
- 6.2 Firstly, the main site for the Converter Station including the access roadway. A request is made as to whether the four corners of the Converter Station compound under both micro siting options B(i) and B(ii) and the edges of the access road can be defined on the ground using marker posts so that the potential footprint can be readily observed.
- 6.3 Secondly, a request is made that a site visit is undertaken to the land between Annmore Road and the Hambledon Road which encompasses the Kings Pond and Denmead Meadows area. This land is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). This is the location where the applicant is proposing to partly Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) to install the cables. The potential impact on the ground flora and the groundwater system needs to be considered as part of the assessment of the extent of the HDD section and the impacts associated with establishing the temporary compounds.
- 6.4 The local ward members have expressed an interest in attending the above accompanied site visits and clarification on this matter is requested from the ExPanel.

Finally, I am not clear on the procedural arrangements, but it would help identify other parties making similar comments if all the responses you have received to the Rule 6 letter were published as soon as possible. We can then consider if one person can present shared points and avoid duplication.

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Case Officer, Mr Stephen Cornwell.

Yours faithfully

Julie Pinnock BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI
Head of Development Management



AGENDA & MEETING NOTES

PROJECT NUMBER	62100616	MEETING DATE	13 June 2019
PROJECT NAME	AQUIND	VENUE	Winchester City Council Offices
CLIENT	AQUIND	RECORDED BY	█
MEETING SUBJECT	Consultation Update Meeting		

PRESENT	█ (AQUIND) █ (WSP Planning) █ (WSP Project Management) █ (WSP Planning)	█ (Winchester City Council) █ (Winchester City Council) █ (Development Manager WCC)
APOLOGIES	Apologies: None	
DISTRIBUTION	As above plus: As above plus: █ (HSF), █ (AQUIND), █ (AQUIND), █ (WSP), █ (WSP), █ (WSP)	
CONFIDENTIALITY	Public	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION	DUE
1	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">█ opened the meeting and explained the purpose and format of the meeting. █ began by updating attendees on the consultation that had been carried out during the PEIR and the consultation responses received. Consultation responses had been received from across the cable route, but particularly around the landfall, converter station and centre of the cable route.█ provided details about the number of individuals contacted, attendees at consultation events and letters received. The applicant's DCO submission would include a consultation report with a more detailed assessment of the consultation process undertaken.█ requested a breakdown of the responses to the consultation within each cluster group (e.g. converter, landfall, cable route). The desire to see a breakdown in the consultation responses was prompted by the concern that in Q2a (Design parameters of Converter Station) "no view" responses (possibly from residents in Portsmouth whose interest may not be Lovedean)		

