



Bassetlaw
DISTRICT COUNCIL
— North Nottinghamshire —

Environmental Services
Central Operations
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Your Ref: EN010142-000010
Our Ref: 22/01475/PREAPP
Officer: Daniel Galpin
Email: planning@bassetlaw.gov.uk

31st October 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11.

Application by Tillbridge Solar Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Tillbridge Solar Scheme (the Proposed Development).

Scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested.

I refer to the request for a Scoping Opinion that was requested on October 3rd 2022. Due to an internal error there was a delay in sending out consultation letters and therefore not all have been received. We will forward these in due course.

Therefore, this response will contain generic advice based on the location of the proposed cabling route within Bassetlaw. The vast majority of the development proposal is situated within West Lindsey and therefore our comments will only focus specifically on the aspects of the development in Bassetlaw. Any consultation responses which have been received in will be included in this response. However, any responses received after this consultation response is issued will be passed onto the Planning Inspectorate and applicant/agent for consideration.

The submitted report contains the following chapters and I comment on them accordingly for you to take into consideration:

The Scheme

The overall scheme is substantial in its nature and is expected to generate around 500 Megawatts (MW) of renewable energy for the grid covering some 1,400 hectares (ha) of land. All of the built development is situated within West Lindsey with exception of the cable routing which will connect to Cottam Power Station on the opposite side of the River Trent. Therefore, unless there is a prospect of transboundary effects, our comments purely relate to the potential impact of the cabling route within Bassetlaw. As such, there are no comments with respect to the design of the scheme with respect to aspects such as the design of the solar panels.

Alternatives Considered

It is welcomed that the ES will contain a description of the alternatives that have been considered during the creation of the development proposal in accordance with Schedule 4 (2) of the Regulations. This appears to be consistent with the approach taken by the other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) proposals which are at a more advanced stage. Nevertheless, it has been previously stated that this approach is not the most beneficial as once the ES has been submitted, this represents the 'final' proposal. The time where amendments can be realistically made is prior to submission at the stage of the production of the EIA Scoping Report and up to the statutory consultation period. It is known from the consultation workshops that have been undertaken that there has been a detailed approach to the site selection, so it would have been beneficial to see this detail in the EIA Scoping Report.

Consultation

There are no detailed comments to make at this stage. The Local Planning Authority did have some reservations initially about the targeted approach to consultation in terms of non-statutory consultation events which only involved targeted members of the community. Whilst this does have clear benefits, a proposal of this scale should take opportunities to maximise public engagement at all stages. It is welcomed that the Scoping Report has included details of a much wider effort to involve the general public. The Local Planning Authority has worked closely with the applicants/agents on the other NSIP proposals prior to the statutory consultation period(s) and would welcome the opportunity to do so again.

Comments on the general approach

The Local Planning Authority only has limited comments to make on the general approach. Each section of this letter will outline our comments on specific issues. Provided that the precise location of the cable route is not yet known, it is very difficult to make detailed comments. Therefore, our response to each chapter will focus on the key environmental designations. Relevant consultee comments will be forwarded when they are received as stated previously. All the relevant Development Plan Documents (DPDs) including Neighbourhood Plans, Local Plans and emerging Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan have all been included in the Scoping Report. The emerging Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan is anticipated to enter Examination this year with the potential adoption in the summer of next year. Therefore, this will carry progressively more weight during the DCO process.

Proposed Topics

Climate Change

Although the development itself will inevitably produce some carbon emissions, especially during the construction and decommissioning phases, it is clear that these will be more than mitigated for by the provision of 500 MW of clean energy per annum. Nevertheless, any efforts to reduce carbon emissions from the project itself should be scoped into the ES.

Please note Policies ST50 and ST51 from the emerging Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan and Policy DM10 from the Bassetlaw Core Strategy.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

This is one of the most important and sensitive considerations for the District. It should be made clear that any response received from Nottinghamshire County Council will form the basis for our comments and as such should be taken into account as well.

With regards to the cabling, it is more difficult to assess at this stage as the final route of the cabling is not yet known. Policy DM4 of the Bassetlaw Core Strategy, Section 12 of the NPPF and Policy ST37 of the Bassetlaw Core Strategy are all relevant. Also relevant are Policies 5 and 10 of the Rampton and Woodbeck Neighbourhood Plan and Policy 2 of the Treswell and Cottam Neighbourhood Plan.

Ecology and Biodiversity

The need for 10% net gain is welcomed and this should be scoped into the assessment. The Environment Act 2021 promotes biodiversity net gain in new development, albeit from 2023. However, the NPPF recommends securing net gains now. Reflecting the principles of national planning policy and the emerging provisions of the Act we would strongly recommend that the proposal secures at least 10% net gain in biodiversity to ensure that the value of the development exceeds the pre-development on site habitat value by at least 10%.

