

Briefing Note Number 3

Update on Aquind Interconnector Proposal at Lovedean

10 September 2019

It is some time since I last sent out an update and so this seems an appropriate time to update you on what has occurred since February 2019.

The last time an update was circulated; Aquind had just started their consultation exercise on the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). This set out all the detail that Aquind had accumulated at the time. A report was prepared and presented as agenda item 12 to the WCC Planning Committee at their meeting on 11 April 2019. The report can be viewed via the following link:

<http://modgov1-wcc.wcc.winchester.gov.uk/documents/g200/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Apr-2019%2009.30%20Planning%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

At that meeting members agreed to delegate to the officers and the portfolio holder the task of dealing with day to day matters relating to Aquind but with the clear understanding that once the formal application is submitted, the council's response will be considered by members before it is submitted.

A response to the PEIR was agreed with the Portfolio holder and submitted to Aquind. A copy of that response is attached.

Whilst raising a number of questions over the level of detail that was available to view, officers did raise two fundamental points of principle. These where:

- Why the option of laying the cables up through the open countryside west of the A3 was not considered.
- Whether Aquind had misled people in the presentation of data relating to the anticipated delays that will result from cable laying in

the roads. The figures used in the consultation booklet were inconsistent and quite often needed to be doubled to get the full implications of the delays resulting from cable laying operations.

Aquind have subsequently indicated that they consider they can justify the approach they have taken on both issues. The matters remain open for WCC to raise at a later date if we wish to do so.

Since February 2019, officers have continued to meet with Aquind. These discussions have focused on the design and landscape issues associated with the proposed Interconnector Station to be located to the west of the existing sub station. Colleagues from East Hampshire and the South Downs National Park authority continue to attend those meetings. The technical requirements associated with dealing with high voltages apparatus appear to be the primary issue that is influencing the building layout and design.

Some of the features (hedgerows and trees) that Aquind have been relying on to screen the building are located outside the red lined application site. At meetings and in the PEIR response, Officers had questioned how these features would be secured and retained. In response, Aquind has recently added a number of these features to the red lined application site. Several locations relate to positions where new hedges will be planted. The relevant landowners have been sent letters informing them of these additions.

Officers have continued to press Aquind to bring to a conclusion the studies and discussions that will decide what route the cables will take from the Hambledon Road to Anmore and beyond up to Lovedean. The issue evolves around the potential impact on the ecological value of the Kings Pond Meadow. Unless there is an overriding reason to protect the meadow, Officers have expressed a preference to avoid running the cables up Mill Road and Martin Avenue. A final decision on the options is still awaited.

Officers are also pressing Aquind to consider what legacy benefits the local community might gain from the proposal. These discussions are still ongoing.

In terms of future actions Aquind have indicated their desire to make a formal submission by the end of October 2019. If they do keep to that timetable, then we will enter the next stage of the NSIP procedure which is the Examination Stage. To give you some idea of the subsequent

actions and how long they might take I have copied the following from the guidance note and made some additions:

TIMETABLE

Pre-application: No time limit (Applicant develops proposal and carries out pre-application consultation) (*This is where we are now*)

Submission of Application: (Applicant formally submits application to planning inspectorate who acts as agent/examining authority for government in considering application)

Acceptance: Up to 28 days (Secretary of State has 28 days to review application and decide whether to accept or reject it)

Pre-examination: 2-3 months (Examining Authority appointed to assess issues and hold preliminary meeting)

Preliminary meeting – procedural decision on how application is to be examined)

Examination: Up to 6 months (6 months to carry out examination)

Report and recommendation: Up to 3 months (3 months to issue report and recommendation that is passed up to Secretary of State for decision)

Decision: Up to 3 months (3 months to issue decision and statement of reasons)

Post decision: 6 weeks (6 week window for legal challenge)

Assuming Aquind submit by the end of October 2019 and allowing the procedure to take the full time allocated to each action listed above, then a decision on whether to issue the Development Consent Order (DCO) should emerge by the end of February 2021. Obviously this timetable is subject to some variations.

Certain bodies such as the local authorities and the parish councils where the development would take place are formally registered as “interested parties” and will be notified when the application is submitted for examination. However, for clarity, it appears that the last consultation exercise that took place from late February through to late April represented the maximum outreach that the applicant is required to

undertake to engage with the public. Those people, groups or anyone else who engaged with the applicant and submitted a consultation response at that time will not be automatically notified at the next formal submission stage. Those people must rely on the public notices and press notices to become aware of the scheme. WCC has used the Zone of Theoretical Visibility to identify parish councils that have been included in the circulation list for this note. When the formal application is submitted and becomes “live” we will send out another briefing note so you can make the decision yourselves if you wish to engage in the process.

