

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2013**

REPORT BY: **HEAD OF PLANNING**

SUBJECT: **FULL APPLICATION - CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTHERN CONVERTER STATION COMPRISING VALVE HALLS, A CONTROL BUILDING AND A SPARES BUILDING TOGETHER WITH OUTDOOR ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT AND ASSOCIATED ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS, INFRASTRUCTURE, EARTHWORKS, SECURITY FENCING, LANDSCAPED AREAS AND HABITAT CREATION AT CONVERTER STATION, LAND SOUTH OF WEIGHBRIDGE ROAD, DEESIDE INDUSTRIAL PARK, DEESIDE**

APPLICATION NUMBER: **050340**

APPLICANT: **NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION PLC**

SITE: **CONVERTER STATION, LAND SOUTH OF WEIGHBRIDGE ROAD, DEESIDE INDUSTRIAL PARK, DEESIDE**

APPLICATION VALID DATE: **10/12/2012**

LOCAL MEMBERS: **Cllrs. C.M. Jones, P. MacFarlane & I. Smith**

TOWN/COMMUNITY COUNCIL: **CONNAHS QUAY TOWN COUNCIL & SEALAND COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

REASON FOR COMMITTEE: **MEMBER REQUEST DUE TO SCALE, COMPLEXITY & SENSITIVITY OF DEVELOPMENT**

SITE VISIT: **NO**

1.00 SUMMARY

- 1.01 The proposal is a full planning application for erection of converter station comprising valve halls, a control building and a spares building together with outdoor electrical equipment and associated access improvements, infrastructure, earthworks, security fencing, landscaped areas and habitat creation at Land South of Weighbridge

Road, Deeside Industrial Park, Deeside. The converter station will link the Scottish and English/Welsh electricity transmission networks via a Western Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) subsea cable. The converter station will allow for electricity to be converted from direct currents to alternating current for onwards transmission onto the existing electricity network.. The Western (HVDC) link will increase cross-border transmission capacity on the GB Transmission System by approximately 2200 Mega Watts (MW) and support the development [of renewable energy generation in line with Government and European targets. The issues for consideration are the principle of development/planning policy context, impacts on visual amenity, impacts on residential amenities, highways, ecology and drainage.

2.00 RECOMMENDATION: TO GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:-

- 2.01 The proposed development is recommended for planning permission subject to the following conditions,
1. Five year time limit.
 2. In accordance with approved plans.
 3. Foul and surface water to be drained separately.
 4. No surface water to connect to public sewerage system unless otherwise approved by Local Planning Authority.
 5. Land drainage run-off not permitted to discharge to public sewerage system.
 6. No development to commence until a scheme approved for comprehensive/integrated drainage of the site showing foul, surface and land drainage and a strategy for containment of any operational spillages of oil.
 7. All finished floor levels to be set at 7.27 AOD unless otherwise agreed in writing with the LPA.
 8. Flood emergency response plan as per section 6.0 of the FCA.
 9. Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted for approval setting out site access/egress arrangements, delivery routes/times, emergency vehicle routes, movement of abnormal indivisible loads to the site. Also to include any assessment identifying any removal, replacement, modification and re-instatement of the highway associated infrastructure required for the movement of the abnormal indivisible loads.
 10. Submission and approval of contamination appraisal, details to include for capping required, a health and safety management plan and a remediation scheme with verification and all remedial works.
 11. Lighting requirements of overall site to be submitted and approved.
 12. Noise attenuation scheme to include minimum construction noise and operational noise and noise monitoring and hours of operation.
 13. Details for a scheme indicating hard and soft landscaping works and/or any necessary land profiling

14. Implementation of hard and soft landscaping scheme
15. Submission/approval of an Environmental Management Plan.
16. Development to be carried out in accordance with mitigation works as stated at Table 16-1 of the submitted Environmental Report.
17. Confirmation of the timing of works in regards to nesting birds and mitigation if necessary.

3.00 CONSULTATIONS

3.01 Councillor I. Smith

Agrees to determination under delegated powers, has no objection and welcomes its location in the industrial area across the river.

Councillor P. MacFarlane

Requests the application be referred to Planning Committee due to the proposal being a major development and supports the proposal. Has been advised that due to the proximity of his home to an alternative site he has a “prejudicial interest” in the application.

Councillor C.M. Jones

Requests the application be referred to Planning Committee due to size of development, complexity and sensitivity.

