



South Tyneside Council

SCREENING OPINION OF THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY **REF. 250573**

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017 (AS AMENDED)

Site:

River Tyne, Tyne Tunnel, South Shields

Description of Development:

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 for the boring of a tunnel under the River Tyne to house electricity transmission cables and associated infrastructure, the construction of tunnel head houses, cable sealing end compounds and overhead line towers, the removal of existing overhead line towers and the modification/removal of overhead lines. This request is being made to North Tyneside Council, South Tyneside Council and to the Secretary of State (SoS) under Regulation 10 of the Electricity Works EIA Regulations.

This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion has been issued within an agreed extended time period, as is permissible by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) and that are referred to as “the regulations” hereinafter.

The Council are satisfied that the proposed development is not a development that falls within Schedule 1 of the regulations and, as such; it would not automatically require EIA and the submission of an Environmental Statement (ES) as part of a planning application.

The proposed redevelopment does not lie within a “sensitive area”, as defined by the regulations.

When screening Schedule 2 projects, the local planning authority must take account of the selection criteria in Schedule 3. These include the type and characteristics of development, its location and the type and character of its potential impact. National guidance provides further indicative criteria and thresholds. If a location is more environmentally sensitive, it is more likely that a Schedule 2 development will have significant effects and will require EIA.

Schedule 1 outlines the types of electricity-related developments that mandatorily require an EIA. These include nuclear power stations, thermal power stations with a generating capacity of 300MWth or more, and overhead lines with a voltage of 220kV or more and a length exceeding 15km. While the proposed OHL has a voltage of 275kV its length is well under 15km. Therefore, it does not constitute development falling within Schedule 1.

Schedule 2, Part 3 covers the energy industry development but does not mention substations, underground tunnels, cables or overhead lines. Underground tunnels are not mentioned in any

of the categories set out in Schedule 2. While this development is not listed in categories 1 or 2, case law and guidance makes clear that if a project, even though not listed, is in reality of a type or scale comparable to those in Schedule 2 and is likely to have significant effects on the environment, then an EIA could still be required.

The scheme does not fall within Schedule 1 or 2.

In terms of assessing the effects, the following criteria, set out in Schedule 3, must be taken into account in determining whether a development is likely to have significant effects on the environment:

- The characteristics of the development and the location of the development
- The types and characteristics of the potential impact of the development (e.g. its magnitude and duration, nature of the impact).

Characteristics of Development & Location of Development

National Grid are proposing to bore a 1.6km long and 4.0m wide tunnel crossing under the River Tyne (from shoreline to shoreline), with underground electricity transmission cables and associated infrastructure between North Tyneside and South Tyneside. The overall purpose of this development is to allow for the safe passage of vessels and cargo with heights close to or above the height of the existing ZZA overhead transmission line.

Associated infrastructure comprises two new tunnel head houses (THHs) (one to the North of the River Tyne and one to the South), - Two new cable sealing end compounds (CSECs) (one to the North and one to the South), - Six new 275Kv OHL towers (four on the north side and two on the south side of the River Tyne), and modifications to existing overhead lines; and - Removal of the existing overhead line and towers from ZZA063 to ZZA068.

The Project in South Tyneside is comprised of the following principal elements:

- The boring of a 1.6km tunnel under the River Tyne;
- Installation of new underground cables in the tunnel; with one cable per phase initially but with an option to increase this to be two cables per phase;
- Associated infrastructure including one new Tunnel Head House (THH),
- A new Cable Sealing End Compound (CSEC)
- Two new 275Kv OHL towers, and modifications to existing overhead lines; and
- Removal of the existing overhead line and towers from ZZA065 to ZZA068.

The red line boundary (RLB) of the Project covers approximately 49 hectares (ha) and includes areas of deciduous woodland, mudflats, open mosaic habitats on previously developed land, and reedbeds (the Site). The works will also be within the riverbed of the River Tyne, and adjacent to the River Don. The Jarrow Slake Mud Flats Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Howdon Wetlands LWS, and River Tyne (Newcastle LWS and Northumberland LWS) are located within the Project RLB. Two existing OHL towers including ZZA066 and ZZA067 of the Project are situated within the River Don Salt Marsh LWS.

The Site is situated within Tyne and Wear Lowlands National Character Area (NCA ID: 14) and does not contain any landscape designated sites or designated heritage assets. However, OHL towers ZZA066 and ZZA067 are located within St. Paul's Conservation Area within the Village of Jarrow. Within 500m of the Project there are several heritage assets, including the St. Paul's

Monastery and Village of Jarrow Scheduled Monuments; the Church of St Paul and the Monastery of St Paul (Ruins of Jarrow Monastery) Grade I listed buildings; as well as several Grade II Listed Buildings.

