

Meeting note

Project name	Little Crow Solar Park
File reference	EN010101
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	01 August 2018
Meeting with	INRG (and Pegasus Group)
Venue	Concorde, Temple Quay House, Bristol
Meeting objectives	Inception 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.

Welcome and Introductions

The Applicant and the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) teams introduced themselves and their respective roles. Applicant was made aware of new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), to be wary of recently increased Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

Details of the proposed development

The Applicant provided a brief history of their current development portfolio, stating that they are responsible for approximately twenty solar parks and several gas generating projects, and disclosed that they are a UK-only based company, with an eight year history in the renewables & energy sector. Pegasus is working with the Applicant and is responsible for planning, consultation and EIA advisory services.

The proposed development will be a 200MW energy scheme, constituting up to 150MW of solar energy (c357,723 panels) and 50MW battery store energy, the anticipated life span of the development is estimated 35 years. The Applicant also confirmed the panels and the batteries used could then be recycled. A full decommissioning plan will be set out in the Development Consent Order DCO. The project is located within North Lincoln District Council jurisdiction and is situated east of Scunthorpe, adjacent to Scunthorpe Steel Works. The Applicant plans to connect the power to the local power grid via an existing overhead line within the proposed development site. The connection from the overhead line will run underground and will connect to a new substation to be constructed by the Applicant. The Applicant does not propose any external grid works and they confirmed that a grid offer has already been secured.

Construction vehicles will access the proposed development site via Appleby lane which has historically been used by heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) at the ex BP oil site; therefore, it is unlikely there will be any major disruption from these activities. During construction a 1.5-2 acre compound will be built on site, in order to meet the welfare and storage requirements of the construction and onsite employees. These facilities will likely be built on specialised mobile platforms – mitigating any ground damage.

Consultation to date

The Applicant has been in discussion with the Local Authority (LA) since December 2017; statutory consultation is planned to commence from November 2018 and to run until early 2019 (dependant on when comments from LA come back). The Applicant confirmed that a draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) would be sent to the LA as part of their initial informal consideration at the end of the week, Friday 3 August, along with other draft documentation. The Applicant asked questions about the acceptance process and were advised by the Inspectorate to run through a Section 55 (PA2008) checklist as this would help to support the Applicant confirm that all statutory requirements are met. The Applicant confirmed that there are other utilities infrastructures on the site and were advised that statutory undertakers would need to be consulted. The Applicant explained that an Anglian Water (AW) owned pipeline underlies the proposed development site and has been accurately mapped by the Applicant following on-site consultation with AW. The Applicant explained that AW only require access when possible to maintain this pipeline and were advised by the Inspectorate to seek agreement with them regarding the need for protective provisions. The Inspectorate explained that other applicants had opted to set up small working groups to seek certain agreements and this approach has proved useful for achieving Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) and can be useful during acceptance to illustrate that adequate consultation was carried out. The Applicant confirmed that the LA support the project fully with no principal objections.

Environmental considerations

The Applicant explained that there are number of environmental constraints in and around the proposed development site including known archaeological interests, protected species (badgers, bats and birds) and public rights of way.

The site is enveloped by mature and ancient woodland which serves as a particularly robust visual screen. The Applicant confirmed that the development site itself is primarily agricultural land of which 70% is regarded as Best and Most Valuable (BMV) land and this is below the Lincolnshire average of c.90%. The Applicant explained that the design of the proposed development is intended to maintain and enhance the environmental characteristics of the proposed development site where possible.

The Applicant confirmed that assessment work had progressed and stated their intention to submit draft Environmental Statement (ES) to the LA by the end of the week. The Inspectorate asked the Applicant how they intended to approach the scope of the assessment and whether they would be requesting a scoping opinion. The Applicant explained they are 'voluntarily' preparing an ES and would provide the formal notification of this at the appropriate time. The Applicant went on to explain how they are working on compiling a draft ES in order to evolve and inform the indicative layout and gain an understanding of the mitigation measures required. The scope of the draft ES had largely

been agreed with the LA. The Inspectorate confirmed that the ES within the PA2008 is a matter for the Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Inspectorate advised that that PA2008 scoping process included consultation with a large number of consultees and provided a very thorough analysis of what is required in the ES. The Inspectorate confirmed that the information required to accompany the scoping request is set out in the EIA Regulations. The Inspectorate also stated that the purpose of the scoping process is to determine the scope and approach to the assessment and not to review or comment on draft ES. The Applicant explained that they had commenced environmental survey work for ecological receptors and were carrying out bat surveys through to September 2018. However, at present no specific EIA work has been undertaken with regards to air quality or noise. The Applicant was advised to consult with Natural England (NE) regarding ecological matters as they are the relevant statutory nature conservation body and will be advising the Examining Authority (ExA) and Secretary of State. The Applicant confirmed that NE were approached for their input in January 2017. The Applicant confirmed their intent to request a scoping opinion towards the end of September 2018, and this was time dependent on when the LA would provide its written response on the informal pre-app submission. The Inspectorate agreed to review the structure of the scoping request before it is formally made. The Applicant sought advice regarding the approach to address uncertainty within the design of the proposed development. The Inspectorate advised that the Rochdale envelope approach has been applied by applicants to address uncertainty and that regard should be given to relevant Advice Notes prepared by the Inspectorate.

Land Ownership

The Applicant confirmed that the site is not situated on any Crown Land. There are two land owners; one owns the majority of the land and is leasing to the Applicant; the second owns the remainder of the land.

Practical arrangements and next steps

Agreement to put project information on the Planning Inspectorate's website; setting up project, appointment of a designated case officer and EIA officer, project email account and Applicant's direct contacts established. Applicant advised to look at example documents on the Inspectorate's website; guide to application – specifically from National Grid (Richborough); Advice Notes AN9, AN15 and AN11 have been updated.

A site visit prior to the scoping process will be arranged.

Proposed date of submission

The submission of the DCO application for the project is expected in March 2019 / Q1 of 2019.