

PLANNING STATEMENT

Planning application for a small-scale gas-fired standby electricity generation facility on land north of Twibell Street, Barnsley, S71 1JE

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application submitted by UK Capacity Reserve Limited (“UKCR”) for a small-scale gas fired electricity generating facility on land north of Twibell Street, Barnsley, S71 1JE (the “Proposed Development Site”).
- 1.2 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide an assessment of the Proposed Development against relevant planning policy and guidance and, if appropriate, set out material considerations which justify a departure. This Statement demonstrates that the application has taken account of the constraints of the Proposed Development Site.

Planning History

- 1.3 From a review of the Local Plan, it shows Proposed Development Site is located within the settlement boundary of Barnsley but is not allocated within the Local Plan. In 2014, a gas holder was dismantled and removed from the site and the land remediated. In 2016, an application was received and determined by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, permitting the subdivision and change of use of an existing warehouse to create 2no. units with flexible permission for either class A1 (Non-food retail) or Class B8 (Storage and Distribution).

2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Site Location

- 2.1 The Proposed Development Site is located on land north of Twibell Street, Barnsley S71 1JE. The site is situated within an existing industrial estate with evidence of a former gas holder. The site comprises a concreted area with small ruderals and grasses growing along seams between the concrete slabs. There are some piles of earth and landscaping debris. To the east of the site lies a distribution warehouse. The north west corner is the location of the former gas holder with additional industrial buildings to the west. Beyond the immediate boundary to the north is the River Dearne and the Dearne Valley Country Park. To the south is Twibell Street and Barnsley Park Trading Estate.

Proposed Development

- 2.2 The Proposed Development will contribute to a national programme to fulfil demand for energy during peak electricity periods known as Short Term Operating Reserve (STOR). The Proposed Development will also provide local energy security as, unlike national energy generation, it will feed electricity into the local electricity network at the point of requirement thereby ensuring that the lights stay on for local residents and businesses. UKCR has considered both gas and diesel local energy generation and concluded by using mains gas it provides a reliable and secure energy supply using technology which minimises emissions to the environment, fuel transport and storage.
- 2.3 The Proposed Development will comprise the siting of containerised engines on site with exhaust flues and cooling radiators. There will be ancillary structures including a small switch room, control room and transformers on site as shown on the Site Plan (ref: 17260/102 Rev.2a). Further details on the design and appearance of the component parts is contained within the Supporting Statement.

3. EIA SCREENING

- 3.1 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 the Proposed Development may be classed as Schedule 2 development (3a – industrial installation for the production of electricity). However, as the site area does not exceed 0.5Ha it falls below the size threshold set by the EIA Regulations. The site does not comprise a “sensitive area” as defined in the Regulations. It is therefore resolved that EIA is not required and the LPA may proceed to determine the application.

4. PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The application will be determined by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (the Local Planning Authority) as the proposal falls below the generation threshold established within Part 3, Section 15 to the Planning Act 2008 which states:
- *“The construction or extension of a generating station is within section 14(1) (a) only if the generating station is or (when constructed or extended) is expected to be within subsection (2) or (3).*
 - *A generating station is within subsection (2) if —*
 - *It is in England or Wales,*
 - *It is not an offshore generating station, and;*
 - *Its capacity is more than 50 megawatts.”*
- 4.2 As the capacity of the Proposed Development Site is 20MW, it clearly falls below this threshold.
- 4.3 Subsection (3) is not applicable as this references a capacity of more than 100 megawatts.
- 4.4 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.5 The relevant planning policy framework consists of:
- National Planning Policy Framework;
 - Barnsley Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted September 2011); and
 - Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (adopted December 2000).

5. PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) was published in March 2012 and forms an important material consideration to the Proposed Development. The ‘golden thread’ running through the document is the need to contribute to achieving sustainable development. Central to this are three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent and to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.
- 5.2 The NPPF emphasises the vital role that planning has in supporting and building a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 18 states that:
- “The Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country’s inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.”*
- 5.3 Paragraphs 19 and 20 go on to state that:
- “...significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system...and that...planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.”*
- 5.4 The proposal meets these twin challenges by ensuring security of supply whilst providing support to the progressive move towards renewable energy and a low carbon economy.
- 5.5 Paragraph 97 states *“to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources.”* It goes on to say that LPAs should *“identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems.”*
- 5.6 Paragraph 98 confirms that *“when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should:*
- *not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*
 - *approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.”*

