

From: [REDACTED]@winchester.gov.uk
To: [Aquind Interconnector](#)
Subject: FW: Aquind Interconnector: Winchester City Council Response to Rule 17 request for further information
Date: 05 February 2021 16:13:09
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[image004.jpg](#)
[Response to ExA on Site Inspection questions.pdf](#)

Your Ref reference EN020022
WCC identification No 20025191
**Aquind Interconnector Nationally Significant Infrastructure
Project Examination**

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed an attachment which sets out the response by Winchester City Council to the request by the Examining Authority for further information relating to the Councils view on additional site inspections relating to the above application.

I will forward a copy to the applicant who is aware of the intention to send the response following a meeting I have with them earlier today. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Steve Cornwell

Lead Officer Aquind Interconnector

Winchester City Council

Colebrook Street

Winchester, SO23 9LJ

Tel:

Ext:



This email and any files transmitted with it are intended solely for the addressed individual. The information in this email may be confidential; if you have received it in error, please accept our apologies and notify the sender as soon as possible, and delete it from your system without distributing or copying any information contained within it. Under UK Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the contents of this email might have to be disclosed in response to a request. We check emails and attachments for viruses before they are sent, but you are advised to carry out your own virus checks. Winchester City Council cannot accept any responsibility for loss or damage caused by viruses.

Response By Winchester City Council to Request for Further Information on the Matter of Additional Site Inspections

In the Examining Authorities (ExA) letter of 3 February 2021 a request was made under the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (Rule 17) for the Council to respond with further information on the matter of unaccompanied site inspections. A deadline for any response was set at February 2021. The ExA letter followed a submission by the Council at Deadline 7 (D7). The Council is responding now in advance of that deadline to give the ExA the maximum amount of time to consider and react to the following so that if on reflection, a decision is made to undertake a further site inspection it may be possible to complete it before ISH5 takes place. This would be considered as the best outcome by the Council.

In the ExA letter it draws attention to the Planning Inspectorate note dated 12 January 2021. The letter also sets out additional detail relating to the site inspections that have already been undertaken, but which is not recorded in the notes of those visits as published in the Examination Library.

The Council had read the Planning Inspectorate guidance on “site inspections” before presenting its D7 comments. They have been read again before this response has been presented. The Council is also grateful for the further detail relating to the site inspections that have already been undertaken. That information has been considered in putting together the response below.

The Council highlighted three areas in its D7 submission where it was asking for unaccompanied site inspections to be undertaken. These were Lovedean, Denmead Meadows and the land on the south side of Hambledon Road. The scheme has been revised by the applicant at D7 which has resulted in the decision to place the drill launch compound on the south side of Hambledon Road. This should secure the land north of the Hambledon Road from any impacts. Regarding the land at the northern end of the Denmead Meadows complex off Anmore Road and the land south of the Hambledon Road, the Councils notes the reference

to this land clearly having been viewed during previous site visits and accepts the situation regarding these two parts of the site.

Concerning the situation at Lovedean, the Council notes the additional detail but is also conscious that this was all observed from the public highway or from rights of way. On balance, the Council remains of the view that the ExA should undertake a site inspection of the Converter Station area. When Council officers undertook a site visit it is recalled that the section of the application site that will accommodate the Converter Station is not visible from any public vantage point. Notwithstanding the interpretation of detail from written text, photos or aerial photos there is no substitute for standing on the land to understand its condition, its character and the surrounding landscape character. The following factors are put forward in support of a site inspection.

The application continues to go forward with the two micro siting options for the Converter Station. The ExA needs to be fully conversant with the implications of option B(i) in terms of the amount of vegetation that would be lost and the additional exposure to view that option would create. The Council believes this can only be achieved and appreciated by viewing the situation from the field on the eastern side of the hedge that will be lost.

The applicant is still indicating that the grassland establishment would result in the removal of between 150mm to 1000mm of soil. The ExA needs to understand the full implications of that work on the land on ground levels and the surrounding landscape features by viewing the land concerned.

During their visit, the Council officers noted the presence of the woodland features but did not consciously note the contribution that ash played in the composition of those features. This assessment can only be undertaken by viewing the landscape features close up on site. The applicant's recent deletion of the additional woodland belt on the south side of Mill Copse needs to be assessed in terms of its significance to maintaining the screening of the Converter Station. This can only be done on site.

All the above factors are currently under active consideration between the Council and the applicant with a divergence of views currently existing. They are also part of the agenda for ISH5. The Council would

therefore encourage the ExA to undertake an unaccompanied site inspection before the hearing if at all possible.

Finally the reference to a site inspection by at least two people was a pre-emptive comment by the Council to assist in maintaining the impartiality and independence of the ExA. The Council is mindful that with planning appeals, inspectors operating alone are very conscious of the need to maintain a position of neutrality and not be left with any party. The suggestion that two inspectors undertake any site visit was simply to ensure this neutrality was maintained. The Council is aware that individual inspectors are still undertaking site inspections during the lockdown regarding general planning appeals. If during lockdown, it is considered more suitable for a single inspector to undertake the site inspection then this is acceptable to the Council. The Council will defer to the ExA in the final arrangements. If lockdown is considered too constraining to allow a site inspection to take place, the Council raises the question whether the procedure might allow a site inspection to take place after 8 March 2021, but before the date the recommendation is presented to the Secretary of State. The indication of the roadmap to take the country out of lockdown that will be published by the government on 22 February 2021 may well signpost an opportunity for a site visit to take place.

End

5 February 2021

