

Winchester City Council Deadline 6 response:

Comments on the letter from National GridESO submitted at Deadline 5

Winchester City Council notes the response from National GridESO dated 30 November 2020 and submitted at Deadline 5 (REP5-101). This followed the letter from the ExA dated 27 October (PD-015) which sought clarification on the influence that the proximity of the Lovedean site has to the National Park played in the decision to choose Lovedean over the other two other options under consideration for the connection to the grid. Those other options were Bramley and Chickerill.

In its Local Impact report paragraph 4.6.8 (REP-183), the Council had raised a concern that the application was lacking sufficient detail on the weight the proximity to the NP had in the decision making process. Aquind had indicated they were not responsible for this decision which they say rested with National GridESO.

The Council notes and has considered the contents of the letter from National GridESO. Regrettably, the letter does not explain the process and the weight given to the national park proximity that the Council was expecting. Accordingly, it is not considered by the Council to fully answer the specific question asked about the evidence of the audit trail.

The letter refers to two processes. Firstly, the preparation of a Feasibility Study. Secondly, a Connections and Infrastructure Options Note (CION). The first document appears to have fed into the second assessment. The South Downs designation as a National Park is described as a contributing factor in the CION but there is no clear indication of the weight given to that matter in the assessment. Of some concern is the reference to the use of Cost Benefit Analysis in the Feasibility Study. That is considered to be an unrefined tool which has the potential to offer a bias towards saving costs by adopting the shortest distance between two points with less weight given to environmental factors. The letter states that the Feasibility Study was taken into consideration in the CION.

It seems clear that both processes must have resulted in the production of reports or notes and the Council believes that the ExA should ask for them to be submitted into the Examination process. This would show that a clear audit trail exists and clarify the weight given to the proximity to the National Park in the context of other considerations. In the event commercial confidentiality is raised, the Council is confident any content that does legitimately fall under that category could be redacted and still leave the relevant section clear.

22 December 2020

End.