

REPORT TITLE: MEMBER BRIEFING UPDATE – LOVEDEAN  
INTERCONNECTOR

11 APRIL 2019

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor Caroline Brook, Portfolio Holder for  
Built Environment

Contact Officer: Julie Pinnock / Stephen Cornwell Tel 01962 848439 / 848485

Email [jpinnock@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:jpinnock@winchester.gov.uk) / [scornwell@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:scornwell@winchester.gov.uk)

WARD(S): DENMEAD

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to inform the planning committee members of the background and current status of the Aquind National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP) which is currently under consideration by Winchester City Council (WCC) and then to agree on a level of officer delegation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Built Environment for future actions.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Members note the contents of this report.
2. That Members agree to delegate to officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Built Environment, the role of responding to the planning inspectorate with regard to the Council's responsibilities as the host authority for the Aquind National Strategic Infrastructure Project.

## IMPLICATIONS:

- 1 COUNCIL STRATEGY OUTCOME
- 1.1 **Improving the quality of the District's environment:** securing the best possible environmental outcome by active engagement in the NSIP process.
- 2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
- 2.1 A planning performance agreement has been signed with the applicants through which we will claim payments for time spent on the project.
- 3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS
- 3.1 None arising from this paper.
- 4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS
- 4.1 A planning officer is acting as the main contact and drawing in other colleagues as required when formulating responses.
- 5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS
- 5.1 None.
- 6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION
- 6.1 Briefing notes have been circulated to ward members and to parish councils that fall within the area where the project is considered to have a degree of visual impact. The Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for the Built Environment have also been copied into these notes.
- 7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS
- 7.1 None directly related to the decision sought by this report.
- 8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSEMENT
- 8.1 None.
- 9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT
- 9.1 None required.
- 10 RISK MANAGEMENT
- 10.1 None at this time.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<i>Property</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Community Support</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Timescales</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Project capacity</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Financial / VfM</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Legal</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Innovation</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Reputation</i>	N/A	N/A
<i>Other</i>	N/A	N/A

## 11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

### **Background**

- 11.1 National Strategic Infrastructure Projects(NSIPs) are development proposal which are considered to have more than local implications. The Planning Act 2008 introduced the procedure under which projects relating to a certain type of development must be considered by the Secretary of State (SoS) for a decision. The precise SoS who deals with the project will reflect the type of scheme under consideration. Depending on the type of project concerned, an applicant can also make a request that the SoS deal with the project rather than the local planning authority. This new procedure was a response to the long delays that schemes had endured under the 1990 Planning Act. The Heathrow Terminal 5 inquiry is often quoted as an example of this. If an NSIP is successful, a Development Consent Order (DCO) is issued. This not a planning permission but a separate legal statutory instrument. Usually, the decision can include consents over a range of aspects such as the marine environment and can also include compulsory purchase powers. When a DCO is issued, it is usually accompanied by requirements which are similar to planning conditions and address outstanding issues that have to be resolved. These requirements are submitted to the relevant local planning authority for a decision. Any monitoring and enforcement are also the responsibility of the LPA. A link to the NSIP web page is set out in the background documents below.
- 11.2 The Aquind proposal is one of three NSIPs currently registered with the Planning Inspectorate which relate to land within the district. A further NSIP has been made which relates to land within the Test Valley area but has implications that will cross over the boundary.
- 11.3 The Aquind Interconnector submitted by Aquind Ltd is a project that seeks to establish a cross channel electricity link for the export or import of electricity. It

would make landfall at Eastney on Portsea Island with the cables then buried underground within the public highway up the existing sub station at Lovedean where a connection would be made to the national grid. The cable route would follow the Eastern Road on Portsea Island and then under the M27 and up the A3 towards Waterlooville. The route would then follow a section of the Hambledon Road (B2150) before striking off across open fields toward the existing substation facility at Lovedean. A plan showing this route is attached as appendix A This scheme crosses the boundaries of 4 authorities (Portsmouth, Havant, East Hampshire & Winchester). With the proximity of Lovedean to the National Park boundary the South Downs National Park Authority are also an interested party.

