

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Head of Natural and Built Environment	Report Number: L56
TO: Strategy Committee	Date of Meeting: 18 August 2011

NATIONAL GRID: STAGE TWO DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION (SoCC)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To agree a response to the draft Statement of Community Consultation produced by National Grid for Stage Two of the Bramford to Twinstead project. It must be stressed that this report deals solely with the methods of consultation to be used during Stage Two of the project. National Grid will consult on the detailed route alignment at a later date.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That, subject to any additional comments the Committee may wish to make as a result of its consideration of this report, National Grid be informed that the arrangements outlined in the draft Statement of Community Consultation for Stage Two of the Bramford to Twinstead project are acceptable and the District Council fully supports the establishment of the Community Forums to enable direct engagement with the affected communities.
- 2.2 That National Grid set out clear milestones for key consultations during Stage Two of the project and be urged to come to an early view for the benefit of the local community on the possible selection of Corridors 2a or 2b within the Hintlesham area.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the content of this report.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 The District Council's Significant Business Risk Register identifies one area of concern that is pertinent to the content of this report: No. 1 – Political and Managerial Leadership. The key risk is set out below:-

Risk Description	Likelihood	Seriousness of impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to engage with communities and provide community leadership at a local level.	Significant	Critical	Respond to consultation

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Members representing the 20 parishes that are situated within the consultation zone identified by National Grid have been informed that the draft Statement of Community Consultation has been submitted and invited to comment. Members will be updated accordingly at the meeting if any observations are received.

6. Equality and Diversity Impact

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising directly from the content of this report.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 The National Grid project has implications for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk albeit that the extent of the project within Babergh is considerably greater.

8. Key Information

- 8.1 Members will be aware that the National Grid is proposing to construct a new 400kV power line through Babergh between Bramford in Mid Suffolk and Twinstead in Essex. The District Council will not be the determining authority for any subsequent Development Consent Order application. This will fall to the Secretary of State following the abolition of the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) in line with the provisions of the Planning Act, 2008.

- 8.2 In October 2009 the Strategy Committee considered a report relating to National Grid's Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) for Stage One of the project. During Stage One National Grid consulted on four possible route corridors and engaged extensively with local communities and other organisations during 2009/10. A report detailing the feedback received by National Grid during Stage One of the consultation exercise can be viewed in the Members Room and at Planning Reception.

- 8.3 As a result of the consultation undertaken by National Grid, Corridor 2 has been identified as the preferred route for the new link. A public announcement to this effect was made on 12 July 2011. Formal consultation with local communities and interested parties on the detailed route alignment within the preferred corridor will commence shortly and extend into summer 2012.

- 8.4 In order to support the consultation work that will be undertaken during Stage Two of the project National Grid has prepared a further SoCC for consideration by the relevant local authorities in accordance with Section 47 the Planning Act, 2008. The Planning Act provides that local authorities should have 28 days to comment on the content of any draft SoCC. The deadline for the submission of observations is 17 August 2011 and National Grid has been made aware of the content of this report.

- 8.5 National Grid has defined the objectives of the Stage Two SoCC as being:

- To engage and consult publicly on the issues relevant to the route alignment, in accordance with best practice consultation processes,
- To engage and consult on other related project issues,
- To facilitate consultation feedback to inform National Grid's decisions,

- To ensure National Grid delivers a compliant, robust consultation programme to support its application for a Development Consent Order, and,
 - To communicate National Grid's role in providing infrastructure to support the UK electricity market and the provision of future low carbon generation.
- 8.6 The consultation zone will extend for at least 1 km from the outer edge of the preferred corridor and the consultation programme will consist of three key areas of activity running alongside each other. They will comprise a:
- Community Forum programme,
 - Public communications programme, and,
 - Issue specific consultation programmes.
- 8.7 In response to the observations made by the Strategy Committee on 8 October 2009, National Grid will be establishing a series of up to five Community Forums to enable direct consultation and engagement with representatives from the affected communities. The Community Forums will be chaired by a single independent chairman to provide consistency. The Community Forums will be based upon clusters of parish councils and the membership will be as inclusive as possible. The intention is to include representatives from all interested parties ranging from elected councillors to representatives from 'hard to reach' groups.
- 8.8 In addition to the Community Forums, open events will be held at regular intervals during Stage Two at suitably accessible venues. These events will be publicised through a range of communication channels, including advertisements in the local press, announcements on local radio and by direct communication. Councillors and MP's will also be offered regular updates during Stage Two and Town and Parish Councils will be invited to project briefings.
- 8.9 National Grid consider that during Stage Two there may be some specific issues which warrant a separate public consultation event, such as detailed route alignments around a settlement. The SoCC therefore makes provision for separate events to be held which will be widely publicised. The substation siting issues around Twinstead will also be subject to specific consultation.
- 8.10 During Stage Two National Grid will in addition be undertaking consultation on the preliminary environmental information required to support the preparation of the Environmental Statement required to accompany the Development Consent Order application. The scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment will be discussed with the local authorities and organisations like Natural England. The findings will be fed into the consultation process as detailed in the SoCC.
- 8.11 The production of the draft SoCC represents the next step in the process leading up to the formal submission of the Development Consent Order application. At the end of Stage Two a consultation feedback report will be publicised which provides a summary of the representations received. Before the application is made National Grid intends to undertake further consultation. The consultation arrangements for Stage Three would be similar to those proposed for Stage Two.
- 8.12 The proposed consultation arrangements and methods outlined in the draft SoCC for Stage Two are acceptable and should be supported. They follow best practice as set out in the guidance provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

- 8.13 The SoCC does not, however, set out clear milestones during the next 12 months. As a result there is no certainty as to when views may be invited from the local communities on, for example, route alignment issues or the technology to be used.
- 8.14 In addition there is a complete lack of clarity relating to the possible use of Corridor 2a or 2b around Hintlesham. Early consultation on this matter and the selection of an option would address the ambiguity that currently exists for the communities concerned. As such it would enable the consultation process to be suitably focused during later parts of Stage Two. National Grid should therefore be urged to come to an early view on this matter.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Bramford to Twinstead Tee 400kV Connection Project: Consultation Strategy	http://intranet/refdocs/natnbuilt/natgrid/Stage_2_B-T_SoCC_final_20110720.pdf
(b) Feedback Report on Stage One Consultation	Members Room www.nationalgrid.com/bramford-twinstead

10. Background Documents

None

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