



Meeting note

Project name	Aldborough Hydrogen Storage
File reference	EN030003
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	18 October 2023
Meeting with	Equinor New Energy Limited (“the Applicant”)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
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 Overview

The Applicant provided an overview of the project and the current proposal.

Non-Statutory Consultation

The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with an overview of its approach to the recent Non-Statutory Consultation. It was explained that the Applicant had held three in-person events in Garton, Sproatley and Aldborough. Aldborough and Garton were chosen as they are the two closest communities to the site, although most of the Scoping area lies in East Garton and not Aldborough. Whereas Sproatley was chosen as it lies on the designated Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) route to Aldborough.

The Applicant detailed efforts towards advertising the project. As part of its consultation it delivered flyers to 3000 homes and premises, placed posters in strategic locations, advertised in local media and set up an online consultation website.

A report summarising the outcome of the consultation including identification of frequently mentioned issues such as Traffic, Noise and Vibration, Major accidents and safety, Ecology and Visual Impacts is being produced by the Applicant.

An initial meeting was held with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) earlier in the year, with a follow up meeting currently being planned to go into more detail regarding the scope and schedule going forward.

Project Update

Aldborough Community Liaison Group (CLG) consists of local council members, school groups, churches, activity groups etc. The Applicant engages in monthly meetings with the CLG to provide updates on the project.

The Applicant enquired about the Early Adopters Programme (EAP) which is currently ongoing with seven pre-application cases and the ten components that form part of this trial. Following this enquiry, the Applicant subsequently asked if it would be possible to view templates of EAP documents. The Inspectorate was not able to give a definitive answer, but it is understood that advice given would be reflected in s51 advice published under the duty.

The Applicant updated the Inspectorate that meetings had been held with Natural England in relation to Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). Following a short discussion in relation to EAP components the Applicant said they intended to prepare an Evidence Plan for completeness.

The Applicant is arranging a meeting with Natural England around the in-combination assessment for HRA and the approach to be taken to this assessment.

The Applicant discussed efforts towards seeking a deemed marine licence for the project as well as a deemed hazardous substances consent. Involvement of the HSE will be essential in dealing with Hazardous Substances consent although it is understood the process of monitoring and compliance during the operational phase will fall within the responsibility of East Riding of Yorkshire Council. The Applicant raised as precedent the approach taken with Preesall Saltfield Underground Gas Storage. The decision letter might be reviewed by the Inspectorate in relation to this point, in order to facilitate any future guidance, it may be in a position to provide on this point.

Due to resourcing constraints Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping comments from East Riding of Yorkshire Council were outstanding but the Applicant understood that the Local Authority will shortly be submitting some comments. The Inspectorate made clear that these would be processed as late Scoping responses and published on the National Infrastructure Website once received, in line with standard practice.

Consenting Programme

The Applicant provided an update to the Inspectorate on the current programme for scheme development and consenting. Environmental baseline surveys are expected during Autumn 2023 and Winter 2023/24. Section 47 consultation with the host Local Authority, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, on the Statement of Community Consultation is anticipated in 2023 (Post meeting note: this is now likely Q2 2024). A Statutory Consultation is currently anticipated during Q2 2024.

The Inspectorate indicated that it would be helpful to have an anticipated date for submission of the application for development consent and for the Inspectorate to be kept updated should this change for resource allocation purposes. The Applicant provided an indicative submission date at the time of the meeting of Q1 2025.

In respect of the next project update meeting, it is expected that this could potentially be worthwhile in January 2024.

The Applicant asked which documents would be expected at a Draft Documents Review and the Inspectorate made it clear this was a decision for the party making an application for Development Consent. However, the Applicant was advised that it can be helpful to see the project description chapter of the Environmental Statement, and the HRA.

Other documents might be worth consideration of inclusion of submission for a Draft Document Review were suggested to be a draft Development Consent Order, Explanatory Memorandum, Land Plan, Work Plan, Book of Reference, Statement of Reasons and the Consultation Report. The Inspectorate confirmed that their standard but not guaranteed timeframes for Draft Document Review is six to eight weeks.