

North Yorkshire Council

Strategic Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Civic Centre, Selby on Tuesday 8 August 2023 at 10am.

Present:-

Councillors Andy Paraskos (Chair), Chris Aldred (as substitute for Hannah Gostlow), Sam Cross, Richard Foster, George Jabbour (as substitute for Tom Jones), Andrew Lee, John McCartney, John Mann, Bob Packham, Yvonne Peacock, Neil Swannick, Roberta Swiers and Malcolm Taylor.

Apologies were received from Councillors Hannah Gostlow, Tom Jones and Steve Mason.

Officers present: Kelly Dawson, Martin Grainger, Steve Loach, Jenny Tyreman and Hannah Blackburn.

There were 5 members of the public and 2 representatives of the press present.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

17. Welcome and Introductions.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of this Committee, and informed Members that the meeting was being live broadcast, therefore they would need to introduce themselves when speaking and would need to use the microphones.

18. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting of North Yorkshire County Council's Strategic Planning Committee, held on 11 July 2023, be confirmed by Members and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

- 20. 2022/0711/EIA - Planning application comprising two parts as follows – Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for the construction of a convertor station;
Full planning application for the installation of high voltage direct current (HVDC) underground cables from the River Ouse to the converter station and high voltage alternating current (HVAC) underground cables from the converter station to the existing Drax 400 kV substation, along with associated temporary works including compounds, accesses and bellmouths.**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Director Planning – Community Development Services requesting Members to determine a planning application comprising two parts as Follows: –

Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for the construction of a convertor station;

Full planning application for the installation of high voltage direct current (HVDC) underground cables from the River Ouse to the converter station and high voltage alternating current (HVAC) underground cables from the converter station to the existing Drax 400 kV substation, along with associated temporary works including compounds, accesses and bellmouths.

This application was reported to Committee due to the application being a significant planning application relating to energy or physical infrastructure accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement and where it was intended to recommend approval.

Mr Stokoe, representing the applicant addressed the Committee in relation to the application providing a summary of the proposals, focusing on the need of the project and the context of the benefits to the UK electricity consumer. He also briefly outlined the rigorous development process that has led to the location and design of the development as per the proposals. He also picked up on a couple of the matters raised as concerns within the Committee Report, namely factors related to the design parameters of the proposed converter station and also landscape and visual impacts and associated mitigation.

A representative of the Assistant Director Planning – Community Development Services presented the Committee report, highlighting the proposal, the site description, the consultation that had taken place, the advertisement and representations, planning guidance and policy and planning considerations. The report also provided a conclusion and recommendations.

Detailed plans, photographs and visual information were presented to complement the report.

An update on the report since it was published was provided, highlighting the following:-

- Paragraph 10.46 – Delete ‘AECOM016’ from the last line of the paragraph.
Trial trenching has not been undertaken at AECOM016, only at AECOM015.
- Paragraphs 10.59 and 11.4 – Delete the following two sentences from both paragraphs - ‘A grid connection has been secured for 2029 and therefore the project could contribute to meeting net zero targets by 2050. Grid connections are being exhausted with Applicants facing long wait times, therefore projects that have secured connections are fundamental to achieving net zero targets.’

The project would be integrated into the existing grid in 2029. To clarify, the proposed development would facilitate other projects in contributing to the net zero targets by 2050 by providing a major reinforcement of the electricity transmission system which would provide additional north-south transmission capacity across transmission network boundaries ensuring that green energy was

transported from where it is produced to where it was needed.

For the avoidance of doubt, Officers considered the benefits of the proposal:

- Outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of a number of designated heritage assets (as per paragraph 10.60 of the report); and
- Are material considerations which would justify granting outline planning permission for the converter station, notwithstanding the harm identified (as per paragraph 11.6 of the report).

