

01 March 2021

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

By email only

Dear Sir / Madam

**DCO Application for the Aquind Interconnector Project
SDNPA Deadline 8 Submission**

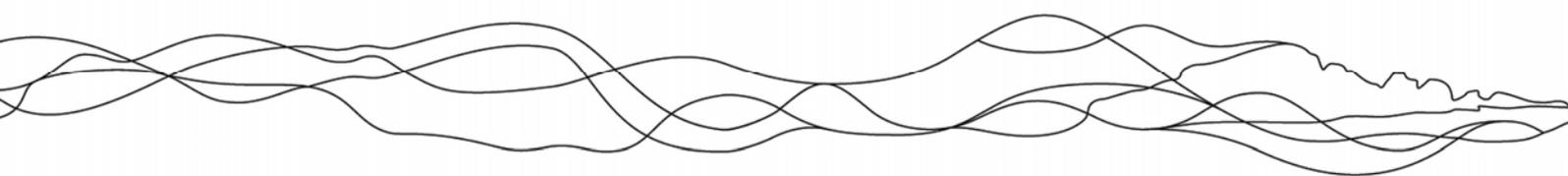
I write to provide the following from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) at Deadline 8:

1. A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 4 (draft Development Consent Order) on 17 February 2021
2. A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 5 (Environmental Matters and Highways) on 18 February 2021
3. To provide an update in respect of:
 - a. Post hearing notes
 - b. The conclusion of Section 106 planning obligation negotiations
 - c. The applicant's proposed changes to the Design and Access Statement
 - d. The final Statement of Common Ground between the applicant and SDNPA

**A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 4
(draft Development Consent Order) on 17 February 2021**

The SDNPA made a number of points at the Hearings on 17 and 18 February 2021. 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.

For clarity the SDNPA did not attend the open floor hearing nor did it attend the compulsory purchase hearing (both held in February 2021).



A summary of the main points made by the SDNPA at Issue Specific Hearing 4 on 17 February, in broadly chronological order, is as follows:

- a. In relation to agenda item 5.1 we confirmed that we were happy that Winchester City Council (WCC) would be discharging proposed Requirement 6 (1), in consultation with the SDNPA. We noted that WCC were the Local Planning Authority and that this therefore falls within their remit, in consultation with SDNPA, and in this case the proposal was no different to a planning application determined under the Town and Country Planning Acts.
- b. We noted that we did not wish to see Work Number 2 bb) (the proposed access junction and gated highway link) removed from Requirement 6 as the scheme includes significant changes here on the boundary of the National Park that, in our view, should be approved in advance. The applicant's solicitor agreed to look into this following the hearing.

Post hearing note: The applicant is intending to add the following to Requirement 6 at Deadline 8 to deal with this matter. SDNPA is therefore content on this point:

The construction of Work No. 2 (bb) must not be commenced for the purposes of section 155(1) of the 2008 Act until written details of the—

- (a) siting;*
- (b) design;*
- (c) layout;*
- (d) visibility splays; and*
- (e) landscaping*

in so far as relevant to those works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the relevant planning authority (in consultation with the South Downs National Park Authority and the relevant highway authority).

- c. SDNPA confirmed that it had reviewed the Employment and Skills Plan put forward by the applicant and that we had no comment to make.
- d. In respect of agenda item 22.2 the SDNPA made reference to S62 as inserted by the Environment Act 1995 and the duty to have regard to the statutory purposes of the National Park. We noted therefore that the siting of the grid connection and the substation at Lovedean could not be solely a commercial decision but that it must have regard to the purposes of the National Park. We noted that the explanation given by the applicant for not proceeding with a grid connection at Chickerell and Bramley was logical and satisfactory to the SDNPA but that only a cursory explanation was given for discounting of the

other 7 substation locations. SDNPA noted that it had been making this point for some time and that whilst the SDNPA was looking to be proportionate and reasonable here it did think it appropriate that an explanation was given.

Post hearing note: Following the close of the hearing the SDNPA has had further discussions with the applicant on this matter relating to why the 7 other possible substation locations were discounted at an early stage.

The Applicant is providing a post hearing note on this point at Deadline 8, which the SDNPA has reviewed. The SDNPA is now content that a reasonable rationale has been given for why the 7 other substations were not progressed and it has therefore finally reached agreement with the applicant on this matter.

A summary of the points made by the Authority at Issue Specific Hearing 5 (Environmental Matters and Highways) on 18 February 2021

A summary of the main points made by the SDNPA at Issue Specific Hearing 5 on 18 February, in broadly chronological order, is as follows:

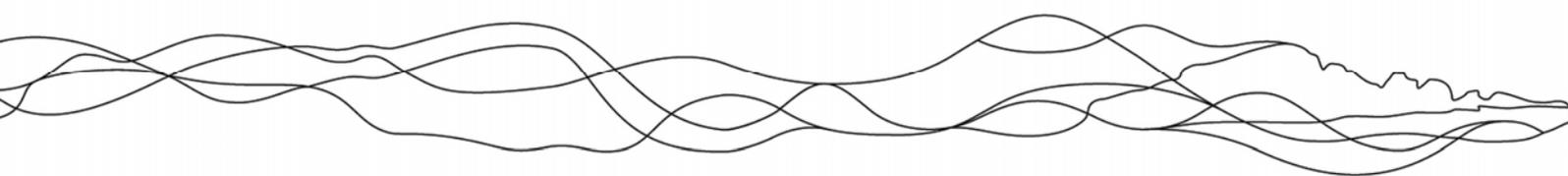
- a. In relation to agenda item 4.1 the SDNPA noted that there are still two options for the converter station location identified in the landscape mitigation plans and confirmed that Option B(ii) remains our preferred option.

