



Pre-Application Forum

Report by Development Management Manager

Meeting Date: 3rd November 2022

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| Site Address: | Land Adjacent to Existing Electricity Substation, Willowdale Place, Aberdeen, AB24 5AQ |
| Description of Proposal: | Extension to an existing 132kV electricity substation including grid supply point to be accommodated in a new building, associated plant and infrastructure, ancillary facilities (including hardstanding area), and road alterations and improvement works |
| Notice Ref: | 220562/PAN |
| Notice Type: | Proposal of Application Notice |
| Notice Date: | 3 May 2022 |
| Applicant: | Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc |
| Ward: | George Street/Harbour |
| Community Council: | Castlehill And Pittodrie |
| Case Officer: | Alex Ferguson |



RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

- a) note the key issues identified;
- b) if necessary seek clarification on any particular matters; and
- c) identify relevant issues which they would like the applicants to consider and address in any future application.

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The application site comprises a 2-storey industrial warehouse building at 23-42 Willowdale Place with a footprint of approximately 1,200sqm, along with the Willowdale Place road carriageway. The industrial building lies on the northern side of Willowdale Place at its eastern end, and it is bound to the north by the Willowdale Place electricity substation, operated by SSE. Further industrial and commercial buildings line both sides of Willowdale Place to the north and south, with a residential flatted development on King Street adjoining the site to the east.

Relevant Planning History

220307/ESC – An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion was requested from the Planning Service by the applicant in March 2022. The Planning Service advised that the proposed development would not require an EIA.

220562/PAN – A Proposal of Application Notice (POAN) was submitted by the applicant in May 2022, informing the Planning Service of the intention to carry out pre-application consultation on the proposed development, prior to lodging a planning application in due course. The Planning Service confirmed that some further consultation would be required, in addition to that proposed by the applicant.

Pre-application consultation - The applicant undertook their pre-application consultation in June 2022, comprising a public meeting at the Aberdeen Arts Centre on 28 June and an online event on 30 June.

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

The applicant, Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc (part of the Scottish and Southern Electricity group - SSE) proposes to extend and upgrade the existing 132kV electricity substation on Willowdale Place. The substation extension would involve the formation of a new grid supply point, to be accommodated in a new building, replacing the existing warehouse, with associated plant and infrastructure, ancillary facilities (including an area of hardstanding), and road alterations and improvement works.

As the proposed development would comprise the upgrade of an existing onshore substation directly linked to electricity transmission cabling of or in excess of 132 kilovolts, at present the proposal constitutes a National development, in accordance with Annex A (National developments) of National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3). It should be noted that in the event National Planning Framework 4 is adopted in its current form (anticipated to occur later this year), the development proposal is likely to constitute a Local development, due to an amendment to relevant criteria. It is however not possible to confirm this at the time of writing.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

Development Plan

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2020)

The current Strategic Development Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire was approved by Scottish Ministers in September 2020 and forms the strategic component of the Development Plan. No issues of strategic or cross boundary significance have been identified.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017)

Section 16 (1)(a)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that, where there is a current local development plan, a proposed local development plan must be submitted to Scottish Ministers within five years after the date on which the current plan was approved. From 21 January 2022, the extant local development plan will be beyond this five-year period. Therefore, where relevant, weight should be given to paragraph 33 of the Scottish Planning Policy (2014) which states: “Where relevant policies in a development plan are out-of-date or the plan does not contain policies relevant to the proposal, then the presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development will be a significant material consideration.

The following policies are relevant –

- H2 (Mixed Use Areas)
- D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design)
- NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality)
- R2 (Degraded and Contaminated Land)
- R7 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency)
- T5 (Noise)

Supplementary Guidance

- Noise
- Resources for New Development

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)

The Report of Examination on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 (PALDP) was received by the Council on 20 September 2022. The PALDP constitutes the Council’s settled view as to the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the PALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on whether –

- these matters have been subject to comment by the Reporter; and
- the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The following policies are relevant –

- H2 (Mixed Use Areas)
- D1 (Quality Placemaking)
- NE4 (Our Water Environment)
- R2 (Degraded and Contaminated Land)
- R6 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency)
- WB3 (Noise)

EVALUATION

Mixed Use Areas

Policy H2 (Mixed Use Areas) requires applications for development or change of use within Mixed Use Areas to take into account the existing uses and character of the surrounding area and to avoid undue conflict with the adjacent land uses and amenity.

Noise

Given the proximity of the proposed development in relation to nearby residential flats, it is possible that there could be some exposure to noise to residents from the new substation equipment. As such, as per the requirements of Policy T5 (Noise), a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) will be required to support an application in order to assess the impact of any such noise emissions and, if necessary, to recommend suitable mitigation measures to ensure that the noise would not adversely affect the amenity of the nearby properties.

Layout, siting and design

Issues of layout, siting and design will need to be considered against Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design), which requires all development to have high standards of design and have a strong and distinctive sense of place which considers the context of the surrounding area.

Drainage

Policy NE6 (Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality) notes that a Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) will be required to support an application where new non-residential buildings exceed 250sqm of floorspace. The DIA should detail how surface water and wastewater will be managed and also consider surface water flooding.

Degraded and Contaminated Land

Policy R2 (Degraded and Contaminated Land) advises that the City Council will require that all land that is degraded or contaminated, including visually, is either restored, reclaimed or remediated to a level suitable for its proposed use. The Council's Contaminated Land team will be consulted on the application and will advise whether any further information is required in terms of site remediation.

Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency

Policy R7 (Low and Zero Carbon Buildings, and Water Efficiency) requires new buildings to meet at least 20% of the building regulations carbon dioxide emissions reduction target applicable at the

time of the application through the installation of low and zero carbon generating technology. With regards to water efficiency, all new buildings are required to use water saving technologies and techniques. The low and zero carbon element of Policy R7 will not apply if the new substation building would not be heated or cooled.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020

The relevant policies in the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 substantively reiterate the policies noted above from the adopted Local Development Plan.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The applicants undertook a hybrid public consultation strategy in June 2022. This involved an in-person public exhibition followed by a virtual, online event. The in-person event took place on Tuesday 28th June 2022 between 2pm and 7pm at the Aberdeen Arts Centre, with the online event taking place on Thursday 30th June between 1pm and 3pm and 5pm and 7pm.

All properties within a c. 50m radius of the application site boundary were notified by mail and an advertisement was placed in the Evening Express newspaper, informing nearby residents, business and the wider public in advance of the public and online consultation events. Ward Councillors, the local MP and MSP and the local community council were also provided with details of the events.

The results of the pre-application consultation will be submitted as part of the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report, which will form part of the planning application, if it is confirmed as a National development.

NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT ANY FUTURE APPLICATION

As part of any application, the applicant has been advised that the following information would need to accompany the formal submission –

- Design & Access Statement
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Drainage Impact Assessment
- Pre-Application Consultation Report

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Forum –

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