

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Application Ref:	3/2018/0913	 Ribble Valley Borough Council <small>www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</small>
Date Inspected:	26/11/2018	
Officer:	AB	
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:		APPROVAL

Development Description:	Installation of a backup electrical generation hub together with security fencing, access, substations, gas kiosk and associated plant and equipment.
Site Address/Location:	Land off Clitheroe Road adj Shaw House Farm BB7 9AD

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Whalley Parish Council accepts the noise report but noise is still an ongoing concern that needs to be monitored.	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	
No objections subject to conditions.	
Network Rail:	

Network Rail has the following comments:

The applicant will need to comply with the following.

- As the generators on this site are fuelled by natural gas, a generator exhaust report is to be accepted by Network Rail Fire Safety Engineer to assess possibility of any flammable emissions extending over the site fencing towards the electrification apparatus.
- Can Network Rail have sight of the significant findings from the site fire and DSEAR risk assessment documents.
- We require sight of an accurate depot layout plan showing the locations of any gas storage units, generators, fuel stores etc.
- What fire-safety (passive and active) are provided on site i.e. gas suppression systems, fire alarm, gas shut off valves, fire-extinguishers, fire compartmentation for high risk storage units etc.
- Will the site be manned 24/7 by security personnel?
- Details of proposed transformer/substation locations (if applicable) to be submitted to Network Rail for acceptance due to risk of electro-magnetic interference with Signalling equipment.
- Details of procedures if the plant were to fault and overheat resulting in fire which could impact the railway infrastructure.
- Soakaways as a means of storm/surface water disposal must not be constructed near/within 20 metres of Network Rail's boundary or at any point which could adversely affect the stability of Network Rail's property. Storm/surface water must not be discharged onto Network Rail's property or into Network Rail's culverts or drains. Water discharged into the soil from the applicant's drainage system and land could seep onto Network Rail land and cause flooding, water and soil run off onto lineside safety critical equipment or de-stabilisation of land through water saturation. Suitable drainage or other works must be provided and maintained by the Developer to prevent surface water flows or run-off onto Network Rail's property. Suitable foul drainage must be provided separate from Network Rail's existing drainage. Once

water enters a pipe it becomes a controlled source and as such no water should be discharged in the direction of the railway.

- Requirements for Tower Cranes Alongside Railways Controlled by Network Rail document applies in all circumstances where the crane and its load can collapse within 4m of a railway asset or property boundary. In the case of cranes the main controls can be found in Requirements for Tower Cranes Alongside Railways Controlled by Network Rail (see document attached). Although this is concerned with tower cranes, the same principles apply to other cranes including mobile cranes.
- Summary as below in accordance with CPA
 - 1) The crane should de-rated to 75% of maximum capacity in accordance with CPA guidance
 - 2) The base design loads should be uprated by 1.33 as per 2.3.3 in accordance with CPA guidance and crane down rated as 2.3.2.
- All excavations / earthworks carried out in the vicinity of Network Rail property/ structures must be designed and executed such that no interference with the integrity of that property/ structure can occur. Prior to commencement of works, full details of excavations and earthworks to be carried out near the railway undertaker's boundary fence should be submitted for the approval of the Asset Protection Engineer and the works shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- Prior to commencement Network Rail will need to be in receipt of a signed Basic Asset Protection Agreement (BAPA) in place. This is to cover costs of reviews of Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) and any associated on-site supervision by Network Rail. The RAMS would need to be accepted by Network Rail prior to commencement of works on site. Some typical Risk and Method Statements to be accepted by Network Rail:-
 - a) Cutting down of trees in the vicinity of the boundary.
 - b) Works to install palisade fencing and close boarded fencing
 - c) Excavation works (Network Rail will provide buried services records for Network Rail land prior to commencement of works).
 - d) Use of Piling Rigs (if applicable)
 - e) Use of mobile cranes or tower cranes

As the proposal includes works which may impact the existing operational railway and in order to facilitate the above, a BAPA (Basic Asset Protection Agreement) will need to be agreed between the developer and Network Rail. The developer will be liable for all costs incurred by Network Rail in facilitating this proposal, including any railway site safety costs, possession costs, asset protection costs / presence, site visits, review and agreement of proposal documents and any buried services searches. The BAPA will be in addition to any planning consent.

CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
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No representations have been received.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

3/2017/0476 - Request for EIA Screening Opinion for the installation of a gas powered grid support plant with a generating capacity of up to 20MW and a battery storage facility up to 2MW and all associated ancillary works – EIA not required.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

- Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**
 Key Statement DS1 – Development Strategy
 Key Statement DS2 – Sustainable Development
 Key Statement EN2 – Landscape
 Key Statement EN3 – Sustainable Development and Climate Change
 Policy DMG1 – General Considerations
 Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations
 Policy DMG3 – Transport and Mobility

Policy DME1 – Protecting Trees and Woodland
Policy DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection
Policy DME3 - Site and Species Protection and Conservation
Policy DME5 – Renewable Energy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Policy Guidance

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

This application proposes development comprising the installation of a backup electrical generation hub together with security fencing, access, substations, gas kiosk and associated plant and equipment at Land off Clitheroe Road, adjacent Shaw House Farm. Shaw House Farm is located in the open countryside to the north of Whalley and is accessed by the existing farmyard track which connects to Clitheroe Road. Shaw House Farm is directly to the north of the A59 main road and comprises a group of buildings including the farmhouse and large scale farm buildings. The application site is located to the north of the group and is partially hard-surfaced and used as a yard for the storage of farm machinery, vehicles and rubble.