In relation to the landscape mitigation proposals the SDNPA confirmed at the hearing that two of our concerns with the applicant's landscape mitigation proposals raised at Deadline 6 remained. These were firstly the inadequate additional woodland and hedgerow planting set out in the proposals and secondly the strategy to deal with Ash die back.

In respect of the first the SDNPA noted the operational constraints relating to planting in close proximity to the Converter Station, but remained 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.

In respect of the second, the application had set out the ash dieback strategy in reports, however this is not fully reflected on the landscape mitigation plans, in respect of the existing woodland areas, hedgerows and individual trees inside the Order Limits.

Post hearing note: A S106 planning obligation, including provision for new woodland planting, is proposed (see below) to mitigate some of the landscape harm arising from the proposal. In relation to the ash dieback comment the applicant has agreed to reflect this in the key of the landscape mitigation plans to be submitted at Deadline 8 and the SDNPA is content on this matter.



- b. In relation to hearing agenda item 4.2 SDNPA noted that the impact of this change could be ameliorated to some extent through larger woodland planting.
- c. On agenda item 7.7 we noted that there will be a moderate erosion of the rural character of Days Lane during the construction period, with an effect on landscape character of the immediately adjoining National Park and visual amenity from the Monarch's Way (which runs across fields to the immediate north) from the movement of lorries.

The SDNPA welcomed the inclusion of a new design principle relating to the laybys. The SDNPA noted that it would welcome an undertaking from the applicant that the laybys will be removed and Days Lane restored to its original state at the end of the construction period. It was agreed at the hearing that SDNPA would discuss this matter with Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council (as Local Planning Authority).

Post Hearing Notes

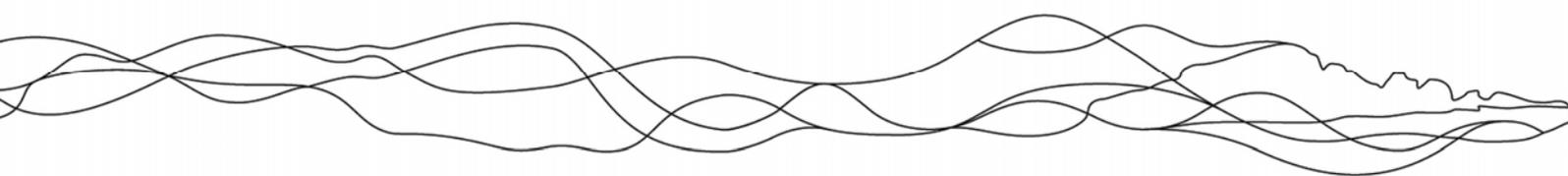
At the examination hearings on 17 and 18 February no post hearing notes were requested from the SDNPA. SDNPA has been involved with others in drafting and agreeing a post hearing note on Days Lane and the proposed passing bays (see paragraph immediately above) which will be submitted by Hampshire County Council at Deadline 8.

The conclusion of Section 106 planning obligation negotiations

Agreement has been reached with the applicant on a Section 106 planning obligation to, should the proposal receive Development Consent, mitigate some of the impact of the proposed development on the South Downs National Park, a national resource that has the highest standards of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

An agreed draft Section 106 will be submitted by the applicant at Deadline 8, including a note setting out how this is to be secured given that the applicant currently has none of the land needed for the development proposal under their ownership. The S106 makes provision for the following:

1. £250k for woodland improvements within 5km of the proposed Converter Station in the National Park. This would be administered by the SDNPA and used for new woodland planting, the enhancement of existing areas of woodland, the gapping up of hedgerows and measures to address the effects of Ash Dieback.
2. £20k for public right of way improvements in the National Park within 2km of the Converter Station
3. £5k for the SDNPA's costs in monitoring the S106 agreement.



Proposed changes to the Design and Access Statement

In discussions with the applicant it has been agreed that the following two new design principles will be added to the Design and Access Statement in respect of the Convertor Station at deadline 8.

New Ash dieback Design Principle:

New woodland, tree and hedgerow planting, within existing areas identified as affected by Ash Dieback, will be introduced within the Order Limits to replace diseased trees where replacement planting will provide appropriate screening from sensitive receptors, enhance landscape character, increase landscape and ecological connectivity and improve biodiversity. Ongoing management of the decline of ash trees will be carried out to encourage natural regeneration, and ensure the identification and implementation of further replacement planting as required. Management will include selective felling where necessary as well as the retention of a proportion of standing deadwood for biodiversity reasons.

Day Lane Design Principle:

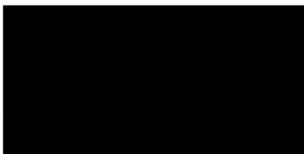
When designing passing bays measures will be taken to retain Day Lane's rural character by not introducing additional signage, road markings, kerbs or lighting.

SDNPA supports the addition of these two design principles. The SDNPA has no further comment to make in respect of the other design principles proposed for the Convertor Station.

Statement of Common Ground

A Statement of Common Ground has been agreed with the applicant. This will be submitted by the applicant at Deadline 8.

Yours faithfully



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