Adjacent Member

Councillor J.B. Attridge

Agrees to determination under delegated powers

Connah’s Quay Town Council

Supports and welcomes the application

Sealand Community Council

Awaiting final response |

Cheshire West & Chester Council

No response at time of writing report

Wirral Council

No response at time of writing report

Head of Assets and Transportation

No objections subject to conditions

Environment (Rights of Way)

No observations

Head of Public Protection

No objections subject to contamination and noise conditions

Welsh Government Transport

Directs that any permission includes a traffic management plan condition to cater for movement of abnormal indivisible loads.

Environment Agency

No objections subject to condition

SP Powersystems

No objection

NATS

No safeguarding objections

Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust

There are no archaeological implications for the proposed development

The Coal Authority

Does not fall within the defined coalfield. No comments to make.

Airbus

No aerodrome safeguarding objection

British Pipelines Agency

Works will not affect BPA's pipeline interest in the area

Fire and Rescue Service

No observations

Council for the Protection of Rural Wales

The development will integrate well within the existing industrial landscape of the area. Careful orientation of the built form will reduce visual and noise impacts. A condition is requested to reduce light pollution.

4.00 PUBLICITY

4.01 Press Notice, Site, Notice, Neighbour Notification

The proposed development has been advertised by way of press and site notices and neighbour letters. No observations have been received at the time of report writing.

5.00 SITE HISTORY

5.01 The site was formerly part of the Shotton Steel and includes the railway sidings for the steel works. The site was cleared in the 1980's and has remained vacant since.

6.00 PLANNING POLICIES

6.01 Flintshire Unitary Development Plan

Policy GEN1 - General Development Requirements for Development|
 Policy D1 - Design Quality, Location and Layout
 Policy D2 - Design
 Policy D3 – Landscaping
 Policy D4 – Outdoor Lighting
 Policy L1 – Landscape Character
 Policy EM1 - Employment Uses
 Policy EM6 - Protection of Employment Land
 Policy EM7 – Bad Neighbour Industry
 Policy EWPF16 - Flood Risk
 Policy EWP12 – Pollution
 Policy EWP13 – Nuisance
 Policy EWP14 – Derelict and Contaminated Land
 Policy EWP17 – Flood Risk
 Policy AC18 - Parking Provision and New Development
 Policy CF9 - Development of Utilities
 Policy WB1 – Species Protection
 Policy WB2 - Sites of International Importance
 Policy WB3 - Statutory Sites of National Importance
 Policy WB6 – Enhancement of Nature Conservation Interests
 Policy AC13 – Access and Traffic Impact
 Policy AC14 – Traffic Calming
 Policy AC18 – Parking Provision and New Development
 TAN5 - Nature Conservation and Planning
 TAN8 - Planning for Renewable Energy
 TAN12 - Design
 TAN15 - Development and Flood Risk
 TAN18 - Transport
 TAN22 - Planning For Sustainable
 Planning Policy Wales 2012

The proposal would generally comply with the above policies and advice.

7.00 PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.01 Proposed Development with General Overview and Site Description

The proposal is a full planning application for erection of converter station comprising valve halls, a control building and a spares building together with outdoor electrical equipment and associated access improvements, infrastructure, earthworks, security fencing, landscaped areas and habitat creation at Land South of Weighbridge Road, Deeside Industrial Park, Deeside. The application site is currently in the ownership of Flintshire County Council.

7.02 In summary, the application is further detailed as follows:

- Valve Hall/DC Buildings, control building and spare parts store. Approx. internal floor area of 7258 sq.m. ranging in height from approx. 6 metres to 24.4 metres. The proposed buildings are linked as one unit, save for the spares part building, are contemporary in design and would utilise

primarily metal cladding for the roof/walls and brick plinths.

- Outdoor electrical equipment is located to the south of the buildings and will be arranged broadly in two banks which are aligned north to south. These comprise reactive and harmonic equipment and busbars and associated switchgear which are used in the conversion and transmission of electricity. The height of the equipment will range from 12-15 metres.
- Auxiliary 11V Substation will be located to the north of the converter station to provide auxiliary power supplies via the distribution network operator.
- Landscaping will be used to the perimeter of the site and will include a landscaped embankment which will run north to south along the eastern boundary of the site, SUDS drainage zones and settlement ponds. The SUDS will include filtration trenches, soakaway, oil interceptors & oil dump tanks.
- Back-up diesel generator
- Two boundary fences are proposed to the western and eastern boundaries
 - a 2.7 m high palisade fence and a 4 m high Pulse Secure fence system.
- Access. The proposed access for the site is indicated as via a new gated access off Weighbridge Road and includes related internal access arrangements.

