

23 December 2020

The Examining Authority Case Team  
Aquind Interconnector Project  
National Infrastructure Planning  
Temple Quay House  
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BS1 6PN

**By email only**

Dear Sir / Madam

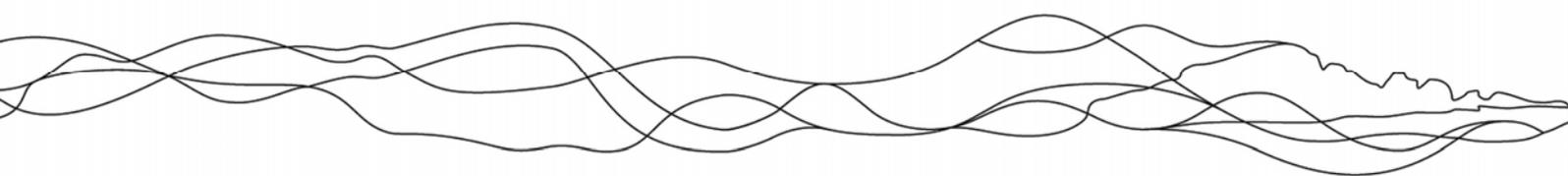
**DCO Application for the Aquind Interconnector Project  
SDNPA Deadline 6 Submission**

I write to provide the following from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) at Deadline 6:

1. SDNPA comments on the document 'Applicant's Response to Deadline 3 Submissions' (reference REP4-027)
2. SDNPA comments on the 'Indicative Landscape Mitigation Plans Option B (ii)' (reference REP5-032)
3. SDNPA comments on the letter from National Grid Electricity Systems Operators Limited, dated 30 November 2020 (reference REP5-101)
4. A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 1 on 9 December 2020
5. A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 3 on 15 December 2020

**1. SDNPA comments on the Applicant's Document 'Response to Deadline 3 Submissions' (reference REP4-027)**

The applicant states, in table 2.14 at point 1, that the South Downs Local Plan is unclear in its application of references to Special Qualities as some areas include specific reference to tranquillity whilst others do not, including both the Dip Slope and the Scarp Slope.



We understand that the applicant is referring to the 'Spatial Portrait' from page 14 onwards of the South Downs Local Plan. The Spatial Portrait is a new way of looking at the South Downs National Park as a single entity; arising from its geology, geography and settlement pattern. It is designed to be broad brush, not least as it is a relatively short chapter in our Local Plan and as it has to cover over 1,600 square kilometres of the National Park which is home to some 117,000 residents.

The Spatial Portrait is not to be considered as a 'photograph' and is just an impression of the National Park at a very high level. Where a Special Quality of the National Park isn't mentioned within the Portrait it does not mean that it is not important. It remains a matter of fact that tranquillity is a Special Quality of the whole National Park. Any impact of the development proposal on the tranquillity of the National Park is a material planning consideration, not least given that the National Park benefits from the highest level of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

## **2. SDNPA comments on the Indicative Landscape Mitigation Plans Option B (ii) (reference REP5-032)**

This submission from the applicant does little to address the concerns raised by the SDNPA about the landscape mitigation proposed. The additional areas proposed for woodland planting are very small and located solely to the south of the Converter Station.

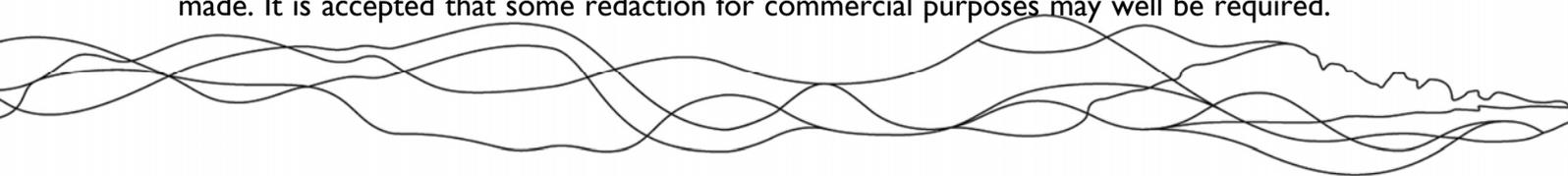
Our concerns on the landscaping mitigation put forward by the applicant are set out in our Deadline 1 responses (including our answers to ExQ1), our deadline 5 response and are also summarised below in the verbal comments we made at Issue Specific Hearing 3.

