



Meeting note

File reference	NA
Status	Final
Author	Siân Evans
Date	7 August 2017
Meeting with	AES Electric Ltd
Venue	Temple Quay House
Attendees	The Planning Inspectorate Chris White (Infrastructure Planning Lead) Siân Evans (Case Officer) David Price (EIA and Land Rights Manager) The Applicant Claire Addison (AES) Stuart Winter (JLL) Steven Sensecall (Carter Jones)
Meeting objectives	Introduction to the battery storage project at Culham Science Centre, Abingdon
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

Introduction

AES Electric Ltd (the Applicant) and the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) case team introduced themselves and their respective roles. The Inspectorate outlined its openness policy and ensured those present understood that any issues discussed and advice given would be recorded and placed on the Inspectorate's website under s51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). Further to this, it was made clear that any advice given did not constitute legal advice upon which the Applicant (or others) can rely.

Proposed development

The Applicant gave a brief outline of their battery storage technology, which has been developed over the last 10 years and is now installed in various locations around the world.

The proposed application is for a large-scale battery storage facility at the Culham Science Centre in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The scheme has been initially progressed under Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) with South Oxfordshire District Council who granted planning permission for a grid scale battery storage project with a 250MW transformer at this site in November 2016. Following clarification from BEIS

on the current status of battery storage facilities as a form of electricity generation station (see paragraph 22 of BEIS' call for evidence <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-a-smart-flexible-energy-system>) the Applicant is considering an application for a Development Consent Order under PA2008.

The Applicant gave an overview of the site and its features, stating that the nearest settlement is Clifton Hampden, which includes a conservation area and listed buildings. There are scheduled monuments in the vicinity and the Grade I listed Registered Park and Garden of Nuneham lies to the north of the site. However the Applicant explained that the site is well screened and has been an established industrial site since the 1960s.

The Applicant advised that the site includes an existing national grid substation, with an existing 400kV overhead line offering opportunity for suitable connection and export to the grid. The existing substation will require an extension and other works which will likely be progressed separately by National Grid. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider carefully the relationship between the substation extension works and the proposed development and to take this into account when considering the timing of the submission of the application. The Examining Authority (ExA) is likely to need information regarding the works and likely route for connection to the grid.

Phasing

The Applicant advised that they may opt to build out the proposal in a phased development programme. The Inspectorate advised that phased development has been included in previous Development Consent Orders (DCO) and suggested the Applicant look at made DCO's where this has been allowed e.g. the East Midlands Gateway Rail Freight Interchange. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant of the importance of making clear what they are doing, why they are doing it and what the end result will be when they are undertaking their assessment and consultation.

Compulsory acquisition

The Applicant explained that they do not consider they will require any compulsory acquisition. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider whether they will require any additional land for temporary construction compounds and to consider their required access route to the site for construction and maintenance. The Applicant advised that they will look at what rights they have over the land in their existing lease agreement. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that developers can apply for compulsory acquisition to clean the title of land where there is any doubt as to ownership and to give the ExA the assurance that the development can be delivered.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Applicant advised that when the TCPA application was screened by South Oxfordshire District Council a negative screening opinion was received, stating that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was not required. The Applicant considers this still to be the case as there will be no emissions, waste or water discharge from the development, the site is not within any ecological designations and is in flood zone 1 (meaning there is a low probability of flooding).

The Applicant advised that there will be some noise from ventilation and air conditioning but this can be mitigated. The Inspectorate advised that any mitigation should be secured through the DCO. Phase 1 environmental surveys have taken place and show there are no breeding birds or European protected species on site. There is evidence of bats using a tree corridor and the Applicant is considering the need for further survey work.

The Inspectorate advised that under PA2008 an applicant is required to either request a screening opinion or confirm their intent to submit an Environmental Statement (ES) before consultation under s42 of the PA2008. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider the extent to which the application may change from that which was submitted under the TCPA and to consider this in respect of the EIA approach.

The Applicant was advised to ensure that any screening or scoping request is accompanied by suitably detailed information to provide confidence to the process. The Inspectorate advised that if there are environmental surveys these should be included to provide additional evidence and support.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to consider the advice contained in [Advice Note 7](#) but to note that this does not yet reflect the introduction of the new EIA Regulations. However, the Applicant was reminded of the [DCLG Planning Practice Guide](#) which has been updated and should be considered. The Applicant was advised to also consider other non-EIA applications made under PA2008 including the Redditch Branch Enhancement Scheme and the more recent A19/A1058 Coast Road Junction Improvement project.

The Applicant enquired who the list of consultees would be for a screening opinion. The Inspectorate advised that there is no statutory requirement to consult as part of the EIA screening process.

Application changes

The Applicant enquired to what extent they could change their application after their statutory consultation. The Inspectorate advised that an applicant is required, in their Consultation Report, to show how they have taken feedback into account in shaping their proposals. However where changes are made to address concerns the Applicant should consider whether this creates any new concerns. The Applicant should also consider whether there are any additional consultees if there is any change to the red line boundary. The Inspectorate further advised that any changes to the application may affect any screening or scoping opinion.

Enabling works

The Applicant advised that, to progress the development, they may start enabling works, such as site preparation, under the TCPA consent or a further TCPA consent, if required. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to seek their own legal advice on the extent of the works they could undertake under the TCPA consent and reminded them that building a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project without a PA2008 consent is a criminal offence.

Next steps

The Applicant was advised that any EIA screening will need to take place before any s42 statutory consultation commences.

The Inspectorate advised that further meetings or teleconferences can be arranged at the request of the Applicant. The Inspectorate offers a draft documents review service however the Applicant should consider the timing of this and allow around two months for this to take place, as well as allowing sufficient time to make any amendments to documents following the Inspectorate's feedback.

The Applicant advised that to help ensure they can enter the 2018 storage capacity auction they are aiming for submission of their application in Q1 2018.

Specific decisions / follow up required?

The Inspectorate to send details of what information is required to set the project up on the website.

The Applicant to advise when any screening request will be submitted.