- 11.4 As the cross channel cables would operate on Direct Current (DC) and the national grid operates using Alternating Current (AC) there is a need for facilities at Lovedean to change the current from AC to DC and back, depending on whether electricity is being exported or imported. This needs an interconnector station which would consist of various pieces of equipment positioned around two large converter hall buildings each 90m in length by 50m wide and from 22m to 26m tall. After considering several options, Aquind have decided to locate the interconnector station on the western side of the existing sub station facility. A plan showing the layout of the interconnector station is attached as appendix B. A link to the Aquind web page is set out in the background documents below.
- 11.5 In early 2019 the scheme started off as separate pre application discussions with the five interested authorities. In June 2018 Aquind sought a ruling from the SoS that the scheme should be dealt with as an NSIP. Whilst the proposal did not exactly meet the threshold for an NSIP as set out in the 2008 Act, it did have similar characteristics to other energy schemes and as a consequence in July 2019 the SoS issued a letter saying he would accept the proposal as an NSIP. The consequence of this decision is that Winchester City Council has effectively been downgraded from the role of a determining authority, to the role of a host authority. This means we will be consulted and can comment on the scheme but the final decision will be made by the SoS.
- 11.6 The application is still in the pre application stage and currently going through an 8 week consultation exercise following the publication of the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report. The deadline for comment is the 29 April 2019. A formal submission is expected in the third quarter (June to September) of 2019. This is the stage when the project will be subject to an examination when the nominated inspector or panel of inspectors will review all the written evidence and hold hearings to examine specific topics. At the end of the

examination stage the inspector writes up a decision and presents this to the SoS who will then consider the recommendation before publishing a decision.

### **Engagement by the Local Authority in the Process**

- 11.7 Advice note two, (the role of local authorities in the development consent process) acknowledges that the involvement of the local planning authority (LPA) in the pre application stage is not obligatory, but they are “strongly advised” to engage in the process. The pre application stage is effectively the formative stage when the proposal is put together with the critical issues identified and the depth of the analysis is established. The extent of the consultation exercise is also established through the Statement of Community Consultation. The applicant is expected to take the initiative in reaching out to other parties and in collating all the data that will feed into the formal application stage. During this stage it is not intended for a view to be expressed whether the LPA would support or object to the scheme but to focus on the identification of the topic areas and the depth of investigation that is required.
- 11.8 The degree of officer involvement with the developer reflects the nature of the proposal. A lead Planning officer has been identified to act as a hub, drawing in and co-ordinating responses from other colleagues within the council to ensure a uniform and consistent response. Officers have engaged with the applicant by participating in meeting and teleconference calls. It is anticipated that this will continue up to the formal submission date. There is also close contact and discussion with colleagues in the other interested authorities when common issues have been discussed.
- 11.9 As the pace associated with the scheme has picked up, officers have initiated a briefing note. Two editions have been circulated within the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). This is an area that extends 8km out from the application site and identifies the ground where it is theoretically possible to have a direct line of sight of the proposed buildings. This view excludes any feature such as trees or buildings that might obstruct the line of sight. A copy of this plan is attached as appendix C. The following is the circulation list of the briefing notes:
- The elected members in the wards of Denmead, Central Meon Valley, Upper Meon Valley and Southwick & Wickham.
  - The parish Councils within this area.
  - The Council Leader.
  - The Portfolio Holder.

A copy of the briefing note can be viewed on the councils web site under application number 19/00522/NSIP.

### **Delegation Requirement**

11.10 The council's response when the application is formally submitted for examination will be brought to the committee for agreement. However, there are actions within the process that will require rapid responses that the published committee cycle cannot accommodate. The guidance suggests that LPAs should resolve a level of delegation to enable officers to respond on those occasions, and this would be in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Built Environment. The proposed recommendation reflects the need for flexibility to address the above scenarios.

## 12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 None

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

#### Previous Committee Reports:-

None

#### Other Background Documents:-

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

<http://aquind.co.uk/>

### APPENDICES:

A Plan showing route of cable from Eastney to Lovedean.

B Plan of interconnector station.

C Plan of Zone of Theoretical Visibility.