- 7.03 In addition to the submitted drawings, the application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Environmental Reports, Flood Consequences Assessment, Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, Transport Statement, Drainage Strategy, and a Tree Survey. Members should be aware that any onshore cables linking the proposed development to off shore cables do not require formal planning permission and are not being considered as part of the application.
- 7.04 The Government has set ambitious targets to increase renewable energy generation and to combat climate change. In order to achieve this major reinforcements of the current transmission system are required with the Western Link being one such reinforcement. It will connect the electricity transmission network in Scotland with England and Wales by subsea HVDC cable. The WHVDC link is seen as a key reinforcement of the UK's electricity transmission system, ensure security of supply and facilitate further development of renewable energy in line with the UK and European targets. The WHVDC link comprises a converter station and substation at Hunterston in North Ayrshire which will connect to the existing system and be transmitted via subsea and underground cables to a converter station at Connaught's Quay where the electricity would be converted from DC to AC for onwards transmission onto the existing electricity network.
- 7.05 The applicant maintains that at the time the outline and full planning applications were submitted for a similar proposal at Kelsterton Road,

Connahs Quay, there were no technically feasible sites available on the north of the River Dee. However, the current application has now been submitted and a solution to cross the River Dee with multiple HVAC cables has been identified, which overcomes previous constraints on technical feasibility.

7.06 The application site is previously developed land where part of the wider Shotton Steel works site was located and was occupied by railway sidings and associated buildings to enable delivery of coke and coal before the iron and steel works operations ceased in 1980. The site has remained vacant since apart from unauthorised off road motocross use. The site is located to the south of the Shotton Combined Heat and Power Plant. The site is within an industrial area within the Deeside Industrial Park and is bounded to the east by the North Wales Coastal Railway Line, the north west by the UPM Paper Mill and Eirgrid Converter Station, the west by the TATA steel works facility and Weighbridge Road and the south by vacant industrial land. The site covers an area of approximately 22 hectares. The site is relatively flat and, has grass and shrub/tree vegetation on it.

7.07 Principle of Development

Within the UDP the site falls under the remit of Policy EM1 (General Employment Land Allocations) which allocates the land for the following employment uses B1 (Business Use), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Storage and distribution). The proposed development does not sit comfortably within recognised land use designations and would not per se fall within a B1, 2 or 8 use, hence it being advertised as a departure to the development plan, however, other material considerations are relevant, i.e. industrial type development in an area zoned for industry, reuses "brownfield" land, and is a nationally significant scheme that would enhance the provision of security of supply of electricity. Bearing in mind these other material considerations it is considered the proposed development is acceptable in principle.

7.08 Design and Appearance

Within the site the applicant considered four possible locations for the siting of the valve halls and electrical equipment to ascertain which would be the most favourable visually. The options were as follows,

Option 1 – North West corner of the site parallel to weighbridge Road

Option 2 – Adjacent to the south west boundary

Option 3 – Adjacent to the northern site boundary

Option 4 – Locates the building towards the south eastern site boundary

7.09 Each of the options were considered in detail in the submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS), with analysis of their relative visual impacts. The DAS concludes that Option 3 is the preferred location within the site for the following reasons:

- The building's orientation and position embraces the location of the existing CHP plant and its infrastructure whilst following the industrial grain of Deeside Industrial Park and its linear forces which are

created by the railway line to the east and Weighbridge Road to the west.

- The existing CHP plant will provide a degree of instant screening which used with the raised ground levels to the east and western boundaries will help to integrate the building into the landscape from the outset.
- As regards views/visual impacts the working façade of the valve halls would be facing to the south of the site which allows more scope to bed the infrastructure into the site.
- A significant proportion of the external electrical equipment will be screened by the building along Weighbridge Road. And allows a good buffer zone of landscaping and SUDS to be provided around the edges of the site.
- Being sited furthest away from the river Dee the proposal positions the largest built form away from the important area of nature conservation – the Dee Corridor.

7.10 The proposal has been assessed by the Council's Consultant Landscape Architect who concludes the development is appropriate in design, scale and quality for the particular location and will not cause undue or unacceptable impact upon the existing landscape and visual attributes of the site/surrounding area.

7.11 As regards the actual design of the proposed buildings it is reasonable to conclude they are functional in design and scale which are typical of buildings currently located across a wide area of Deeside Industrial Estate. The proposed metal clad buildings in addition to the electrical equipment would not look out of character with the general locality. The site will benefit from large areas of new landscape planting to its boundaries which should assist in screening views of the lower element of the development. Whilst the scale of the development means it will be seen from distant views, these views are set against, and filtered by, existing industrial development of a similar scale to that proposed. I would concur with the Council's Consultant Landscape Architect i.e. the proposal is considered acceptable in visual terms.

