The Slough Multifuel Project

Planning Inspectorate Ref: EN010129

Slough Multifuel Extension Project

Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

The Planning Act 2008, Section 47

The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, Regulation 12

SSE Slough Multifuel Limited

Date: March 2022

DOCUMENT HISTORY

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GLOSSARY

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| Abbreviation | Description |
| AGI | Above Ground Installation |
| BEIS | Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (government department) |
| CCGT | Combined Cycle Gas Turbine |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| DCLG | Department for Communities and Local Government |
| DCO | Development Consent Order |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| MHCLG | Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government |
| MWe | Megawatts electrical |
| SBC | Slough Borough Council |
| NTS | Non-Technical Summary |
| PA 2008 | Planning Act 2008 |
| PCC | Power and Carbon Capture |
| PEIR | Preliminary Environmental Impact Report |
| PINS | Planning Inspectorate |
| plc | Public limited company |
| Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 | Quarter 1/2/3/4 (of a year) |
| SCI | Statement of Community Involvement |
| SoCC | Statement of Community Consultation |
| SoS | Secretary of State |
| TCPA | Town and Country Planning Act 1990 |

1. Introduction

SSE Slough Multifuel Limited (‘the Applicant’) is proposing works to increase the efficiency and output of a generating station which was originally consented in June 2017 under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (‘TCPA’) regime with capacity up to 50 megawatts (‘MW’) (Planning Ref. P/00987/024 and P/00987/025) (“Slough Multifuel”), to achieve up to 60MW electrical output (‘MWe’) (‘the Proposed Development’).

The Proposed Development will be located within the administrative boundary of Slough Borough Council (SBC).

The Proposed Development will increase the electrical output of the consented Slough Multifuel power station to in excess of 50 megawatts (‘MWe’). It is therefore considered a nationally significant infrastructure project under sections 14(1)(a) and 15(2) of the PA 2008 as an extension of an onshore generating station in England, which (when extended) would have a capacity of more than 50MW. As such, the Applicant will require a Development Consent Order (‘DCO’) under the PA 2008 to permit the extension to the consented Slough Multifuel.

A DCO is a type of legislation known as a Statutory Instrument which contains the powers (including planning permission) needed to develop the power station and any associated development needed to operate it. Consequently, instead of a planning application to SBC, the Applicant must apply to the Planning Inspectorate (‘PINS’) for a DCO. PINS will carry out an examination of the application on behalf of the Secretary of State, who will then make the final decision on the application.

This SoCC sets out how the Applicant will consult with people living in the vicinity of the Proposed Development as required by section 47 of the PA 2008. It explains how the Applicant will consult the local community, community groups, local businesses, as well as others who work in or use the area. The SoCC has been prepared with reference to guidance[[1]](#footnote-2) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (the predecessor to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), as well the PINS advice notes and SBC’s Statement of Community Involvement. The Applicant has consulted SBC about this SoCC in accordance with section 47 of the PA 2008.

Under the DCO application process, pre-application consultation by the Applicant is the main opportunity for the local community to be engaged with and help shape the proposal for the Proposed Development. It is therefore important that those consulted let the Applicant know if they have any comments or information about any part of the proposals during this consultation process prior to the submission of the application for a DCO.

1. General Approach to Consultation

Before applying for a DCO, the Applicant must carry out consultation and publicity activities required by Sections 42 to 50 of Planning Act 2008 (‘PA 2008’) and associated regulations and have regard to government guidance.

The Applicant generally adopts a two-stage approach to its pre-application consultation on major projects. Accordingly, a stage of non-statutory consultation (the 'Stage 1 Consultation') was undertaken in November/ December 2021. This has influenced the development of the proposals, which will be described in the Consultation Report to be included with the DCO application. The Stage 1 consultation has also informed the approach to statutory consultation (the 'Stage 2 Consultation'), which is summarised in section 6 of this SoCC.

About SSE Slough Multifuel Limited

The Applicant is part of the FTSE-listed SSE plc, one of the UK’s largest and broadest-based energy companies, and the country’s leading generator of renewable energy. Over the last 20 years, the SSE Group has invested over £20 billion to deliver industry-leading offshore wind, onshore wind, Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (‘CCGT’), energy from-waste, biomass, energy networks and gas storage projects.

