

I have come here today to speak on behalf of the group that I run, Keep Milton Green. We have over 9,000 members and I have been asked to bring forward their concerns to highlight why we are lobbying against the route of this cable in such significant numbers.

- 1) The allotment holders have been vocal in their upset of the proposed change to the route of this cable. It was promised that the route would follow the path yet this has changed a few times and it now seems that it may encroach on a number of plots. If given permission, Aquind would then have the right to access the allotments to provide maintenance to the cable in the future. This has worried people as they have lovingly established their plots for many years and any possibility that they could be cleared is devastating. There is also the fact that the Great Crested Newt has been sighted in the allotments. This newt's population is rapidly declining and therefore, this species and its habitat is strongly protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework and is listed as a European Protected Species under Annex IV of the European Habitats Directive. The government also acknowledge this newt as a protected species on their own website. We cannot allow the wanton destruction of their environment and people's plots by this cable.
- 2) Residents have concerns as to the disruption they will have to face. 66 weeks is the estimated time it could take. That is 66 weeks of disruption for the city with no break, benefit or compensation to well over 210,000 residents who live and work here. Two trenches are required to lay the cable yet laying this will cause twice the disruption. Due to the combined effect of the magnetic field, they cannot be placed at the same time. There are also some concerns as to whether there will be any health risks to exposure from these fields. Residents across the city are absolutely outraged that the potential route means that the green space that they use will be lost to them including parts of Bransbury Park, Milton Common, Farlington Marshes as well as Farlington Playing fields. Whilst we have been in lockdown, those spaces have been precious for our health and mental wellbeing. There is currently no 'compensation' proposed for loss of those spaces or for anywhere else that we could use to mitigate that fact.
- 3) There is a legitimate concern regarding the landing point in Eastney. Not only has there been an additional request to add towers to Fort Cumberland car park for a fibre optic project, the worrying fact is that Aquind has not taken into consideration that further down the road is the life boat station. The only way to get there is via this road and if there is a chance of any disruption to their journey time, this cannot be allowed to happen.
- 4) Residents have also expressed their anger as to how they can comment on Aquind's application when the proposed route consistently changes. It's close to being 3 years since we became aware of the project and still we have no clue of the exact route. The deadline for comments passed some time ago yet there are still documents being added to the planning inspectorate's website. In the week before this hearing 70+ were added. It seems morally unjust and rather unfair to expect residents to form an opinion when what they are being asked to consider is changing frequently after they submit their views and thoughts.

- 5) Residents have also expressed their concern as to the way that Aquind have handled this whole consultation. Letters were sent out to hundreds of homes in 2018 and doors were knocked asking for information about land ownership and mortgages. Residents were concerned that their houses were going to be compulsory purchased. The council had to then step in to get Aquind to understand the level of panic that they had caused. A leaflet was also sent out in 2019 by Aquind and stated that out of 155 responses received, 52% supported or were neutral regarding the proposed cable route. This is an extremely poor response from a consultation that stretches from Eastney to Lovedean. The fact that hundreds, maybe even thousands of people have now made their opinions clear via the planning inspectorate shows that.

All in all, we as residents feel let down by Aquind and by our own government. We feel let down that our council has had their rights to decide this taken away. We feel let down that Aquind have not kept residents informed with the route and we also feel let down that they scared residents into believing that their homes would be taken away from them. We feel let down that we had to find out proposed routes ourselves by delving through hundreds of documents. We feel let down that the government will not help with the air quality issues that this project will force onto the residents of Portsmouth yet the same government chastise the council to do better. We also feel let down that we will lose our open spaces for this to occur and we know that habitats, plant life and wildlife will be lost due to this project. We also know that it will cause chaos and disruption for over a year to the residents and workers of Portsmouth (and further afield) whilst no proper mitigation or help has been offered by the government or Aquind. We implore the planning inspector, the secretary of state as well as Aquind to reconsider this project. Instead of forcing it onto Portsmouth and Hampshire Council's and going through heavily congested routes and junctions, we hope that other options can be considered. We hope that our views will be taken into consideration and that this is not just part of a 'tick box consultation'. We hope this project will be reconsidered for somewhere else on the South Coast away from any cities that face similar issues that we do. We also want to point out that Aquind may have experts helping them in various fields but they seem to have forgotten the most vital field that they do not have experts for – Portsmouth. The way the people of Portsmouth have been consulted, the various routes that have been proposed, the miscommunication with residents and the lack of understanding as to the road network and general feeling shows that Aquind have no experts here. We, the residents are the experts, we have grown in numbers and we are more than prepared to make our voices heard. We implore whoever is taking this decision to consider all that has been said. It is us, the residents who will have to live with the choices you are about to make and put upon us.