## **3. SDNPA comments on the letter from National Grid Electricity Systems Operators Limited, dated 30 November 2020 (reference REP5-101)**

SDNPA, in its Deadline 2 submission (reference REP2-020) and in response to additional information provided by the applicant accepted that there was a logical and reasonable rationale for selecting Lovedean as a grid connection point above that of the alternatives at Chickerell and Bramley. However, we also noted that the reasoning for not progressing with 7 other substation locations, some of which are not near protected landscapes, was cursory.

Unfortunately, the deadline 5 response from National Grid does not elaborate (or indeed mention) the other 7 substation locations and why these were not taken forward to a shortlist. The SDNPA requests that a short explanation should be provided as to why these potential 7 locations were not taken forward. Without this explanation, and despite some time pursuing this point, it is perhaps difficult to conclude other than the substation selection process was a solely commercial decision.

Should National Grid be unwilling to provide a short explanation of why the 7 substation sites were not taken forward we ask that National Grid provide the assessment report (or their notes of the assessment) that was undertaken at the time the decision was made. It is accepted that some redaction for commercial purposes may well be required.



Failing this it is suggested that the issue be explored at a hearing with National Grid in attendance.

Without this additional detail it is not possible to determine whether National Grid had regard to the statutory purposes of the National Park when determining the substation location as required by Section 62 of the Environment Act, 1995.

#### **4. A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing I on 9 December 2020**

The SDNPA made a number of points at the Hearings on 9 and 15 December. These points should, of course, be read in conjunction with the more detailed written submissions that the Authority has made at deadlines throughout the examination period.

The Authority did attend Issue Specific Hearing 2 on Traffic, Highways and Air Quality matters but made no verbal points in this hearing and hence there is no summary to give here. However, the SDNPA has made written representations on these matters, including at Deadline 5 (REP5-091).

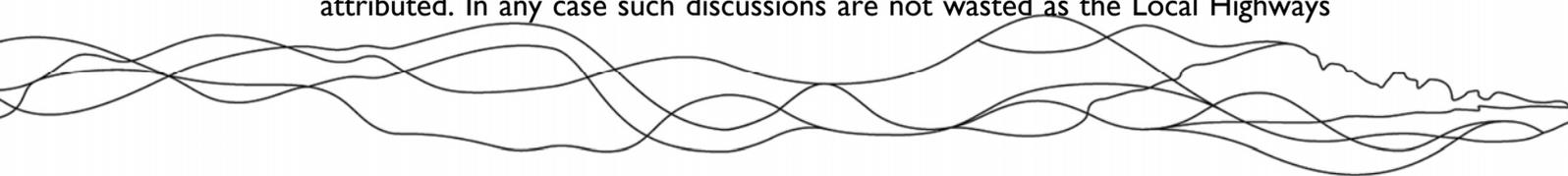
For clarity the SDNPA did not attend either of the open floor hearings nor did it attend the compulsory purchase hearings in December 2020.

A summary of the main points made by the SDNPA at Issue Specific Hearing I on 9 December, in broadly chronological order, is as follows:

- a) We requested that proposed DCO requirement 17 relating to the Construction Traffic Management Plan be discharged by Local Planning Authorities and not by Highways Authorities as currently put forward. We suggested that Local Planning Authorities were best placed to do this given that these documents give rise to local planning considerations that are ordinarily dealt with by them, such as potential impact on residential amenity or the tranquillity of the National Park.
- b) SDNPA noted that just such an approach (with Local Planning Authorities determining Construction Traffic Management Plans) had been taken on the recently granted Development Consent Order for the Southampton to London pipeline.

Post hearing note: The applicant identified that having the CTMP approved by the Local Highways Authority and the Local Planning Authority would be an unnecessary level of approval. We agree and this is not what we were suggesting in the hearing. For the avoidance of doubt SDNPA requests that the CTMP be solely determined by the Local Planning Authorities, after consultation with the Local Highway Authorities.

The argument advanced by the applicant that discussions have already been held with Hampshire County Council and that therefore this suggestion is, essentially, inconvenient is not a position to which much weight can be attributed. In any case such discussions are not wasted as the Local Highways



Authorities would be consulted on the discharge of this Requirement under the SDNPA's suggestion.

The applicant notes that construction traffic will not pass through the National Park and this is accepted. However it will pass directly adjacent to the National Park's boundary along Day Lane.

- c) In relation to decommissioning of the proposed development at the end of its operational life we welcomed at the hearing the inclusion by the applicant of new DCO requirement 24 that requires a written scheme of decommissioning to be approved by the relevant local planning authority. We noted however that there was no timescale for compliance with this requirement.

