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FAO: Development Management

Barnsley Council

1 Westgate

Barnsley

S70 2DR

27th August 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION (CROSSBOUNDARY) FOR THE PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF AN UNDERGROUND HIGH VOLTAGE CABLE ALONG KIRKGATE LANE, CHURCH LANE AND LUND HILL LANE TO LINK A PROPOSED SOLAR FARM (23/01900/FUL) TO MONCKTON SUBSTATION, COLD HIENDLEY, BARNSLEY S71 4BG

Overview

Ethical Power Development ltd. (EPD) submit this application for the installation of a buried high voltage cable. Kirkgate Solar Farm planning application is presently being considered by Wakefield Council (ref: 23/01900/FUL). The proposed cable will connect the proposed solar farm to the electrical distribution network.

The electricity distribution network is owned by Northern Power Grid. The point of connection for the solar farm is at Monckton substation (coordinates: 437628, 412596) within the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley and directly adjacent the Metropolitan Borough of Wakefield administrative boundary.

The cable is proposed to be approximately 1.9km long and lies within a rural location and runs within the highway boundary of Kirkgate Lane, Church Lane and Lund Hill Lane between the site of a proposed Solar Farm development and an existing substation which is to be the point of connection.

It will be a requirement to implement intermittent jointing pits to allow for an adequately sized working area in which separate lengths of cable can be jointed together. The minimum requirement for a jointing pit is 3m x 1.5 m, although larger pits may be required depending on the conditions. The construction of the cable route is detailed within the attached supporting document 'Method

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Statement'. The planning red-line boundary includes land on either side of the 1m trench to enable the works to be carried out.

Commented [PG1]: @Neale Bryan Please can you check this is correct? If not we can stick in some time to go through the Method Statement together. Ideally want to submit the application by COP Friday.

Commented [PG2R1]: Method Statement saved here: \EPD 021 Kirkgate - IF\5 Grid\5.3 Cable Route\5.3.1 Cable Route Application\5.3.1.2 Planning App Docs\5.3.1.2.6 Method Statement

Need for renewable energy development

The cable route is essential for connecting the proposed solar farm to the electric network. The proposed solar farm presently being considered would significantly contribute to local and nationally significant objectives regarding renewable energy development, energy security and affordability of supply.

The 'UK Industrial Strategy (2016)' sets out a series of 'Grand Challenges' which are intended to place the UK at the forefront of industries of the future. The objective to achieve 'Clean Growth' is one of these challenges, defined as follows:

"….. to make the UK a world leader in the development, manufacture and use of low carbon technologies and systems and services that are cheaper than high carbon alternatives".

Wakefield Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' in May 2019. The Councils 'Climate Change Action Plan' was published September 2020, stating that Wakefield has *"pledged to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030; for those emissions that are under our control".*

The National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) details that 'solar farms are one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK and the cheapest form of electricity generation worldwide. Solar farms can be built quickly and, coupled with consistent reductions in the cost of materials and improvements in the efficiency of panels…the government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions. As such solar is a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector'.

EPD analysis undertaken to date concludes the submitted solar development proposal 23/01900/FUL proposal offers a demonstrable opportunity to make a positive contribution towards achieving local and national planning policy targets and other nationally significant objectives regarding renewable energy development, energy security and affordability of supply.

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Cable Route

The high voltage underground cable route will be buried within the Kirkgate Solar Farm site and will exit at the point of connection at Monckton Substation. The cable will be laid underground within the road and verges along Kirkgate Lane, Church Lane and Lund Hill Lane.

The route has been defined in response to the planning constraints along the route, including Ecology, Arboriculture and Archaeology.

Ecology

Enzygo were commissioned by EPD to conduct an Ecological Impact Assessment. A suitable buffer either side of the proposed cable route has been surveyed and included within the impact assessment.

No Badger setts were identified along the proposed cable route or in immediately adjacent habitat. However, suitable habitat is present and there are records of Badger in the surrounding area. No further survey is required however, the construction phase shall implement a set of precautionary best practice measures to minimise the risk of killing/injury of Badger which may stray into the works areas.

Due to the extensive surveys carried out, it is considered that all other designated sites within the surrounding area are sufficiently removed and separated from the site that the proposals will result in no negative impact on designated sites. Appropriate mitigation measures are proposed as part of the ecology appraisal and a CEMP can be produced prior to the commencement of construction. The report details, *"if mitigation measures are implemented in full then no significant residual impact could be expected, and the proposed application will result in 'no net loss in biodiversity."* The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the requirements of the Wakefield District Local Plan 2036, Policy LP51.

It is considered that the requirement to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity is not appropriate or achievable here given that in normal situations the applicant needs to commit to 30-year management and maintenance of such areas. However, that would not be possible in this instance given it is highways land. A biodiversity net gain calculation without this typical commitment and permissions for long-term management would be purposeless. The proposed works result in no net

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loss in biodiversity and all land would be 'made good' following the installation of the underground cable. A suitably worded planning condition could be used to secure this.

Furthermore, the proposed development could be carried out by Northern Power Grid as the statutory undertaker as it is already granted permission by permitted development rights[1] and would therefore be exempt from the biodiversity net gain requirements of the Environment Act 2021.

Arboriculture

Enzygo were commissioned by EPD to conduct a Tree Survey, Impact Assessment and Method Statement (AMS). Due to the cable route being installed entirely within the footprint of the highway, no trees will require removal to facilitate the development. The AMS specifies methodologies to be implanted to ensure any retained trees are adequately protected during site set-up and the cable installation operations.

Archaeology

Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) were commissioned by EDP to conduct a Heritage Impact Assessment. The proposed route travels near the Grade I Listed Building; Church of St Peter and Grade II Listed Building; Hodroyd Hall. It is regarded that the proposals would result in no greater than a negligible level of harm to the significance of surrounding heritage assets. No archaeological monitoring, observation or recording is warranted, either pre- or post-determination, given the limited archaeological interest of the route (site).

Conclusion

This planning application is supported by an appropriate and proportionate assessment of the potential development impacts, including a detailed consideration of arboricultural, heritage and ecological issues. In accordance with the NPPF, the development should be supported as the impacts are or can be made acceptable. The proposal is in general conformity with the adopted development plan. Material considerations also include the need for the development to enable a solar farm to export renewable energy to the grid. The need for renewable energy is well established along with the urgency for action to address the climate emergency.

[1] Class B, Part 15, Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 (as amended)

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The following documents and drawings are submitted with the application:

- This Covering (Planning) letter
- Application form
- Ecological Survey & Mitigation Recommendations
- Archaeological Appraisal
- Arboriculture Survey
- Arboriculture Impact Assessment and Method Statement
- Construction Method Statement
- Site Location Plan
- Cross-sectional Drawing - Reference: EPD-021-GA-TCH-01

We look forward to receiving confirmation that the application has been registered.

In the meantime, should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

Phil Gordon

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