Local Planning Policy

- 5.7 The Proposed Development has been considered against policies contained within Barnsley's Core Strategy Development Plan Document, adopted September 2011 and the Saved Policies of Barnsley's Unitary Development Plan, adopted December 2000. The Proposed Development Site is within the settlement boundary but not allocated for any particular land use.
- 5.8 Core Strategy Policy CSP1 states that development proposals will be required to include details of their sustainability within their Design and Access Statement. This will include the consideration of factors such as energy efficiency, water conservation, flood risk, green infrastructure provision and community impacts.
- 5.9 Core Strategy Policy CSP6 supports proposals for renewable energy unless there are significant harmful effects which cannot be prevented or mitigated against. Proposals should be accompanied by information setting out the effects of the proposal and any proposals to reduce or mitigate against the effect.
- 5.10 Core Strategy Policy CSP8 states that priority will be given to development in the following locations:
- Urban Barnsley
 - Principal Towns of Cudworth, Wombwell, Hoyland, Goldthorpe (Dearne Towns), Penistone and Royston
- 5.11 Core Strategy Policy CSP29 states that development should, wherever possible and practicable, respect the architecture of Barnsley. This includes contributing towards creating attractive, sustainable and successful neighbourhoods.
- 5.12 Core Strategy Policy CSP40 requires development to demonstrate that it is not likely to result, directly or indirectly, in an increase in air, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, light or other pollution which would unacceptably affect or cause a nuisance to the natural and built environment or to people.

6. OTHER MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

National Energy Policy

- 6.1 It is important to consider the significance of the proposal in meeting national policy to support the economy by ensuring continuity of energy supply. The relevant policy is provided by the overarching National Energy Statement for Energy (EN-1).
- 6.2 Paragraph 2.2.20 of EN-1 is concerned with national security of energy supply and states:
- “It is critical that the UK continues to have secure and reliable supplies of electricity as we make the transition to a low carbon economy. To manage the risks to achieving security of supply we need sufficient electricity capacity (including a greater proportion of low carbon generation) to meet demand at all times. Electricity cannot be stored so demand for it must be simultaneously and continuously met by its supply. This requires a safety margin of spare capacity to accommodate unforeseen fluctuations in supply or demand.”*
- 6.3 Whilst the policy includes a shift towards low carbon generation, it must be acknowledged that the contribution of renewable technologies is, in the case of wind turbines, dependent upon the weather and therefore unpredictable.
- 6.4 The proposal therefore conforms to national energy policy and will support a more resilient system that should deal with unexpected events, and consequently:
- “...lower the risk of a supply interruption. This helps to protect businesses and consumers, including vulnerable households, from rising and volatile prices and eventually, from physical interruptions to supplies that might impact on essential services.” (EN-1, paragraph 3.3.3)*

The Energy Act 2013

- 6.5 The Energy Act 2013 is the primary legislation that enables Electricity Market Reform (EMR), including the implementation of the Capacity Market (CM). The delivery of the EMR is a key objective of the Government’s objective to secure energy on the way to a sustainable low carbon future. The Government has established the CM and it is intended to incentivise investment in more sustainable, low-carbon electricity capacity at the least cost for energy consumers. This is needed to help secure electricity supplies for the future.

Building Our Industrial Strategy 2016– Green Paper

- 6.6 Building storage capacity together with smart use of transmission and distribution systems are therefore now a priority for UK Government. Westminster’s Modern Industrial Strategy currently at the Green Paper stage but due to be published this month puts energy efficiency and storage at its heart, seeing new technological development key to the country’s ambitions in global markets. Of relevance is the need to better match infrastructure to local plans, using infrastructure to support local growth. It goes on to

identify that, local councils' choices about where to encourage development are constrained by a lack of resources to carry out infrastructure requirements to make sites viable, including installing utilities such as electricity, water and sewerage.

7. PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.1 This section considers the Proposed Development against the provisions of the Local Development Framework and other material considerations and covers the following:

- Principle of development
- Need for Proposed Development
- Suitability of Proposed Location

7.2 Other material considerations:

- Sustainable Development
- Design/Visual Impact
- Coal Mining Risk
- Noise
- Air Quality

Principle of the Development

Need for the Proposed Development

7.3 The urgent need for new energy infrastructure to support the UK's shift towards low carbon energy is set out in the National Policy Statement for Energy Infrastructure EN-1 as described above. Under the direction of the Energy Act 2013, the Proposed Development will operate within the Capacity Market and therefore contribute to the Government's key objective to secure energy on the way to a sustainable low carbon future. The Proposed Development will provide electricity which will meet the Electricity Market Reform objectives which are:

- decarbonise electricity generation by providing certainty to support renewable energy generation.
- keep the lights on by being able to react to peaks in consumer demand
- minimise the cost of electricity to consumers by providing a cost effective solution

7.4 The need to increase electricity generating capacity is evident in the most recent Winter Outlook Report (2016/17) from National Grid. This shows a 6.6% capacity margin in the UK during Winter 2016/17 – i.e. a 6.6% buffer between peak electricity demand and the capacity available to meet it. This represents only a slight improvement when compared with Winter 2015/16 when the capacity margin was 5.1%, the lowest since 2007/08.