It will be possible to make specific comments when a more exact route is known. Ongoing consultation with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust will be important. Designations such as SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites and other relevant designations should be avoided where possible.

The most relevant policies are Policy DM9 of the Bassetlaw Core Strategy, Section 15 of the NPPF, Policies ST39 and ST40 of the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan, Policy 6 of the Rampton and Woodbeck Neighbourhood Plan and Policy 2 of the Treswell and Cottam NP.

Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage

No further comments to make at this stage, it is noted that much of the cable route is located within flood zones 2 and 3 which should be avoided where possible. We will forward comments from Nottinghamshire County Council's Lead Local Flood Authority in due course.

Ground Conditions and Contamination

No comments to make at this stage. We will forward the response from the Environmental Health Officer in due course.

Minerals

The Nottinghamshire County Council Minerals Local Plan (Policy SP7) and Section 17 of the NPPF collectively give great weight to the benefits of minerals and on the economy and attempt to prevent unnecessary sterilisation of safeguarded mineral reserves. The County Planning Authority are best placed to comment on this matter and therefore we have limited comments to make. Any relevant consultation responses that we do receive will be passed on.

Archaeology

The final cable routing should ensure best efforts have been taken to avoid areas of archaeological interest. Where this is not possible, we would expect appropriate geophysical surveys, trial trench evaluations and appropriate mitigation to all be undertaken. We will forward any comments received from Lincolnshire County Council's Archaeologist in due course.

Heritage

Cottam to the north, Church Laneham to the south and Rampton to the west all have various designated and non-designated heritage assets that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development. Cottam Power Station itself is a non-designated heritage asset and therefore should also be considered, although it is noted that permission has been granted for its demolition (21/01661/DEM) any weight given to this heritage assets will undeniably be reduced. Once the cable routing has been selected, it will be possible to offer more significant comments. It would be expected that once the cable routing is in place, it is unlikely that there will be any impact on relevant heritage assets, but this should be fully explored within the ES.

Any comments we receive from our Conservation Officer will be forwarded.

The most relevant policies are Policy DM8 of the Bassetlaw Core Strategy, Section 16 of the NPPF, Policy ST42 of the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan, Policy 6 of the Rampton and Woodbeck Neighbourhood Plan and Policy 2 of the Treswell and Cottam NP.

Transport and Access

Please see below the response from Nottinghamshire County Council's Highways Officer:

'The Highway Authority would expect the DCO application to be supported by a Transport Assessment (TA) prepared in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance. A chapter should be included within the TA specifically dealing with the cable routing corridor in Nottinghamshire and which should also be addressed in the proposed Construction Environmental Management Plan. The opportunity to share cabling infrastructure with the other DCO solar schemes in the area should be explored.'

It is difficult to comment in more detail until the specific details of the cable routing are known.

Noise and Vibration

The section of the cable route appears to be situated away from sensitive receptors such as nearby population centres at Cottam, Rampton and Church Laneham but these effects will need to be fully considered in the ES. We will forward any response received from our Environmental Health Officer.

Glint and Glare

No comments to make in this respect. This is a significant consideration in relation to the solar panels themselves but not in relation to the cable routing.

Electromagnetic Fields

It is not anticipated that there would be any significant impacts arising as the result of a cable route. However, until an exact cable route is selected, it is not possible to make any further comments at this stage.

Light Pollution

No comments at this stage.

Major Accidents and Disasters

No further comments are required at this stage.

Air Quality

This would mainly be an issue during the construction period but until a more specific cabling route is agreed, there are no specific comments at this stage.

Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation and Human Health

No further comments are required at this stage.

Agricultural Circumstances

It is considered that this is an important issue for the District, especially when considering these proposals cumulatively with other similar proposals. It therefore should be fully considered in the ES. Paragraph 174 gives weight to the protection of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land which comprises Grades 1, 2 and 3a agricultural land. This should be avoided when selecting a cabling route, but it is difficult to make specific comments at this stage.

Waste

Nottinghamshire County Council in their role as the Waste Planning Authority are best placed to make specific comments in this matter. Any relevant comments we received will be passed on in due course.

Telecommunication, Utilities and TV Receptors

There are no further comments at this stage.

Conclusion

This forms a response from Bassetlaw District Council on the initial EIA Scoping Report. As stated at the start of this letter, we will forward any consultation responses we receive in due course.

This letter was undertaken at officer level and is subject to change if further information and does not prejudice future comments.

Yours faithfully



Development Team Manager

Enc

Response from Nottinghamshire County Council Highways