Whilst the first point of contact should be Aquind or the NSIP web site if there are any points that you think I can help you out with, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Circulation list:

All members within the following wards

Denmead Ward

Central Meon Valley Ward

Upper Meon Valley Ward

Southwark & Wickham Ward

Council Leader

Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Wellbeing

Denmead Parish Council Clerk

Hambledon Parish Council Clerk

Southwark & Widley Parish Council Clerk

Newlands Shadow Parish Council Clerk

Soberton Parish Council Clerk

Boarhunt Parish Council Clerk

Briefing Note Number 2

Update on Aquind Interconnector Proposal at Lovedean

28 February 2019

Since the first briefing note was circulated, there have been a number of meetings and teleconferences between Aquind and the five interested authorities. (Portsmouth, Havant, East Hampshire, Winchester & South Downs National Park). There has also been a small number of meeting focusing on the issue of the design of the proposed interconnector building. These have been attended by East Hampshire, SDNP and WCC. The restricted attendance reflects the more limited interest in this issue to those of us at the northern end of the project.

In terms of general trends, there have been a number of themes we have raised at the meetings. These are:

- we have consistently sought greater clarity on the proposals.
- we have sought to broaden the range of community groups that will be consulted and the number of locations where details of the project can be viewed.
- we have sought clarification on the design approach that Aquind has adopted and proposed that they use the forthcoming Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) to sound out the community on options for the design approach.
- we have raised the issue with Aquind of creating a fund to support environmental improvement work beyond the red lined application site but within the wider area potentially affected by the proposal.

Aquind have now published their Preliminary Environmental Impact (PEI) Report. Also referred to as the PEIR document.

This new consultation exercise runs for an eight week period from Wednesday 27 February 2019 until Monday 29 April 2019.

I attach a link that leads to the documents

<http://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=6600&d=8pn33Druep9n2xm-TFFruGnnMXM933iDrJUFrsrgnw&s=658&u=http%3a%2f%2faquindconsultation%2eco%2euk%2fconsultation-materials%2f>

Aquind are publicising the existence of the PEIR document and you may already have received information. Aquind have been asked to notify you and offer you the chance to engage in this consultation. **It would be of assistance if you could email me and let me know whether you have been sent any information so I can record how extensive the consultation net has been cast and how effective the lobbying for wider consultation has been.**

We are holding a paper copy of the consultation documents in our reception area at the WCC offices as one of the listed locations where people can view the proposals.

I am aware that a public exhibition is proposed to take place at Denmead War Memorial; Hall on Friday 5 April 2019 between 1600 and 2000 hours.

Any comments on the PIER should be addressed to Aquind and not to the council.

The PEIR is a consultation document and its description of the scheme should make it clear what aspects are open to change and can be influenced by the consultation. Accordingly, this is not the time to register any definitive view on whether the proposal is considered to be acceptable or not. Responses should focus on whether the content and coverage of the issues is adequate for the project to move on to the next stage, which is the build up to the formal submission. The Aquind web site indicated this will take place in the summer of 2019.

WCC has been formally consulted and views from various internal colleagues will be collated and put together in a response.

Whilst Aquind should be the first point of contact, if you wish to clarify any aspect relating to the proposal, I am more than happy to help clarify any point if you contact me.

Finally, the circulation list below is a live list and has been enhanced in stages to reflect the elected members and parish councils that fall within the zone of

theoretical visibility (ZTV). This is the area within which it may be possibly to view the interconnector building. The ZTV plan has been generated using a computer programme by feeding into it the ground level of the site at Lovedean and the height of the proposed building. The programme then identifies the surrounding ground from where a line of sight back to the building is theoretically possible. However it does not make any allowance for buildings, features or vegetation that may obstruct the line of sight.

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Denmead Parish Council Clerk

Hambledon Parish Council Clerk

Southwark & Widley Parish Council Clerk

Newlands Shadow Parish Council Clerk

Soberton Parish Council Clerk

Boarhunt Parish Council Clerk

Briefing Note No.1

Date: 10 January 2019

The Aquind interconnector project that will see the creation of a cross channel electricity link is developing a momentum that is likely to conclude with the submission of a detailed application later this year. This will then be considered by the Planning Inspectorate. This is the mechanism through which it is hoped to gain approval and obtain the Development Consent Order (DCO) that would enable the link to be built and operated. A sign on how the project is advancing is the very recent decision to choose a preferred site for the interconnector station.

This scheme seeks to create a 2 Megawatt capacity electricity connection between England and France through which energy can be imported or exported. Whilst the landfall for the undersea cables will be Eastney on Portsea Island, the cables will continue underground for a distance of some 18km as they run northward towards the Lovedean sub station which lies west of Horndean and north of Denmead. This sub station complex which is located on the western side of Broadway Lane has been identified as the point where a connection can be to the national grid. A new facility will be built in close proximity to the existing sub station. The new facility will convert the electricity current from AC to DC depending on whether the power is being imported or exported. The facility will require a compound that is indicated as between 200m by 200m and 300m to 300m in size. Within this area will be a number of buildings but the largest will be the two converter halls each approximately 70m by 50m by 22m high. Further equipment will be located in the remaining open area. At the present time, the precise details on the exact land take and the building size is unknown.