7.5 This electricity margin has been described as 'tight but manageable' by National Grid who were forced to issue a Notification of Inadequate System Margin (NISM) in May 2016, calling for an increase in power

generation to meet demand within the system. This was the second NISM in 6 months, following a notification in November 2015. Before that a NISM had not been issued since 2012, and before that 2009. The increased use of this mechanism demonstrates the narrowing buffer between demand and available supply and the imperative need for flexible generation facilities such as that being proposed at Twibell Street.

- 7.6 The Proposed Development therefore forms part of this wider national need to deliver innovative ways to manage energy supply and demand in a manner which will support our increased reliance on low carbon sources. The proposed generation facility will contribute to ensuring the UK has sufficient back-up energy supply in the right locations across the country. It will contribute to ensuring the National Grid is able to balance peaks and dips in supply and demand and keep the power on.
- 7.7 The Proposed Development is therefore of national strategic importance and should be afforded significant material weight. It is also supported by national government as a mechanism to provide localised energy generation which is more responsive than traditional centralised energy generation thereby contributing to low carbon generation and being able to provide a balance to renewable energy generation. It is therefore considered to accord with Barnsley Core Strategy Policy CSP1 and CSP6, NPPF paragraphs 97 and 98, and national energy policy.

Suitability of Proposed Location

Site Selection Process

- 7.8 The Proposed Development follows an extensive site selection process undertaken by UKCR. This review of potential sites is based upon the following criteria:
- Availability of grid connection
 - Availability of gas connection
 - Availability of land
 - Proximity to residential uses
 - Other physical site constraints
- 7.9 The Proposed Development constitutes ‘embedded generation’ which means the proposed generator will feed its power into the Local Distribution Network Operator (DNO) network close to the point of use, rather than into the National Grid. This has the distinct benefit of greatly improving the carbon efficiency of the generating facility by avoiding transmission losses which may otherwise occur over long distances associated with the current centralised network.
- 7.10 UKCR has therefore assessed local distribution networks to identify sites close to DNO primary substations where the network has capacity to accept embedded generation. To be viable, the proposed generation facility needs to be close to a substation which has capacity to export the power. The “acceptable cost”

of electricity production is not set by UKCR, but rather the reverse auction of the Capacity Market exists to ensure the government is procuring energy at the most competitive costs possible. For the government to keep energy costs per household at a manageable level, flexible generation facilities such as that being proposed need to be able to connect at an acceptable cost.

- 7.11 The first stage of the site selection process therefore, was to identify those areas which have a commercially viable and available grid and gas connection.
- 7.12 Once this area was identified, the applicant carried out a review of land to identify an available and suitable site for the proposed generation facility. In line with national planning policy, brownfield sites were reviewed in the first instance. Given the industrial nature of the Proposed Development, existing employment and industrial estates are considered the most suitable locations. Sites also need to be an acceptable distance from nearby residential and commercial properties in order to preserve amenity. Potential sites were also reviewed with regard to their physical constraints such as flood risk, topography, ecological constraints and landscape and visual impact considerations.
- 7.13 Given the need to satisfy all the above considerations, there are a limited number of suitable sites which can accommodate the Proposed Development. Somewhat compounding these difficulties, small scale embedded generation often ‘falls between stools’ in terms of planning policy designation as they are categorised as a Sui Generis Use Class. Their development in employment areas therefore often falls contrary to policies seeking to retain these areas for B-Class Uses, despite these largely being the most appropriate locations for the proposals.
- 7.14 For the above reasons, the Proposed Development, through the identification of a brownfield site located within an existing industrial storage site, has sought to minimise impacts on biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape character and areas of recreational or agricultural value by selecting a site which meets the technical viability requirements of this type of development. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development accords with policies for environmental protection within the Barnsley Core Strategy.