In April 2020, the Applicant entered into an agreement with Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) to develop the Slough Multifuel facility as a 50:50 joint venture. Construction of Slough Multifuel, which commenced on 4 January 2021, is being undertaken by specialist EPC contractor HZI pursuant to a section 73 decision notice (Planning Ref. P/00987/035 dated 3 March 2020). On 1 February 2022, a further section 73 was granted (Planning Ref. P/00987/051) to permit minor changes to the approved plans. Construction is expected to take approximately three and a half years. Relevant experience as an operator and employer in the area has informed this SoCC.

1. The Slough Multifuel energy-from-waste multifuel Power Station Project

The Proposed Development involves increased gross generation from 50MWe (pursuant to the consented Slough Multifuel facility) to 60MWe. This will be achieved through mechanical modification of the consented Slough Multifuel facility and provision of systems including:

• heat exchanger bundles (internal to the existing consented scheme building envelope);

• external and internal above ground pipework and valves;

• pipe supports (external and internal);

• thermal insulation (internal works);

• instrumentation (internal to the existing consented scheme building envelope);

• cabling and containment (internal); and

• mechanical modifications to the steam turbine inlet control system (internal works).

The increase in efficiency and generating capacity will not require any increase in the hourly throughput of waste derived fuel (‘WDF’) or in the number of approved deliveries to the facility. The consented building envelope and architecture of the consented scheme, currently under construction, will remain unchanged.

The Proposed Development will not require any new or additional underground or overhead cabling associated with electricity export over and above those required for the consented scheme. Electricity generated by the Proposed Development will be exported via a consented below ground connection to Slough South substation, which is located within the wider SHP site, under permitted development rights on the SHP site. Construction of the Proposed Development will be undertaken within and in parallel with the existing TCPA consented programme; it is not expected that there would be any change to the existing construction duration.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Applicant is preparing a number of environmental documents and undertaking assessments and impact studies that provide information on the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development is subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (‘EIA’); therefore, this information will ultimately be combined into an EIA Report that will form part of the DCO application. The scope of the EIA will be based on the Planning Inspectorate’s ‘Scoping Opinion’ for the scheme which is available to view at: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/slough-multifuel-project/>

During the Stage 2 Consultation, the Applicant will make available environmental information that will enable the local community and consultees to understand the initial findings of our assessments of likely significant environmental effects, how these have influenced design development and our approach to mitigating or avoiding significant effects. The Applicant will publish this in a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (‘PEIR’) available as an electronic document on our project website, or in hard copy on request (chargeable). A shorter ‘Non-Technical Summary’ document will also be available electronically, or in hard copy on request (non-chargeable).

DCO Application and Examination Process

During the pre-application period it is the Applicant who is responsible for carrying out stakeholder and community consultation. Government guidance recognises the benefits of early involvement of local communities, local authorities, statutory consultees and other stakeholders[[2]](#footnote-3):

* “helping the applicant identify and resolve issues at the earliest stage, which can reduce the overall risk to the project further down the line as it becomes more difficult to make changes once an application has been submitted;
* enabling members of the public to influence proposed projects, feedback on potential options, and encouraging the community to help shape the proposal to maximise local benefits and minimise any downsides;
* helping local people understand the potential nature and local impact of the proposed project, with the potential to dispel misapprehensions at an early stage;
* enabling applicants to obtain important information about the economic, social and environmental impacts of a scheme from consultees, which can help rule out unsuitable options;
* enabling potential mitigating measures to be considered and, if appropriate, built into the project before an application is submitted; and
* identifying ways in which the project could, without significant costs to promoters, support wider strategic or local objectives.”

The Planning Inspectorate (‘PINS’) is the government agency responsible for examining DCO applications on behalf of the relevant Secretary of State (‘SoS’), in this case the SoS for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (‘BEIS’). The Applicant currently intends to submit an application for a DCO to PINS in Q4 2022.

If PINS determine that the application should be ‘accepted’ then PINS will make preparations for a public examination, which would likely be held in for a period of up to six months. Following the completion of the examination process will then recommend to the SoS whether or not the application should be approved. **Figure 2** illustrates the six key steps of the application process for DCOs.