	<p>had been aggregated with “support” responses and this may be distorting the true picture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Meeting Note: The DCO application will include a consultation report which will include a detailed analysis of the consultation responses received, and it was not the intention to present the results in such a way as to distort the analysis. 		
<p>2</p>	<p>Converter Station Design, Landscaping and Optioneering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED] introduced this section and noted that the impact and design of the Converter Station had been a key issue raised by Winchester City Council in their consultation response. Since the publication of the PEIR, the applicant has been undertaking additional work on the converter station constraints and landscape and visual impacts. The applicant’s landscape consultant has undertaken further site visits, including to consider the impact of the converter station when viewed from Monarch’s Way to the north, and NORR architects had been developing the design concept further. • [REDACTED] noted that AQUIND’S developing mitigation strategy would include a range of measures including the reintroduction of hedgerows and sensitive use of land forming. [REDACTED] emphasised that the PEIR was a snapshot at time that could not cover all aspects of the project. • [REDACTED] queried the reduction in the extent of the red line boundary during the process, which he considered may have reduced the scope to deliver additional mitigation. [REDACTED] presented the two RLB plans that did show reductions in site area to the NW of the proposed converter station. • In response, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] noted that the reduction in the RLB had been due to the removal of the southern converter station option and northern access route option, and did not reduce the applicant’s ability to deliver appropriate mitigation for the Converter Station. • [REDACTED] also queried whether additional land could be provided to deliver off site mitigation if necessary, where the land had not been included in the PEIR RLB. [REDACTED] confirmed that, in theory, the applicant could undertake localised consultation if increases in the RLB were proposed. But the specifics would need to be considered on a case by case basis. • [REDACTED] set out Winchester City Council’s position which was that the design of the converter station should be landscape led and not functional. WCC would like to understand how deep the converter station can be buried. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC officers queried a number of aspects of the optioneering process that had led to the choice of Lovedean for the Converter Station. • In response, [REDACTED] noted that a robust optioneering process had been undertaken. The use of Chickerell substation was ruled out for technical reasons, because this would require the rebuilding of the substation alongside extensive reinforcement to the wider National Grid network. It was noted that there were also important environmental considerations that weighed against Chickerell including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and other ecological constraints. • The alternative 'countryside route' set out by WCC in their consultation response was discussed in detail. [REDACTED] accepted that off-road cable routes were possible, indeed the proposed development included off road sections, and had been used on other similar schemes. However, [REDACTED] noted that there were many relevant environmental constraints that weighed against the countryside route including the presence of ancient woodland, ecological constraints and archaeology. A further issue is the lack of sufficient road infrastructure alongside the countryside route, requiring the construction of temporary haul roads which would likely increase HGV movements to and from the site. • [REDACTED] recognised that there were potential constraints to the countryside route and confirmed that if Natural England were to object to this route WCC may reconsider their position. However, WCC did not consider that the optioneering process had appropriately been considered in the PEIR. • Both parties agreed that the selection of the cable route required the assessment and balancing of different and often competing planning and environmental issues, alongside engineering issues. The applicant was undertaking a similar process within cable route section 3 (Denmead/Kings Pond Meadow) to determine the preferred option. The consideration of alternatives would be set out in more detail in the applicants Environmental Statement that would be submitted alongside the Development Consent Order. • [REDACTED] stated that WCC is aware that Aquind have a case officer at the planning inspectorate so it was suggested that they set out the situation relating to the countryside route, the concern over whether reasonable options have been put forward and the concern over the lack of public engagement in the choice of options for cable route (road v countryside) to seek PINS advice/guidance at this stage on whether the actions of Aquind will pass any test against requirements of EIA regulations s or 2008 Planning Act rather than wait for this matter to be a topic 		
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	<p>of discussion later in the process. Aquind indicated they have a meeting shortly with PINS and would consider using this meeting to raise the issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC raised the potential for the greater use of Horizontal Directional Drilling as an alternative to trenching to avoid environmental constraints at a 'countryside route'. ■■■ confirmed that there were significant engineering constraints associated with the use of HDDs including the length of sections and cable rating that meant that this could only be used on short sections of the cable route. • ■■■ stated that the lack of a consideration of alternative 'countryside route' was a deficiency in the PEIR consultation, and noted that the extent of public consultation at DCO submission stage was less significant than at PEIR stage. As a result, the consultation had not allowed the public to consider the potential for a countryside route in detail, which may have been chosen as the preferred option by members of the public. • In response, ■■■ noted that the main alternatives considered by the applicant had been considered and therefore the PEIR process was robust. It will be for the Examining Authority to consider the alternatives in more detail if they consider this necessary. It was not possible for the PEIR to contain all potential options. ■■■ noted that during the 2018 consultation, members of the public did not bring a 'countryside route' as an option. • Relating to the cable route through Denmead, Aquind indicated further study work favouring option that goes through fields and not using residential streets. Meeting shortly with Natural England before this can be formally confirmed. 		
<p>3</p>	<p>Community Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ■■■ noted that WCC, along with the other host authorities, had highlighted the need for some form of community fund to provide additional mitigation to offset the impact of the project. ■■■ confirmed that the applicant was willing to consider this. • A discussion was held around the potential for different forms of for a community fund, the types of schemes that could be supported and the potential governance mechanisms. • ■■■ suggested that the fund could be based around the amount of electricity imported through the cable. ■■■ noted that the amount of electricity transmitted would be determined by market forces and is not an appropriate benchmark. 		

MEETING NOTES

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACTION: It was agreed that Winchester City Council would undertake further work to develop and justify the need for a community fund, including governance mechanisms and overall amount of funding. This would then be considered by the applicant.		
4	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The format of future meetings was discussed. It was agreed that face to face meetings with WCC were preferable to teleconferences, as they facilitated greater interaction and discussion. WCC prefers Tuesday and Thursday to hold the meetings due to officer's availability.• ACTION: It was agreed that [REDACTED] would circulate a first draft of the Statement of Common Ground to WCC officers for comment. It was noted that the SOCG with WCC would form one of many SOCGs with various stakeholders, and would be submitted in draft form alongside the applicant's DCO.• The PPA was discussed, with [REDACTED] emphasising the need for WCC to return the work package document.• [REDACTED] noted that a meeting was due to be held with Hampshire County Council to discuss traffic issues on the 20th June. WCC may wish to attend this meeting.• [REDACTED] indicated that WCC are still reviewing the Aquind response to the issue of the presentation and use of traffic data as outlined in the PEIR representation.		

NEXT MEETING

Converter Station Design Meeting 20th June 2019.