



Meeting note

Project name	Keuper Underground Gas Storage Facility Material Change 1
File reference	EN0310001
Status	FINAL
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	24 January 2025
Meeting with	Keuper Gas Storage Limited
Venue	Telecon
Meeting objectives	Project 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.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted (if requested by an applicant for commercial reasons).

Details of the proposed development

The applicant seeks to make a Material Change to the Keuper Underground Gas Storage Facility Order 2017 [S.I. No. 2017/433] from an Underground Natural Gas Storage facility to an Underground Hydrogen Storage facility, in 19 salt caverns, at the Holford Brinefields. Hydrogen above ground installations will allow connection to the proposed HyNet hydrogen transmission system and will replace the consented natural gas installation. Amendments to the substation location and internal roads are also anticipated.

Activities to date

A Non-Material Change (NMC) application to the consented Development Consent Order (DCO) was submitted in November 2022. The NMC aimed to amend the consented DCO to enable the storage of hydrogen gas, alongside an alternative gas connection compound, and amendment to the siting and layout of an office building. A decision on the NMC application was provided by the Secretary of State (SoS) for Energy Security and Net Zero in May 2024; the hydrogen related amendments were not considered to be non-material. However, other minor amendments were considered to be non-material, and an Amendment Order was made by the SoS in May 2024 (S.I.2024/674).

The proposed material change application will build on the progress of the NMC.

Consenting programme

The applicant asked if the Inspectorate could confirm if the material change process is suitable for the proposed development.

The Inspectorate advised that on the basis of the information provided, it had no concerns with the applicant's suggested approach to follow the material change application process, as opposed to a new application for development consent. However, the Inspectorate confirmed that it could not give a definitive view on the matter as it does not have the authority to do so; such a decision can only be made by the SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero. As such, the Inspectorate advised the applicant to discuss the approach, with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

EIA Scoping

The applicant confirmed that it would be submitting a scoping report in April 2025 and will subsequently produce a new environmental statement.

The Inspectorate advised that any hyperlinks should point to specific documents and all references cited should be to individual chapters of the document.

Environmental Surveys

Environmental surveys are ongoing and will be completed during 2025.

Stakeholder engagement to date

Consultation with key stakeholders builds on the NMC application engagement, specifically with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Inspectorate asked if the applicant had consulted the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The applicant confirmed that it not specifically consulted them in relation to the proposed material change but that they had discussed the change to Hydrogen storage with HSE and that a certificate has been granted for the storage of Hydrogen at the site.

Consultation

The applicant confirmed that a new Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) is being prepared and will be published in Q2 2025.

Statutory consultation is due to commence in September / October 2025.

The applicant advised that a local liaison group is already in place.

Compulsory Acquisition

The applicant confirmed that there are no changes to the previous Keuper DCO order limits, therefore no additional land rights are being sought

Submission date

The project is due to be submitted in March 2026.

Next meeting

The Inspectorate encouraged good dialogue with the applicant and advised of the opportunity to provide key updates via the Inspectorate's case manager, as opposed to waiting until project update meetings. The Inspectorate suggested that it would be helpful for the next meeting to be held once the scoping exercise had been completed.