

AQUIND: Comments from WCC Landscape (Natural Environment & Recreation Team) January 2020

Category 1

No comments.

Category 2

2.7 '**Indicative Converter Station Area Layout Plans**' illustrates, for the first time, a second option for the footprint of the Converter Station (Option B (ii)) which *avoids* the removal of the 'important' hedgerows (HR10/ HR14/HR09 which are listed in Schedule 12 of the DCO Part 7 Article 41), about 25 mature Oak trees and a badger set.

This option, rather than Option B (i), should be the option which the Council pursues because, as well as their connective ecological value (ref WCC Ecology comments?), these hedgerows and trees would also assist in screening the converter station, particularly from viewpoints to the west.

2.8 '**Indicative Converter Station Elevations**': these would benefit from recognisable graphic 'entourage' such as occasional trucks or human figures, so that the scale of the Converter Station can be more easily grasped.

Category 3

Draft DCO Schedule 2: 25 requirements. No comment.
Draft DCO at document reference 3.1: No comment.

Schedule 12 –'removal of important hedgerows' NB *includes* the hedges which layout Option B(ii) proposes to avoid.

Category 4

No comment.

Category 5

Design and Access Statement

3. Site Context and Selection

It is accepted that Option B is the best site option and results in less visual impact than other options. At 3.2.1.12 it is stated that this option *'would be better screened from key receptors including the urban area, public highway and PROW's by virtue of existing topography and vegetation to provide screening, and provide the opportunity of being mitigated by the introduction of additional landscaping'*.

4. Consultations

It is assumed from this comment that the preferred strategy of the applicant is to therefore screen and *conceal* the converter station as far as possible.

If this is the case, then it is difficult to understand:

- Why the 'Landscape and Visual Amenity Briefing Meetings' have been so *laboriously focussed* on the colour palette for the converter buildings?
- Why a colour option was introduced which *'sought to celebrate the building'*? (DAS 4.3.3.2); &
- What the rationale is for introducing 'baguettes', colour variations and texture if no one will get close enough to see them, or the buildings are *screened* from most key public viewpoints?

5. Design development

The architects have considered different design approaches, including WCC's preference for darker, less reflective colours (as stated at meetings on 15th October 2018, 21st June 2019 and 10th July 2019) but in the DAS are suggesting that, at a meeting with the authorities on 20th August 2019, *'an autumnal palette was preferred by general consensus'* and are consequently proposing a range of bright, warm 'autumnal' colours (RAL 8001-8015 and 8023-8028) arranged on vertical metal fins, intended, they say, to *'compliment the surrounding landscape, break up the mass of the building and provide visual interest'* (5.3.3.2).

The DAS (5.3.3.2) states that *'The cladding elements are individually coloured using differing hues from the palette to break up the mass of the building and provide visual interest. Further visual interest is added by horizontal banding which includes staggering of colour patterns'*.

But the DAS doesn't say from *where* or from *what direction* this 'visual interest' would be appreciated. It is questioned therefore what the validity or purpose of this exercise is.

6. Converter station: The design principles

It is assumed from earlier statements that a key general Design Principle should be, as far as possible, to visually screen and conceal the converter station; however this is *absent* from the list of design principles.

It is recommended therefore that because the detailed design of the converter station must be in accordance with the Design Principles that this should be a *key Design Principle* from the outset, so that discussions regarding the materials and colours of the converter station, the levels which the ffl should be fixed at and the proposed landscape strategy etc have a common aim.

Currently there seems to be a discontinuity between the landscape and visual impact assessment, the viewpoint analysis and the design development for the building as set out in the DAS.

Category 6

Chapter 15 Landscape and Visual Amenity (6.1.15 ES)

The key receptors in the area of the converter station are:

- Landscape character areas and types, associated landscape features and the setting of the South Downs National Park; and
- Visual receptors, including residents, recreational and transport users within the 8km study area.

I have been through this chapter and agree with the methodology of the landscape and visual impact assessment and particularly the key findings of the assessment as summarised in table 15.10 and the findings of the cumulative effects assessment as set out at 15.9 as they would affect receptors within the converter station area.

There would be significant impacts on specific landscape character areas and types, the setting of the SDNP and on local landscape features in the immediate vicinity of the converter station area. Equally, adverse impacts would be experienced by a variety of local visual receptors within 3km of the converter station with the degree of impact varying according to their proximity and orientation and the presence or absence of intervening vegetation and built form.

Representative viewpoint wireframe illustrations 1-17 and close up views A,B & C. (Ref: 6.2.15.17 ES Vol 2 – 6.2.15.37 ES –Vol 2)

Having studied these viewpoint illustrations, I accept that due to the topography of the area, the two converter halls tend not to break the horizon in views from the more elevated viewpoints to the north, north west & north east (particularly from

representative elevated viewpoints within the SDNP). But in representative viewpoints from the south, east and west, including views from within the Winchester District (*i.e.*, **VP7**, **VP10**, **VP11**, and more close up views **VPA**, **VPB** and **VPC**) they do break the horizon and are far more prominent. This is a significant difference.

There is a concern therefore that while the landscape architect has illustrated these different types of view, the approach to cladding and colouring the buildings by the architect (whilst only illustrative at the moment) bears little relationship to this analysis.

For example, if one considers the illustrative view from viewpoint ‘**B**’ to the SW on Old Mill Lane (6.2.15.36ES Vol 2 – Figure 15.36) it will be seen that the current indicative colour strategy is *not successful*. The converter station halls would be prominent and incongruous in the landscape.

If it is an agreed objective to minimise the visual impact of the development, then colouring should be significantly darker. In fact we made this comment in our 10th July 2019 meeting with WSP.

Winchester District is a largely rural district with several large farm buildings where visual appearance has been, in most cases, carefully considered and buildings and barns coloured along these lines (ref photo?).

It is suggested therefore that muddy dark grey/green/brown colours, such as

RAL 7043	↓	Darker to lighter
RAL 7010		
RAL 7009		
RAL 7039		
RAL 7003		

should be considered. These colours would allow the converter station halls to appear to be more rooted in the ground than floating above it and would considerably reduce the significant adverse visual impact which has been found to occur in many of these views.

6.10 Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy; reviewed and found to be acceptable. No comments.

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Stuart D-D January 2020.