The southern part of the Site lies in Bede ward of South Tyneside Council. The surrounding setting comprises a mix of residential, community, commercial and industrial elements, including housing, community facilities, businesses, industries, open fields, port infrastructure, and transport links.

Access to the site in South Tyneside would be via the A185.

Whilst there may be risk of accidents, that risk is not considered to be significant in terms of persons associated with the construction or operation of the development or in terms of risk to persons living in the wider surroundings of the proposal.

Characteristics of Potential Impact

The sections below consider each of the relevant Screening Criteria.

The Size and Design of the Whole Development

The proposal would occupy a land area of approximately 49 hectares and it is considered that this development would be of an appropriate scale having regard to the other land uses in the area, in particular the large Port of Tyne to the east. In terms of design and scale, the development would be reflective of existing commercial development within the surrounding area. It is therefore considered that there would be no likely significant effects in this regard.

Natural Resources

The use of natural resources as part of the proposed development will be limited and is not likely to result in any significant environmental effects. In terms of the topography, the various proposals that make up the project will generally work with the existing levels of their respective sites with only small scale levels changes proposed. The demolition, construction and operation of the various elements of the project will require the removal of man made materials associated with the previous (and current) site uses however it will not be likely to have a significant effect on any natural resources.

Waste

Waste generated by the various elements of the project in the demolition, construction and operational phases is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects given the nature of development proposed and the location of the sites subject to appropriate management and mitigation which could be secured by means of planning conditions.

Pollution and Nuisances

The site is situated in a predominantly industrial setting and as a result there is the potential to encounter and possibly mobilise contaminants during the construction phase both within the ground and the River Tyne and River Don. There are also risks to the watercourses during the

construction phase as a result of vehicles etc as well as suspended sediments from stockpiles and construction sites.

The submitted report has concluded that there will be no significant environmental effects likely as the implementation of mitigation measures, an intrusive investigation and implementation of a CEMP will help prevent any migration or disturbance of contaminants. However, the Council's Environmental Protection Officer has noted that these issues could be addressed through the planning process and therefore from a contaminated land perspective, an EIA is not required for the proposal.

Population and Human Health

In terms of air quality, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has considered that a standalone air quality assessment is required but this can be addressed through the planning process. Overall, from an air quality perspective it is not considered that significant environmental effects would arise, and an EIA is not required for the proposal.

With regards to noise, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has considered that a noise assessment is required but this can be addressed through the planning process. Overall, from a noise pollution perspective it is not considered that significant environmental effects would arise, and an EIA is not required for the proposal.

Water Resources

With regard to drainage matters, the site predominantly lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The applicant has stated that they will prepare a site specific CEMP which will address possible hydrological regime impacts, pollution runoff and SuDS features as part of the planning submission. The LLFA would require a site specific drainage strategy and Flood Risk Assessment to also be submitted as part of a planning application.

The LLFA have considered this scheme and do not consider that EIA is required for the proposal from a flood risk/surface water perspective.

Overall, the development is not considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects in relation to water resources.

Biodiversity

The Council's Countryside Team raise no biodiversity objection to the scheme and do not consider that the development constitutes EIA development. It has been noted that a number of issues could be dealt with through the planning process such as:

- Land around the River Tyne and River Don is potentially functionally linked to the Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar site, designated for wintering Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper and breeding Little Tern and Arctic Tern. Surveys have confirmed Turnstone presence within the Site, indicating possible ecological connectivity with the SPA.

- A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is likely to be required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is recommended that:
 - An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) includes a summary of the HRA process and references any Shadow HRA documentation.
 - The EclA assesses cumulative effects on the SPA and other designated sites, including any residual or in-combination effects with nearby developments.
 - The project design avoids, minimises, and mitigates potential impacts on designated sites, protected and priority habitats and species—particularly wintering and breeding birds, from physical disturbance, noise, vibration, habitat loss, lighting, and other pressures along the River Tyne and River Don corridors and other potentially linked habitats.
 - The EclA includes robust baseline data, surveys and assessments for designated sites, habitats and protected/priority species, prepared in accordance with BS 42020:2013 and CIEEM guidance.
 - The EclA clearly assesses interrelationships between ecology and other topics (e.g. landscape, air quality, noise, hydrology, and soil handling).
 - The EclA confirms that cumulative effects on biodiversity receptors have been fully considered.

Landscape and Visual

Whilst full details of the proposed development have not been provided, given the nature of the development it is considered that there would be no significant harm to the visual amenity of the area given the surrounding industrial uses.