Post hearing note: We suggest that this written scheme of decommissioning should be submitted to the local planning authority within 6 months of any part of the development (excluding the marine elements) being decommissioned. As it stands Requirement 24 is considered to be unacceptable in our view as it is open ended and does not apply any timescale for the written scheme of decommissioning to be undertaken and submitted to the local planning authority.

- d) We made the point, in respect of Article 10 relating to the power to alter streets, that 20 working days was a short period of time for the street authority to determine the acceptability or otherwise of the works. This is particularly the case given that the entrance to the Converter Station is adjacent to the National Park boundary and the SDNPA would expect to be notified in such instances, given that there is the potential for impact on the setting of the National Park.

Post Hearing Note: The applicant explained that details of the vehicular access are controlled by Requirement 6 and this is accepted. However, in response, we wish to note that Broadway Lane and Day Lane form the boundary of the National Park and further alterations may well be proposed to these roads under Article 10. It is therefore requested that the street authority be given 40 working days to determine such requests.

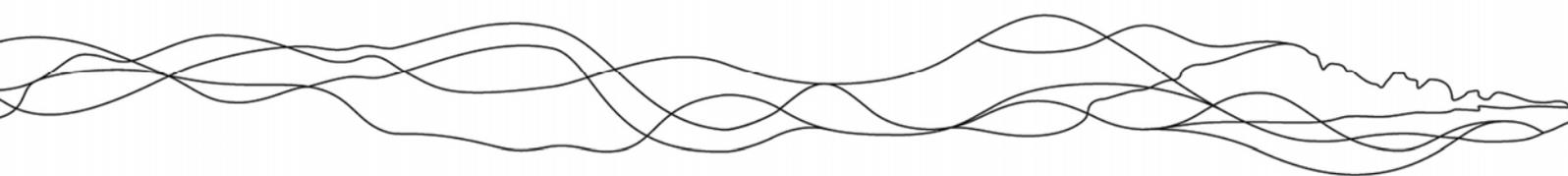
## **5. A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 3 on 15 December 2020**

A summary of the main points made by the SDNPA at Issue Specific Hearing 3 on 15 December, in broadly chronological order, is as follows:

- a) The SDNPA confirmed that, as per its Deadline 5 submission, it had reached common ground with the applicant in respect of Dark Night Skies and impact on the International Dark Night Skies Reserve.
- b) In response to question 4 e) ii) from the Examining Authority we confirmed that we had sought two additional viewpoints from the applicant, one being a viewpoint from the east of Prew's Hanger, and one being to the east of the

proposed access to the Converter Station. The justification for seeking these additional viewpoints was given in detail on pages 8 and 9 of our Deadline 5 submission (REP5-091) and we summarised these points in our verbal answer to the hearing. We also made the following additional points verbally within the hearing that were not included within our written submission at Deadline 5:

- That the requested view from east of Prew's Hanger is of a very different nature to viewpoints 1, 12, 17. The viewpoint requested is approximately 1km closer to the Converter Station than viewpoint 1 and approximately 30m lower. It also shows the Converter Station set against the more distant landform of Portsdown Hill, a key element in views out of the South Downs National Park. Viewpoint 12 is much closer to the Converter Station and at a lower elevation than the additional viewpoint we have requested. Viewpoint 12 also looks at the Converter Station through a line of trees. Viewpoint 17 is from Butser Hill and gives a far more distant view of the Converter Station.
  - The second viewpoint sought is on the boundary with the South Downs National Park and the development proposal at this point gives rise to considerable landscape and visual changes alongside a busy road.
  - In response to a question from the Examining Authority we confirmed that the first viewpoint sought was a refinement of a view we had asked for previously but which had not been provided
  - In response to a further question from the Examining Authority we confirmed that in relation to the second viewpoint sought SDNPA's concern was both in respect of i) the setting of the National Park and ii) that the access to the Converter Station is adjacent to one of the roads that brings visitors into the South Downs National Park.
- c) Given the position, height and movement of cranes during construction this matter is considered to be an important consideration in the landscape and visual impact assessment, notably in views from distance but also in close views from the Monarchs Way, for example, where the cranes will be highly visible above vegetation and above the general construction working area. We would therefore like to see the LVIA updated to include an assessment of the impact of the cranes.
- d) In response to question 4 f) i) we confirmed that we had reached common ground with the applicant in relation to land for mitigation outside of the applicant's ownership. SDNPA's Deadline 5 submission details our position on this matter.
- e) In relation to the landscape mitigation proposals the SDNPA confirmed that its concerns with the applicant's landscape mitigation proposals remained. The SDNPA ran through its concerns with the proposals on three grounds: i) the inadequate additional woodland and hedgerow planting, ii) the strategy to deal with Ash die back and iii) the use of a bigger range of planting sizes to help provide screening at an earlier stage. SDNPA ran through its position in



relation to these concerns in accordance with the detailed points it made on this matter in its Deadline 5 submission.

