

Our Ref: 2659-03/BH/JM

09 October 2023

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Huyton
Knowsley
L36 9UX

Dear Sir/Madam

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A FIBRE OPTIC CABLE ROUTE, HYDRANT CONNECTION PIPE AND DRAINAGE CONNECTION PIPE FOR THE KIRKBY BATTERY STORAGE FACILITY (BSF) OFF COOPERS LANE, KNOWSLEY INDUSTRIAL PARK, KIRKBY

Introduction

We hereby apply, on behalf of HD001KIR Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant' or 'Pelagic Energy'), for planning permission in respect of the above development (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). The planning application has been submitted electronically via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-12439283) and comprises:

- This cover letter;
- Planning Application Forms and Certificates;
- Planning Application Drawings:
 - Location Plan (drawing no: 2569-03-007);
 - Statutory Plan (drawing no: 2569-03-008);
 - General Arrangement (drawing no: 2569-03-009);
 - Existing Site Plan (drawing no: 2569-03-010);
 - Typical Trench Cross Section (drawing no: 2569-03-011); and
- The fee of £298.00 which has been paid via Knowsley Council's online payment service using a credit / debit card.

Context to the Proposed Development

On 6th May 2019, planning permission was granted for a gas peaking plant facility on a site to the south of the Kirkby National Grid Substation (planning reference: 19/00147/FUL). The same applicant has subsequently submitted a planning application for a battery storage facility (hereafter referred to as the 'Kirkby BSF') and associated infrastructure on the same site (planning reference: 23/02008/FUL). The proposed Kirkby BSF is currently under determination with Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC). The BSF would sit within the same development footprint as the approved gas peaking plant.

The Kirkby BSF would be capable of importing (storing) electricity from the grid at times of surplus supply in the system and exporting it back to the grid at times of high demand / reduced generation capacity. This is referred to by National Grid as a 'balancing service'. It would assist in balancing grid frequency at times of system stress. The Kirkby BSF would provide a flexible back-up power source to the grid and could respond rapidly to variations that result from local and national energy demand alongside increasing fluctuations in generation, resulting from an ever-greater use of intermittent renewable energy sources. Accordingly, it would contribute towards ensuring that there is a reliable and constant supply of electricity across the National Grid's transmission network, as well as contributing to net zero targets.

Supporting infrastructure is required to provide a hydrant connection pipe, a drainage connection pipe and fibre optic cable to the Kirkby BSF. This infrastructure is necessary to allow the benefits of the proposed Kirkby BSF to be delivered.

During preparation of the Kirkby BSF application, the details of these services infrastructure were unknown. Following further studies and consultation with National Grid (who own the land around the Kirkby BSF site), the routes for these utilities have now been identified and a standalone planning application has been prepared to secure this infrastructure.

The Proposed Development

The existing site of the Proposed Development is shown on drawing 2569-03-010, and the location is shown on drawing 2569-03-007. The separate infrastructure elements of the Proposed Development are shown on drawing 2569-03-009 and are described below.

Fibre Optic Cable

A fibre optic cable is necessary to connect the Kirkby BSF to the wider network for communicative purposes and to enable the remote operation of the facility. The proposed fibre optic cable would be approx. 60m in length and would run between the west boundary of the Kirkby BSF site and the adopted highway at Coopers Lane (A5208). The cable would run within a PVC duct to protect the route.

The fibre optic cable would be laid within a mechanically excavated trench beneath the existing grassland / hardstanding to the west of the site (see Existing Site plan). The trench would typically measure approx. 300mm deep and 300mm wide although may vary in depth where necessary to avoid existing underground services. A typical cross section of the trench is shown on drawing 2569-03-011. Where necessary to protect the cable route, the trench would consist of a pre-cast concrete channel. This is to prevent damage being caused to the cables by activities above ground, such as vehicle movements. The trench would be backfilled and the existing surface reinstated. Where this is grassland, the surface would be reseeded.

Where the fibre optic cable route meets the adopted highway, connection to the network would be carried out by BT Openreach under their statutory undertaker powers.

Hydrant Water Pipe

The Proposed Development includes a PVC hydrant pipe approx. 90mm in diameter, which is required to connect the proposed Kirkby BSF to a water main supply in the event of a fire breakout onsite. A hydrant connection point would be established within the Kirkby BSF compound, and an underground pipe would connect this to the mains water line at Coopers Lane to the west.

The hydrant connection pipe would be laid within a similar trench arrangement to the fibre route. The trench would be backfilled and the original surface would be reinstated.

Drainage Connection Pipe

The proposed drainage connection pipe route is required to connect the surface water drainage system of the BSF compound to a suitable discharge point. The proposed discharge point is at Knowsley Brook to the south east.

Accordingly, the Proposed Development includes a c. 95m drainage connection pipe between the proposed Kirkby BSF site and Knowsley Brook. The drainage pipe would be laid within a mechanically dug trench. The trench would be approximately 300mm deep by 300mm wide. The trench would be backfilled and the existing surface reinstated.

Environmental Considerations

The site is wholly located within Flood Zone 1 (except at the point of the drainage connection with Knowsley Brook) and is therefore not at risk of flooding. In addition, the site is not located within or adjacent to any protected environmental designations and there are no public rights of way on or adjacent to the site. There are no heritage assets in proximity to the site.

The services cables would be laid beneath the existing grassland surrounding the Kirkby BSF site. An Ecological Assessment Report (EAR) was submitted with the application for the Kirkby BSF. The EAR included an Extended Habitat Survey of the BSF site and its immediate surrounds and found that the habitat comprises neutral grassland with scattered scrub. The EAR concluded that this has 'moderate' ecological value.

The proposed utilities services connections be entirely underground within dug trenches. As such, the impacts on the existing grassland would be temporary while the trenches were dug and following this the above ground vegetation would be allowed to regrow. Maintenance access to the route would only be required should the infrastructure encounter an issue, otherwise it is anticipated that once the services were laid, this would suffice for the lifespan of the Kirkby BSF.

Overall, the environmental impacts of the Proposed Development would be negligible.

Planning Policy Considerations

The Adopted Proposals Map on KMBC's website and Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (2016) identify that the Proposed Development is situated within a Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) employment allocation for land east of Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks, Kirkby.

The principle of energy-lead development at the site (and therefore the principle of doing so within the allocated SUE) has been established through the approved gas plant scheme (19/00147/FUL).

The drainage connection pipe, hydrant connection pipe route and fibre optic cable are necessary for the operation of the proposed Kirkby BSF and would allow the wider net zero and grid balancing benefits of this scheme to be delivered. Furthermore, commercial uses are significant consumers of electricity, and the Proposed Development (by virtue of supporting the proposed Kirkby BSF) would benefit those by providing security and resilience of supply for the local distribution network.

In enabling the operation of the Kirkby BSF, the Proposed Development would support the sustainable development principles of policy SUE2 'Sustainable Urban Extensions - Development Principles' of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy.

In light of the above, the Proposed Development is considered to meet the key policy tests of the local development plan.

Summary and Conclusions

The proposed services connections are required to enable the proposed Kirkby BSF to operate. The Proposed Development would have negligible environmental impacts and is consistent with local and national planning policy.

We trust that the content of this letter and the application documentation are self-explanatory. However, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at should you have any queries or require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Ben Hackeson

Planning Consultant on behalf of Axis

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