

## Aquind Interconnector Consultation

29 April 2019

Dear Sir

### Consultation on Proposals for AQUIND Interconnector

This Response to the Aquind Interconnector consultation is made by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Hampshire Branch (CPRE Hampshire). It is made further to our letter of 23 February 2018 in response to the earlier consultation. We have examined the proposed site from public rights of way and vantage points.

We consider that specific and relevant policies clearly indicate that a Development Consent Order should be refused for the reasons set out below.

The proposed development is surrounded on three sides by the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and in places is only 200-300metres from the boundary of the national park. It would have impacts on the national park. Accordingly the duty to have regard to the purposes of the SDNP applies to this project, per ONPSE-EN1 paragraph 5.9.12 and S62 of the Environment Act 1995.

The proposed Converter Station includes two converter halls, each measuring 90 metres in length, 50 metres in width and notably 22-26 metres in height. These are very large buildings, with a height well in excess of even the largest agricultural buildings and mature trees. Given the high sensitivity and high value of the landscape of the SDNP, buildings of this scale, utilitarian appearance and form sited in this location could not but cause significant harm to the setting of the SDNP in relation to landscape character and visual amenity.

When viewed from the SDNP, and notably the Monarchs Way long distance trail, the landscape would be changed from one with an essentially rural character to one which is far more industrial. This potential for significant adverse impact on views experienced from the SDNP is confirmed by the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR).

While close to the existing Lovedean substation in an area associated with pylons and overhead lines, and with pockets of woodland, these aspects would do little to mitigate the dominant adverse impact of the sheer size of the converter halls on the immediate area and the wider landscape. Nor could it be much reduced by the mitigated measures suggested.

The impact on the SDNP and landscape of the local area would be amplified by loss of hedgerows and mature trees.

Noise from operation of the Converter Station is also a serious concern in what, despite the nearby Lovedean substation, is a largely tranquil rural area. Electrical noise can carry over large distances and be disruptive to enjoyment of the countryside by the public. The Monarchs Way long distance trail passing nearby the proposed site, and giving access from the urban area of Horndean to the SDNP, is sensitive to any reduction in tranquillity. It is acknowledged in the PEIR that operational noise has the potential for adverse effects.

The resulting significant adverse impact on landscape character and visual amenity of the SDNP would be contrary to the first national park purpose, and so significantly compromise the purpose of designation of the SDNP. It would also be contrary to policies for the protection of local landscape, views and tranquillity contained in the East Hampshire Local Plan (Joint Core Strategy and emerging new local plan) and the Winchester District Local Plan (Joint Core Strategy).

Accordingly, for buildings of the sheer size proposed, this location almost surrounded by the SDNP and in fine East Hampshire countryside does not accord with either national or local planning policy. It is entirely inappropriate, despite the benefits available from connecting to the Lovedean substation. If, as is understood to be the case, buildings of this size are essential in technical terms, then another and more urban site needs to be found, even if this would involve additional expense to improve capacity to evacuate power.

If, contrary to the above, this project should proceed then, to mitigate visual impact on nearby residents and public rights of way, it is essential that landscaping and planting of trees and vegetation must start at the very beginning of the project. Screening must not only be provided close to the converter site but also in the middle (500m) and further (1-2km) distance from the site. Routing of construction traffic would need careful consideration as Anmore Road leading from Denmead is totally unsuitable for HGVs, and the use of Milton Road and Lovedean Lane would cause significant disruption to the local population. Noise would need to be severely mitigated, taking into account the combined effect on local properties of noise from the proposed development and the existing substation.

CPRE Hampshire South Downs & Central Planning Group