The following alterations to conditions were outlined:-

- Conditions 25, 43 and 58 – In the final bullet point delete ‘BS 4142:2014’ and replace with ‘BS 5228’
- Conditions 29, 47 and 62 – Change ‘Prior to first use’ to Prior to first operational use, excluding testing ‘

Members were invited to ask questions in respect of the report and the following issues were highlighted:

- It was clarified that once the cable had been laid the land would be returned to agricultural land, with conditions outlined in the report ensuring this.
- A Member noted that the report stated that the operational noise of the proposed converter station would not significantly increase noise levels, with any noise diverted away from local residents, and he asked how this would be achieved. In response it was stated that the proposals for the converter station were indicative at this stage and would be subject to final planning consent, should the outline permission be approved. However, Environmental Health Officers had considered the details provided and had not expressed any significant concerns. The design of the final proposal was expected to include noise abatement measures.
- Noting that the report stated that the proposals related to the transfer of green energy, it was asked where the source for the energy was from. The Planning Officer and the representative of the applicant explained that clean, green energy from solar and off-shore and on-shore wind, from Scotland, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands was being produced, but had to be transferred to the areas where it was needed, which was the purpose of the application.
- A Member sought clarification regarding Condition 21 and the non-treatment of run off rainwater from the roof. In response it was explained that some of the run-off ground water would require treatment due to contamination, whereas the rainwater from the roof would not require that.
- Concern was raised regarding the potential for flooding on the proposed site of the converter station. It was noted that the platform height outlined in the proposal had been included to take account of flooding but it was queried as to whether the highest position would be sufficient. In response it was noted that the Environment Agency had not objected to the height of the platform feeling that this was sufficient to take account of any flooding issues. It was stated that additional height had been built into the proposals for the platform to take account of any additional flooding that may take place due to climate change implications. The Member who raised this matter emphasised the need to protect the area from flooding rather than protect visual amenity at the location.
- A Member sought clarification that the application for full planning permission would come back to the Committee, should the outline permission be approved, and whether Members would be offered an opportunity to fully debate the final

proposals. It was confirmed that this would be the case.

Members debated the report and the following issues were highlighted:

- A Member emphasised that this was a great opportunity to bring clean, green energy to the area but also recognised the need to mitigate against the detriment that the proposals would bring to the location given the concerns raised by the Council’s Landscape Architect. He suggested that the outline planning permission and the placement of the cables be approved at this stage, with further consideration given to how to mitigate against the impact of the erection of the converter station, when the reserved matters application returned to the Committee, through robust conditions. He also raised concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land and suggested that any planting undertaken should incorporate the use of food bearing trees and plants.
- Another Member suggested that there was a not large amount of detriment to the area created by the converter station in terms of visual amenity as there was the Drax Power Station alongside the proposed application site, which was much more visible than the proposals.
- Weighing up the proposals it was suggested that the benefits of the application outweighed the detrimental aspects and, therefore, should be supported.
- Support for agreeing the proposals before the Committee at this meeting were outlined by a Member, emphasising the need to move forward on targeting “Net Zero” with the substantial benefits that will bring through the use of renewable energy. He thanked the applicant for their useful summary of the specific details in relation to the application and the need for the relevant infrastructure to supply renewable energy, and stated that the negative aspects of the proposals were heavily outweighed by the benefits.
- The Member in which the electoral Division the application site was located, stated that he had not received nor had been made aware of any objections from the neighbouring local communities and, therefore, did not believe that this application was controversial. He expressed a desire for the highway network to be improved around that location.
- A Member highlighted the need for the proposal to be fully completed as soon as possible suggesting it was too little too late as evidence of climate change was already emerging.
- In supporting the application a Member considered that the Committee should also take account of visual amenity in terms of the proposed converter station and suggested that Members should think about how they would feel should the proposals be near to their residence.
- It was emphasised that Members when considering the application for the converter station that the application site was within the red line boundary highlighted in the report, therefore, proposed landscaping could only take place within that area. This was echoed by planning officers and any future reports would ensure that this was made clear.

Resolved: -

That subject to the amendments to the report and alterations to the conditions, as highlighted in the presentation provided, the outline application and full application be approved for the reasons outlined within the report, and subject to the conditions detailed.

This was agreed unanimously.

21. Update on Previous Issues

The process for the formation of the North Yorkshire Council's Local Plan

Resolved -

That an update on the current position regarding the process for the formation of the North Yorkshire Council's Local Plan be circulated to Members of the Committee at the conclusion of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 am