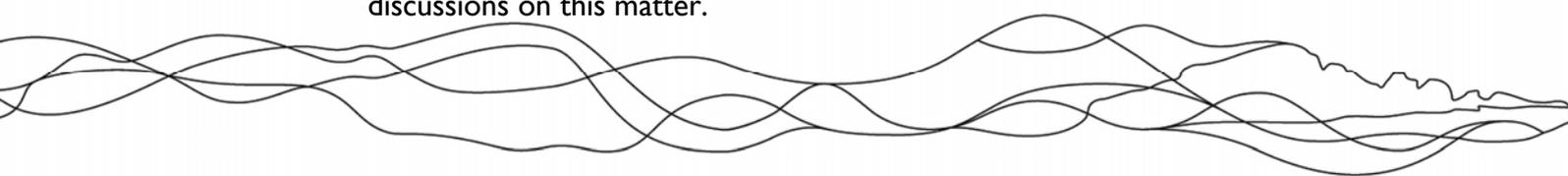
Post hearing note: Whilst the applicant has stated in their deadline 5 response that a comprehensive landscape mitigation package is provided, the applicant also stated in the Hearing that these proposals are still indicative and that revised plans will be submitted in due course which also take account of the further work on the Ash Dieback issue. The SDNPA will review the revised submission once received and provide further comment as required in a proactive manner.

The SDNPA understand the operational constraints relating to planting in close proximity to the Converter Station, but is still concerned at the lack of more substantial woodland planting in areas further away from the Converter Station, which would also assist in combatting the likely degradation of the landscape through the creation of smaller field areas not viable for agricultural purposes.

- f) In relation to tranquillity the SDNPA confirmed that common ground had not been reached with the applicant on the matter. We set out at the hearing that during construction, in particular, there will be significant impacts on tranquillity including from the movement of plant and vehicles (including cranes) and from the provision and use of a car park with over 200 car parking spaces.
- g) The SDNPA outlined that tranquillity is one of the Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park and applies to the whole National Park, and not just part of it.
- h) In relation to Design (agenda point h) the SDNPA agreed to come back in writing at Deadline 6 on the applicant's revised General Design Principle 7 (Access). The SDNPA does not agree with this General Design Principle as currently drafted and asks that it is changed as follows (suggested change in red and italics):

'The access road will be designed and configured to allow maintenance access and include the movement of abnormal indivisible loads, whilst minimising environmental impact, *including on the setting of the South Downs National Park*. Permanent surfacing and landscaping will take account of the local context and be detailed in accordance with the 'Landscape Design Principles'.

This is considered appropriate given the consequential nature of the works to the access and given the location of this access adjacent to the boundary of the National Park. This wording suggestion is made without prejudice to this Authority's view that the current access arrangements do not minimise impacts, because of the loss of agricultural land and hedging and on account of the industrialisation of this currently rural lane. The additional viewpoint provided by the applicant at Deadline 6 will aid discussions on this matter.

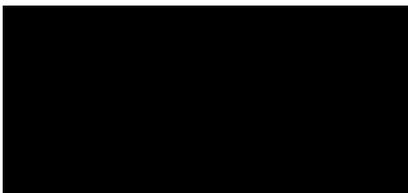


- i) In respect of Building Design Principle 3 the SDNPA confirmed that it did not agree, contrary to the applicant's assertions, to the RAL colours outlined in a meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> December and rather that SDNPA had listened to what had been said and that it would take the matter away and consider it. The SDNPA also acknowledged that there was a difference of opinion between it and Winchester City Council on the RAL colours to be included within the colour palette for the Convertor Station. SDNPA confirmed at the hearing that it would work with all parties to try and seek agreement on this matter and that it had been suggested that the applicant provide visualisations of the Convertor Station in a number of views to aid further discussions.
- j) In relation to Building Design Principle 8 the SDNPA confirmed that it would be happy to see no plant on the roof of the Convertor Buildings. It therefore can confirm here that it agrees to this Design Principle as amended.
- k) In relation to Landscape Design Principle 6 the SDNPA is content with the wording of this principle as revised.

Post hearing note: Note this is without prejudice to the SDNPA's view that the indicative landscape mitigation plans put forward by the applicant are inadequate (See above).

I hope that the above is of use. Please do not hesitate to get in contact should you have any further questions.

Yours faithfully



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