7.12 Effect on residential/Adjacent Amenities/Contamination

The Council's Head of Public Protection has not raised any objections to the proposed development on noise grounds subject to appropriately worded conditions. The submitted noise information indicates that through appropriate mitigation that noise generated by the proposed development would not result in a detrimental impact or harm to local sensitive receptors - the mitigation includes noise hoods, damping facades. Any grant of planning permission should include a noise attenuation scheme with such a scheme making reference to the following,

- use of acoustic hoods on converter transformer tanks and shunt reactor tank
- use of noise damping facades and the enclosing/screening of equipment

- low noise designs on cooling fans
- staged operation of pumps and fans on cooler banks
- insulation and sound proofing of buildings

- 7.13 Construction works and its effects whilst of a temporary nature, does have the potential to generate significant noise and vibration and therefore any grant of planning permission should include a condition referring to hours of operation.
- 7.14 Due to the site's distance from residential properties it is not considered there would be undue detriment to residential amenity, however, from a visual perspective, an appropriately worded planning condition should ensure that light spillage is minimised. The proposed development is not considered to be detrimental to adjacent residential amenities as it is distant from residential properties and, on the whole, has intervening large scale industrial development between it and residential areas, nor is the proposed development considered detrimental to the amenities of existing industrial/commercial occupiers in the locality.
- 7.15 The applicant has estimated and assessed the extent of land contamination suspected to be present e.g. slag material from the previous steel operations and asbestos. The Head of Public Protection, in regards to contamination issues, requires the following planning conditions,
- a remediation options appraisal to allow land contamination to be clearly ascertained
 - details explaining the construction, extent and purpose of capping layer required in regards to dealing with contamination
 - a health and safety management plan to address in particular asbestos and dust mitigation
 - a contamination remediation scheme and verification reports, with verification approval gained prior to use /occupation of the development
- 7.16 Ecology
The site is located in close proximity to the internationally/nationally designated sites of ecological importance i.e. the Dee Estuary SSSI/SAC/SPA/RAMSAR Site and the River Dee SAC, in addition to the Shotton Lagoons and Reedbeds SSSI. The applicant's Environmental report stated that a range of surveys were undertaken to identify habitats and establish if protected or notable plants and wildlife were present on the site and/or may be affected by the proposed development, and that overall the conservation value of habitats (mainly grassland with scattered vegetation/trees/scrub) were considered to be low and whilst habitat will be lost to the footprint of the proposed works, that some habitat creation is proposed which should provide ecological benefits and encourage greater biodiversity and greater connectivity with habitats in the wider area. The applicant was of the opinion that given the intervening distances between the designated sites and the proposed development that no direct effects were predicted, however, there may be indirect effects resulting from pollution or

lighting. The proposed construction works has the potential to affect a range of species including invertebrates, badger, bats, otters, water voles, breeding and wintering birds and reptiles, however, the applicant maintains these effects can be mitigated through, for example, appropriate timing of works. The applicant's submitted Environmental Report includes reference at Table 16-1 to ecological mitigation. The construction period will be temporary and provided those works are carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures as stated in the Environmental report and reinforced in the Council's condition then any adverse effects will be reasonably minimised. It is considered there will be no significant adverse effects during the operation of the converter station providing the stated mitigation/ measures are carried out and an appropriate planning condition attached. The Council's ecologist has not objected to the proposed development. It is reasonable to conclude that the proposal can be sufficiently conditioned to avoid any likely significant effect on the Dee Estuary SSI/SAC/SPA/Ramsar Site, nor the nearby Shotton lagoon and Reedbed SSSI and that a more detailed "Appropriate Assessment" is not required.

7.17 Highways/Drainage

Permanent access to the site would be via a new gated access off Weighbridge Road. The Head of Highways and Transportation has raised no objections to the proposed development subject to planning conditions. Welsh government Transport has directed that any permission includes a traffic management plan condition to cater for movement of abnormal indivisible loads to the site – this condition would essentially assist in the management and control of HGV construction traffic

7.18 Drainage for the proposed development will not connect into any surrounding drainage infrastructure. Surface water will discharge to infiltration systems. Foul water will be discharged to a cess tank. As regards drainage the Environment Agency have not objected to the proposal and therefore subject to the conditions proposed the proposal is considered acceptable from a drainage perspective.

8.00 CONCLUSION

8.01 The proposal in the application is presented as an important strategic infrastructure development in national context. There is no doubting its significance in this context. The proposed development is large in scale, however, it has been carefully sited and designed to minimise its impacts and has been appropriately located to mitigate any potential adverse impacts. The development is acceptable in principle and subject to appropriately worded planning conditions is recommended for approval.

8.02 In considering this planning application the Council has acted in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 including Article 8 of the Convention and in a manner which is necessary in a democratic society in furtherance of the legitimate aims of the Act and the Convention.

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