Figure 1 - Key steps in the DCO application process. © Planning Inspectorate

In deciding whether or not to approve the application, the SoS will have regard to the relevant National Policy Statements and draft National Policy Statements that are in the process of being reviewed (‘NPSs’), which set out the need for new energy infrastructure and the issues to be considered in determining such applications. These can be viewed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statements-for-energy-infrastructure and Planning for new energy infrastructure: review of energy National Policy Statements - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

1. Consultation Objectives

Overarching objectives

* 1. The Applicant seeks to achieve the following through its pre-application consultation exercises:
* To raise awareness of the Proposed Development and provide the local community and other stakeholders with the opportunity to understand and comment on the proposals at different stages.
* To provide clear and concise information on the Proposed development.
* To provide a range of means by which people can engage with the Proposed Development and provide comments and feedback.
* To ensure that comments and feedback are accurately captured and recorded.
* To show how comments and feedback have been taken account of in finalising the DCO application.

Consultation Stages

A two-stage consultation process is being undertaken as follows, comprising a non-statutory stage then a statutory stage, an approach that is recognised in the guidance[[3]](#footnote-4)*.*

**Stage 1 - Informal Consultation** - This was undertaken from 15 November to 17 December 2021. The main aims of this initial stage were to inform local stakeholders of the project, raise their awareness of it and give the opportunity for them to provide initial comments. The key communication tools that we used at this stage included a newsletter, a newspaper advert providing details of how to submit comments, the project website, a comments form, and both a freepost address and an email address, as well as a freephone telephone number.

**Stage 2 - Formal (Statutory) Consultation** – The Applicant intends to carry out its Stage 2 consultation during Q2 2022 for approximately 4 weeks (which is in line with other comparable projects and considered appropriate given the nature of the Proposed Development). The current intention is to carry this out primarily during May 2022. The consultation period will be clearly publicised in advance (see section 6 for further detail). The consultation will be conducted in accordance with this SoCC, and in accordance with the requirements of the PA 2008.

Who will we consult?

The Applicant intends to consult all people, businesses, community organisations, local authorities, and political representatives in the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

* 1. A Consultation Zone, totalling approximately 5,000 business and residential addresses, was used to consult in respect of the planning permission for Slough Multifuel and for the Stage 1 Consultation. Given the nature of the Proposed Development, it is considered appropriate to adopt the same Consultation Zone again for the Stage 2 statutory consultation.
  2. The Applicant is also looking to engage with people beyond the Consultation Zone through other methods such as a project website, webinars and public information notices. Figure 4.1 below depicts the Consultation Zone (in yellow), encompassing the Slough Trading Estate and the surrounding residential areas to the north and west of the Proposed Development Site. The Proposed Development Site is depicted by the red pin in Figure 4.1. The relevant prescribed consultees and bodies (including technical and regulatory bodies), statutory undertakers, and local authorities, and those persons with an interest in the land required for the project will also be consulted. The consultation is not limited to these groups, and notices will be placed in the local and national press inviting views.[[4]](#footnote-5)

**Figure 4.1 - Consultation Zone**

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1. How we will consult

* + 1. The Applicant intends for the consultation to be transparent, inclusive and accessible to those living in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Throughout the pre-application consultation period, there will be opportunities for the local community to discuss and comment regarding the Proposed Development.
  1. Subject to future restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Applicant will use a mix of in-person and virtual consultation methods and events, to ensure maximum flexibility for the groups being consulted. The consultation activities and methods for Stage 2 are set out below at Section 6 of this SoCC. This approach will ensure that members of the community and local stakeholders will have ample opportunity to comment on the Proposed Development and that they have a line of communication with the project team. We appreciate that some of these methods are digital platforms, and as such, will make every effort to offer alternative options for those without digital access to respond to the proposal and receive feedback. This broad range of consultation methods will ensure that hard to reach groups will be consulted. If anyone is unable to access the information for any reason, the Applicant will work directly with that person to find a solution and provide access to the information.

The **consultation documents** that will be made available during the Stage 2 Consultation will include:

* The published Statement of Community Consultation (‘SoCC’);
* A community newsletter;
* The Preliminary Environmental Information Report (‘PEIR’) and its Non-Technical Summary (‘NTS’); and
* Plans showing the location of the Proposed Development.

