



Meeting note

Project name	East Anglia Green Energy Enablement (GREEN) Project
File reference	EN020027
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	04 July 2022
Meeting with	National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)
Venue	Temple Quay House, Bristol (in-person meeting)
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Project and Consultation Update

The Applicant explained that before any new lines are contemplated, upgrades to the existing network are considered and implemented where possible, including the reconducting of existing overhead lines (OHL) and the installation of power control devices.

Reinforcement solution

The Applicant advised that the currently Proposed Development includes the following elements in very broad terms, noting that the descriptions/elements are evolving and are subject to change not least as part of the ongoing technical reviews, stakeholder engagement and public consultation,

- A new 60km, 400kv overhead line between Norwich, Norfolk and Bramford, Suffolk;
- A new 120km, 400kv overhead line between Bramford, Suffolk and Tilbury, Essex;
- Underground cabling through Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (approximately 8km); and
- Work at existing substations and a new 400kv substation in the Tendring district, to connect two new proposed offshore wind farms to the electricity transmission network.

Emerging Consultation Feedback

The Applicant stated that they were in the early stages of going through all the feedback but that emerging issues related to the nature and scale of the proposals. There are 13 host Local Authorities (LAs) that NGET has engaged with, 13 MPs and 114 Parish Councils. The Applicant has written to the residents of around 55,000 homes along the route of the Proposed Development.

During the non-statutory consultation, which ran between 21 April and 16 June 2022, the Applicant conducted:

- 12 face-to-face events, which had a total of 2821 attendees;
- 12 webinars, which had a total of 381 attendees;
- 5 MP briefings.

The Applicant has seen a shift in engagement to online, rather than paper responses, with a total of 3383 consultation responses received (accurate up to and including 30 June 2022 at 6:00pm). This constituted of 2131 online form submissions, 672 emails and 509 paper submissions.

The Applicant advised that Thurrock Council had not issued their response as they were focussing their resources on responding to the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) consultation. However, the Applicant was expecting a submission from Thurrock Council after the LTC consultation period closed.

The Applicant has seen opposition to new onshore overhead power lines through consultation feedback. Local people have raised concerns about the visual impact of pylons, property values and diminished ability to sell in the future. Further concerns about health issues of overhead lines and mental health due to stress during development were raised. Many consultees believe that the infrastructure should go in the sea. The project website FAQs have been updated to reflect the main themes being raised.

The Applicant is now reviewing all responses against the preliminary routeing and siting work to help inform the next stage of project evolution (and as part of that a developing design) for the next consultation. This will include consideration of appropriate routing, pylon types (including T pylons/low height lattice which are typically lower (35m vs 50m) and mitigation such as underground cables, tree planting etc.)

The Applicant stated that there are some areas of high sensitivity in the currently proposed route corridor and further work will be done to reduce the impacts where practicable, including the use of appropriate mitigation.

The Applicant acknowledged that the lack of an exact alignment for the proposed overhead line is concerning consultees in the vicinity, with a route corridor having been defined at this stage. The Applicant confirmed that further information will be available at the statutory consultation including information on a proposed more detailed alignment, pylon types and indicative locations..

The Applicant stated that all local authorities that responded to the consultation had raised objections.

The Applicant is due to commence technical 'thematic' meetings with parties such as Natural England w/c 11 July 2022, looking at, for instance, the methodology for survey.

The Applicant advised they will be seeking voluntary access for survey. Where that is not possible, they do not intend using s53 of the Planning Act as they have other powers available to them as a statutory undertaker, as a last resort. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to ensure that letters highlight clearly what any surveying requires as they may be less intrusive than landowners are expecting. This may facilitate a greater level of co-operation.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to ensure any new technology or novel information capturing methods are signed off by statutory bodies prior to them being used.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant has a dedicated community liaison officer for the project. The Applicant advised that they do not, but they do have a communications agency based in the area and will consider allocating a specialist contact.

The Inspectorate queried whether there are many hard-to-reach groups along the site. The Applicant advised that they have prepared a hard to reach strategy and this is available on the project website as part of the Engagement Strategy and will keep this under review during the development of the project.

The Applicant advised that several campaign groups have formed along the route. The most significant are the Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons group who consist of approximately 3,100 members. The Applicant stated that the campaign group is lobbying the government but not engaging with the project team at this time.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Inspectorate sought views from the Applicant on their approach to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and whether they would be seeking to split the Environmental Statement (ES) in some way, for example into sections of the line. The Inspectorate encouraged the Applicant to discuss this with Statutory consultees, to understand how this could aid the accessibility of the document whilst also ensuring that the ES provides a robust assessment of impacts from the entire Proposed Development. It was advised that any subdividing should be undertaken in the early stages of the project and remain unaltered for ease of understanding. The Applicant asked whether the Inspectorate could provide any examples of linear NSIPs that had presented the ES assessment in a subdivided manner.

Post Meeting Note: The Inspectorate advises the Applicant that Southampton to London Pipeline and Hinkley C Connection provide examples of how an ES has been subdivided.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant had any concerns about the ability to engage with statutory consultees, noting that the contacts may be regional contacts and therefore they would need to consider how they approach this on a route that runs through three counties. The Applicant advised they recognise the challenge but are actively pursuing

Service Level Agreements (SLA) to support the work with the statutory consultees. Currently, the Applicant has a strategic SLA with Natural England across all projects.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant should consider whether flexibility may be needed in relation to how parties were referenced in the DCO. Having flexibility in the DCO would allow for amendments such as stakeholder regional offices changing etc.

The Inspectorate advised that statutory consultees should be given an accurate programme so they can effectively allocate resources for engagement.

The Inspectorate discussed approach to surveys to inform the Applicant's Scoping Report. The Applicant advised that these are underway. The Applicant has instructed Arcadis as the EIA lead advisor.

The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant may benefit from utilising template documents to provide uniformity to LA responses. The Applicant should also discuss with LAs whether they wish to work together, noting that 13 LAs are involved in the project.

The Inspectorate queried if the Applicant is looking at going beyond a standard EIA with the use of digital EIA. The Applicant will liaise with Arcadis and respond.

Next Steps – Scoping, Stakeholder Engagement

Key industry dates

- Holistic Network Design publication (as part of the Offshore Transmission Network Review) – Early July 2022 (delayed)
- Network Options Assessment publication – 30 June 2022 (delayed)
- Revised National Planning Policy Statements publication – Autumn 2022 (tbc)

The Applicant expects the above events to be of interest to local communities and campaign groups.

Key Project Dates

- EIA scoping request - submission currently planned for end of September 2022, but to be reviewed in August to understand consultation responses. Scoping will be based on the preferred route corridor used for the non-statutory consultation
- Statutory Consultation – Spring/Summer 2023
- DCO application submission - December 2024

Post Meeting Note: The Applicant has provided an updated date for submission of the EIA scoping request – October 2022.

The Applicant queried whether the Inspectorate would hold meetings in the local area to advise the public on the process. The Inspectorate advised that there are a number of videos and Advice Notes available to members of the public via the National Infrastructure website that the Applicant can direct stakeholders or consultees to, in order to understand the NSIP process better.