When the first details of the project were shared with the council and with the public, the plans showed two alternative locations for the interconnector compound. One option was on land south of the existing sub station and this became known as option A. The other location was on land west of the sub station and this is known as option B. Attached with this note is a copy of a plan that shows the overall application site for the general cable route and the two option sites for the interconnector station. Option A is the blue square and option B the green square. The fact the application area which is outlined in red on the plan is larger at the northern end does not mean all that land will be developed in some form. It is to allow scope for alternative cable routes (depending on which site is finally chosen), the creation of an access, to accommodate any

temporary compound area and finally to allow for any landscaping around the chosen site. The inset plan shows the two options in more detail. The boundary between Winchester and East Hampshire runs through this area and means that option A is within the East Hampshire District area whilst option B lies within the Winchester City Council area. Further details on the background to the project can be viewed on the Aquind web site which can be found by following the link below:

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

Aquind have engaged with all the local planning authorities that lie along the proposed cable route from Eastney up to Lovedean. These are Portsmouth & Havant at the southern end, together with the two authorities covering the two options for the converter station which are East Hampshire and ourselves. This approach would have required individual applications to be submitted and considered by each authority for that part of the project that fell within their administrative area. Given the proximity of both of the option sites to the national park boundary, the South Downs National Park Authority where also approached.

In mid 2018 it became evident that Aquind were seeking to utilise the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) procedure to obtain an approval. This procedure was introduced following concerns relating to the long delays in getting major development proposals through the planning system. The Planning Act 2008 has created a new procedure for dealing with this type of development. It also took the final decision for dealing with these schemes away from the local planning authorities and gave it to the Secretary of State. Schemes that fall into a certain category of development such as new harbours, roads, power generating stations (including offshore wind farms) and electricity transmission lines are now dealt with by a section within The Planning Inspectorate who act as the agent for government. If the projects are supported, they receive what is referred to as 'development consent' under procedures governed by the Planning Act 2008. Development consent, where granted, is made in the form of a Development Consent Order (DCO).

The following is a link to the NSIP home page on the web site:

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

It was announced in July 2018 that as the scheme had similar characteristics to a power generation plant and it involved multiple authority consents, the Aquind project would be accepted as an NSIP. The consequence of that decision means that the status of WCC has changed. Previously, we would determine an application for any part of the project that fell within our area, but now we have become just one of the host authorities and a consultee. This means we can comment on the project when the application is submitted and the consultation window opens. The decision whether to grant or reject the application will now rest with the Secretary of State.

An application for approval under the NSIP procedure goes through a six stage process. If you open the folder headed "Application process" on the NSIP web site and then click on "The process" there is a short but useful video that explains the six stages. As the scheme has only recently been accepted as falling within the NSIP procedure, it is still within the first 'pre application' stage. The onus is mainly on the applicant to initiate actions at this time which includes identifying interested parties, affected property owners and engaging with both local authorities and the local community. Officers from WCC are attending meetings and participating in teleconferences seeking to provide both local knowledge and influence the form that the project takes prior to its submission. The NSIP procedure does not allow for a scheme to be revised after it is formally submitted, so it is important to exert what influence we can at this time. There are a series of guidance and advice notes on the roles and responsibilities of relevant parties involved in the NSIP process. These are available to view on the planning inspectorate web site through the link above in the "Legislation and Advice" folder. The local planning authority is expected to engage with Aquind in a positive manner without prejudice to its final position.

As referred to above, when Aquind outlined its original ideas, they indicated that two possible locations had been identified for the converter station. Option A and option B. On 8 January 2019 during a teleconference update, officers were informed that Aquind had completed their assessment of both of these sites and decided to move forward with option B (sometimes called the western option). This is the location that lies within our administrative boundary. As the scheme is now under the NSIP procedure this decision does not have the same implication as it might once have had. Given the scale of the proposal and the close proximity of both option sites, it is likely we would

have maintained a close interest in the scheme whichever option was chosen. Aquind have confirmed today that their agents have approached the landowners associated with the option B site. They will post an update on their web site about the choice of the option B by tomorrow.

This is the first update we have sent out. It is proposed to circulate further editions as the project moves from one stage to the next or if some significant matter arises. If you need any information at any time please do not hesitate to get in touch. Regarding the circulation of this note, we do not know at present the full “zone” within which the buildings would be seen. Consequently, I may be erring on the side of caution at this time. However, if you think there is someone who we should send this to and is not listed below please let me know.

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Newlands Shadow Parish Council Clerk

Soberton Parish Council Clerk

Boarhunt Parish Council Clerk

10 January 2019

22 January 2019 (additions to contact list shown in blue)

29 January 2019 (further additions to contact list shown in green)

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