1. STAGE 2 Consultation activities and methods

INFORMATION

The Applicant will provide information about the Proposed Development and details of the dates and consultation events through a range of methods which are noted below.

Newsletter

The Applicant will deliver a newsletter which will explain the Proposed Development to all properties within the Consultation Zone. The newsletter will detail sources of further information and an invitation to participate in the consultation with details of how to access information, ask questions and make responses. The newsletter will include a freepost survey response form. Additionally, the newsletter will be sent to those on the mailing list compiled from the Stage 1 responses (either electronically or by post depending on the details they provided).

Newspaper advertisements

Statutory notices (both SoCC notices and S48 notices) will be placed in a local newspaper, the Slough Observer and will give details about how to access the consultation opportunities. The S48 notice will also be advertised in a national newspaper along with the London Gazette.

Posters

Public posters advertising the consultation with details of how to participate will be displayed in local venues and locations within the consultation area.

USB Sticks

The temporary suspensions imposed by the Government’s coronavirus regulations in 2020 were made permanent on 31 December 2020 as part of the Infrastructure Planning (Publication and Notification of Applications etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (the 2020 Regulations). Therefore, the Applicant does not intend to make physical documentation available for inspection at Stage 2. However, the Applicant will provide a free USB stick containing the consultation documents, or a free of charge paper copy of the consultation documents (except the PEIR itself, papers copies of which will be chargeable), on request.

ENGAGEMENT

* 1. The Applicant intends to use a range of engagement opportunities to facilitate dialogue for those who wish to understand more about the Proposed Development. The intended means of engagement are noted below.

Exhibitions

Marking a positive change from the necessity of a virtual approach in Stage 1 and if Coronavirus restrictions allow, the Applicant intends to offer 2-3 physical drop in exhibitions at local venues. The Applicant will display exhibition boards and supporting documents and factsheets will be available. A privacy notice will be displayed in the exhibition and accessibility needs will be considered in the development of the exhibition. This will provide members of the community with the opportunity to meet with the project team and ask questions.

Webinars

* 1. The Applicant intends to offer 2-3 webinars (i.e., web-based presentations with Q&A sessions) during the consultation period, covering pertinent topics for approximately 20 minutes with a 10-minute Q&A session at the end. These will be delivered by members of the project team. Dates will be advertised in advance and are likely to be at the beginning of the consultation period to allow plenty of time for feedback to be submitted. The applicant will consider requests for further webinars in light of circumstances at the time.

Web presence

The project website <https://www.ssethermal.com/energy-from-waste/slough-multifuel/> will be used as an accessible method for engaging with the consultation for people who may have difficulty in attending any of the events in person, as well as being a resource for all the consultation documentation associated with the Proposed Development. The website will be kept updated and will include a privacy notice.

An email address will also be available to raise queries regarding the Proposed Development – thermalenquiries@sse.com.

Telephone

* 1. The freephone telephone number (voicemail based) will be available to receive queries/information requests, in line with the latest regulations.

Briefing local political representatives

Local political representatives (such as MPs, ward councillors and parish councillors) will be kept informed via the existing Local Liaison Group meetings. The liaison group comprises local councillors, local MPs, members of SBC and community representatives. In addition, this group will be kept informed through direct e-mails and the option to request a one-to-one meeting with the Project Team if requested. Face-to-face meetings can be offered if practical with virtual options remaining fully accessible also.

Briefing local businesses

The Local Liaison Group, comprising SEGRO and businesses within Slough Trading Estate, was informed of the plans for the Proposed Development at a meeting in September 2021, and will be informed directly via e-mail at the start of the consultation period. A further meeting is intended to take place in May 2022 to provide an update regarding the DCO.

Interim meetings are held six-weekly with SEGRO representatives, who are kept informed regarding the Proposed Development as part of these meetings.

Statutory Consultees and Prescribed Persons

Consultation under s42 PA 2008 will also be undertaken in parallel with the community consultation.

1. Planning Act 2008: guidance on the pre-application process, 2015. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-pre-application-process-for-major-infrastructure-projects [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Department for Communities and Local Government, “Planning Act 2008: Guidance on the pre-application process”, (March 2015): paragraph 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Department for Communities and Local Government, “Planning Act 2008: Guidance on the pre-application process”, (March 2015): paragraph 70 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. In accordance with Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)