As such, overall it is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant urbanising effects and landscape impacts.

Cultural Heritage/Archaeology

The County Archaeologist has stated that further assessment of the impacts upon nearby heritage assets consisting of two scheduled monuments (Village of Jarrow & St Paul's Monastery), two Grade I listed buildings (Church of St Paul & Monastery of St Paul Ruins of Jarrow Monastery), three Grade II listed buildings (Church of St John the Evangelist, Bede Monastery Museum Jarrow Old Hall List and Jarrow Bridge) and St. Paul's Conservation Area within 500m of the Project would be required. However they have noted that this could be addressed through the planning process and so from an Archaeology perspective, an EIA is not required for the proposal.

The Council's Historic Environment Officer has raised no concerns and considers it is unlikely that there will be any significant effects on heritage assets.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects in relation to cultural heritage/archaeology.

Transport and Access

With regard to traffic, no concerns have been raised for the purpose of this screening opinion by the Council's Transport Development Officer. Consequently, it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have significant environmental effects in respect of transport or access.

Land Use

In terms of socio-economic impacts the proposed development has the potential to provide employment and to contribute to economic growth during its demolition and construction phases.

Overall, the socio-economic impacts of the development are not considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

Land Stability and Climate

The site is not within a Coal Authority Development High Risk area therefore the risk of land instability is considered low.

The site is situated in a predominantly industrial setting and as a result there is the potential to encounter and possibly mobilise contaminants during the construction phase both within the ground and the River Tyne and River Don. There are also risks to the watercourses during the construction phase as a result of vehicles etc as well as suspended sediments from stockpiles and construction sites. The submitted application has concluded that there will be no significant environmental effects likely as the implementation of mitigation measures, an intrusive investigation and implementation of a CEMP will help prevent any migration or disturbance of contaminants. The management of contamination from the site development can be managed through the planning process and conditions

With regard to climate change matters, the proposal would contribute to the achievement of Government targets concerning net zero emissions through supporting the efficient use of energy by providing new cables.

As such the proposal would not have significant environmental effects on the climate or in respect of land stability.

Cumulative Effects and Transboundary Effects

With regard to the matter of cumulative impact consideration has been given to the environmental effects of the proposed development taken together with large scale housing and commercial development proposals elsewhere in the North and South Tyneside areas which are both the subject of current planning applications and consented but not yet completed. These comprise the current planning permission for large scale commercial development on the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) site in the south west of the Borough, consented housing developments (some of which are under construction) in Hebburn at The Maples, the Baker Perkins site, Hebburn Civic, Argyle Street, Hawthorn Leslie Ellison Street, Lukes Lane and Victoria Road West and on the Holborn Riverside site in South Shields. Consideration has also been given to large-scale developments that have minded to

approve Planning Committee resolutions subject to completion of Section 106 Agreements namely the South Tyneside College housing and new campus proposals in South Shields. The proposal is not functionally or physically linked with these other schemes. In terms of North Tyneside, The Port of Tyne, Northside Development Project has been identified as having potential cumulative effects as the red line boundaries overlap for both schemes, and due to the likelihood that the construction phases may occur at the same time. This development would be subject to an EIA which will include the assessment of the cumulative impacts. Given this and having regard to the various matters highlighted previously in this Opinion it is not considered that cumulative impact matters in respect of all the above proposals taken together with this proposal would give rise to significant environmental effects requiring EIA in respect of the project the subject of this screening opinion. Similarly, it is also considered that the proposed development is unlikely to lead to transboundary effects.

Summary

Overall, the environmental impacts arising from the proposed development would be largely no more than localised to the site itself or those properties and land within close vicinity and where those impacts could potentially be satisfactorily mitigated through planning conditions. The magnitude and complexity of the proposals and their environmental impacts are not therefore considered to be of a scale or nature that would go beyond a limited geographical area and population. Furthermore, the proposed development is not considered to give rise to significant in-combination effects and would not result in transboundary effects.

Conclusion

For the above reasons and acting under delegated powers it is determined that, having considered the proposed development, an **Environmental Impact Assessment is NOT REQUIRED** in respect of this development.

You should be aware that the comments made regarding the likely environmental impacts of the proposed works relate only to the need to issue an EIA screening opinion under the regulations. As such, they do not represent or prejudice any formal decision as to the planning merits of any subsequent planning application(s) or their conformity with the Council's development plan policies or the NPPF / National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

A copy of this Screening Opinion has been placed on the planning register.

DECISION DATE: 28/11/2025

Andrew Inch

Senior Manager - Planning