Suitability of the Proposed Development Site

- 7.15 Considering the above context, the Proposed Development Site is considered highly suitable for the proposed generation facility. It is brownfield land, which is adjacent to an existing industrial use and is a considerable distance from surrounding residential properties.
- 7.16 The Proposed Development Site is adjacent to but outside an existing employment site. It is however, clearly part of a wider brownfield site which comprised the former gas works, surrounded by an industrial storage site to the south, east and west and visually well contained from the adjacent Dearne Valley. The Proposed Development would be of similar land use to the former gas works and also not an employment use.
- 7.17 It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development Site, which has remained vacant since the removal and remediation of the gas holder site, is an appropriate use of the land and would not affect

employment opportunities of the availability of employment land. Moreover, the Proposed Development has the potential to indirectly benefit the local and national economy and society through ensuring a sufficient power supply is maintained.

- 7.18 The rest of this Statement goes on to provide an overview of the other material considerations of the site. It demonstrates that, regarding the physical constraints of the site and the nature of the surrounding uses, the Proposed Development will not result in any adverse impacts which will significantly and demonstrably outweigh the economic benefits of the development.

Other Material Considerations

Sustainable Development

- 7.19 The golden thread within the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that development contributes to sustainable development. The Proposed Development forms part of this wider national need to deliver innovative ways to manage energy supply and demand in a manner which will support the increased reliance on low carbon sources.
- 7.20 The provision of a secure and reliable electricity supply is at the cornerstone of today's society and can be considered to make an essential contribution to promoting social well-being and economic development. Providing a localised, low carbon electricity supply which is capable of plugging the gap when the national electricity infrastructure is in stress means that electricity is being provided in the most efficient manner with the minimum negative impact on the environment.
- 7.21 As stated previously, the Proposed Development will also support the generation of energy from renewable sources as it will enable the elimination of the intermittency of supply without the need to maintain a large centralised spinning reserve.
- 7.22 For the above reasons, it is considered that this development constitutes sustainable development through its support of electricity to local residents and businesses in a manner which is both efficient and contributes to the mitigation of the impacts of climate change. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development is in accordance with the guidance contained within the NPPF.

Design and Visual Impact

- 7.23 The Proposed Development Site is located within an existing industrial area and, as such, is an area of limited architectural and visual merit. The Proposed Development is of a utilitarian design focussing on functional efficiency and minimising the overall development footprint. UKCR is willing to consider further measures suggest by consultees to reduce the visual impact and that these can be implemented through the inclusion of a condition but are not critical to the determination of this application. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development is in accordance with Core Strategy CSP29.

Environmental Impacts

7.24 Chapter 7 in the Supporting Statement summarises the supporting environmental studies which have been completed to support this planning application. It is not the intention of this Statement to repeat information provided elsewhere in support of this application. Through the provision of supporting studies, UKCR has demonstrated that the environmental impacts in relation to noise emissions, ecology, air quality and visual impact will not be significant on the environment or local residents and therefore the development conforms to Core Strategy Policy CSP40, national planning policy and appropriate environmental requirements prescribed in other guidance and legislation.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.2 The Proposed Development Site is not allocated within the Local Plan but is located within the Barnsley settlement boundary.
- 8.3 The golden thread within current planning policy is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This Statement demonstrates that the principle of sustainable development has been considered and that the Proposed Development accords with the Core Strategy and NPPF.
- 8.4 The Proposed Development will be located on land previously used as a gas holder site. The site has remained vacant since remediation. The Proposed Development would be of a similar land use to the former gas works which was also not an employment use. It is therefore concluded that there would be no direct impact on employment opportunities or the availability of employment land and that the Proposed Development could lead to indirect economic benefits.
- 8.5 The Proposed Development forms part of a wider national initiative to deliver innovative ways to manage energy supply and demand in a manner which supports the increased reliance on low carbon sources. It is also supported by national government as a mechanism to provide localised energy generation which is more responsive than traditional centralised energy generation thereby contributing to low carbon generation and providing a balance to renewable energy generation. The Proposed Development is therefore of national strategic importance and should be afforded significant material weight.
- 8.6 The Supporting Statement and appendices demonstrate that there would be no significant environmental harm from the implementation of the Proposed Development and therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy 40.
- 8.7 Nationally, the Proposed Development reflects the Government's energy policy priorities in relation to promoting a decentralised electricity network which can respond in an efficient and effective way to the modern demands of businesses and residents and ensure security of supply. It is considered that this is a material consideration to the planning application.
- 8.8 For the above reasons, when read in conjunction with other Statements and studies submitted with this planning application, it is considered that this development accords with the Local Plan or material planning considerations exist to enable Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to approve this planning application.