The application proposes 12 no. containerised natural gas fired engines providing a total electricity generation capacity of 24MW. The proposed development would provide back-up power to manage unforeseen electricity demand increase and/or fluctuations. This is particularly relevant in the context of an increased reliance on renewable energy output where supply can often fluctuate depending on specific climatic conditions. The proposed development would provide power at times of low electricity supply and back-up power at times of high demand.

The 'energy hub' would be subdivided into two compounds which will serve different existing local powerlines. Each compound would be in operation for approximately 2000 hours per year, although generating hours would be clustered mainly between November and February. The main components of the application are as follows:

- 12 x 2MW gas engines measuring 12m x 3m and 3.5m high with a flue stack height of 8m;
- Transformers;
- Switchgear cabinet;
- Welfare cabinet;
- 2 x gas kiosk;
- 2 x customer substations;
- 2 x gated compounds with 2.4m high security fence;
- 2 x DNO substation;
- 3m high solid acoustic fence enclosing containerised engines; and
- Access track

The existing local electricity grid infrastructure has sufficient export capacity to accommodate the application proposal and the points for connection for both gas and electricity are all located within Shaw House Farm. Backup energy generation would only be produced at the site as and when instructed by the local electrical energy grid network. The cable runs/gas pipes linking the proposed compound to the point of connections would be located underground. The facility would be unmanned with infrequent visits made for maintenance purposes.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

The matters to be considered in the determination of this application relate to the principle of the development, the impact of the proposed development upon the surrounding landscape and the effects of the proposal upon the amenities of nearby residents, ecology and trees and highway safety. Consideration must also be given to the benefits of the development

which would contribute to energy security.

Principle of Development

Core Strategy Key Statement EN3 states that proposals for renewable energy generation facilities will be considered based on many factors including the need to reduce the areas carbon footprint. All development should optimise energy efficiency by using new technologies and minimising the use of energy. Core Strategy Policy DME5 'Renewable Energy' supports the development of renewable energy schemes providing it can be shown that such developments would not cause unacceptable harm to the local environment or local amenity and having regards to seven other considerations.

It is recognised that the proposal is not a renewable energy scheme per se but it would provide additional energy capacity to balance energy generation as existing generation is replaced by more intermittent and less flexible generation (i.e. renewables and nuclear) and as demand becomes more varied. The requirement for decentralised backup electricity generation plant is well supported by Government energy policy. Although not a renewable energy generator, the proposed development is the most efficient way of providing 'infill generation' with gas having the lowest carbon footprint of all fossil fuels.

Paragraphs 151-154 of the NPPF support the transition to a low carbon future. Paragraph 154 states that *'When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:*

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*
- b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.'*

National Planning Guidance 'Planning for renewable and low carbon energy: introduction' (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 5-001-20140306) states *"Increasing the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies will help to make sure the UK has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change and stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses. Planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable"*.

Whilst the proposal would rely on a non-renewable energy source, it would provide important flexible back-up generation that would allow for a greater reliance on renewable energy in the generation mix. The application site is located in the Open Countryside. Core Strategy Policy DMG2 requires development outside of defined settlement areas to meet at least one of six considerations one of which is the following:

- The development should be essential to the local economy or social wellbeing of the area.

It is also noted that there are specific locational requirements for site selection for this type of development proposal. Sites must be in close proximity to both the gas and electricity network. Taking into account national guidance and strategies, the proposed development would have an important role in making relatively small, but important, adjustments to the supply of electricity and would make a valuable contribution in safeguarding electricity supply which is essential to the local economy and social wellbeing of the area. The development is considered acceptable in principle subject to more detailed considerations outlined in Policy DME5 of the Core Strategy and discussed under appropriate headings below.

Effects Upon the Landscape/Visual Amenity

The development site is located in the Open Countryside and consideration must be given to its visual impact. Policy DME5 requires that consideration be given to the immediate and wider impact of the proposed development on the landscape and the visual impact including design, colour and scale. Key Statement EN2 and Policy DMG2 also require development proposals to have regard to the character of the landscape. The application is supported by a Landscape Assessment which considers the effect of the proposals on the landscape.

The application site is currently used as a yard for the storage of farm machinery, vehicles and rubble. It is sited directly to the north of a large farm building and is closely related to the group of buildings at Shaw House Farm. Along the eastern boundary of the site is an overhead powerline. Directly to the west of the site is the railway line and a small copse lies immediately to the north and west of the site.

The Landscape Appraisal notes the strong tree cover within the local landscape and states that the effects on landscape character are therefore limited to the site itself and the immediate area. Effects on local visual amenity would be limited to a short section of footpath 3-45-FP10 around 125m to the south-east. Visibility of the scheme would be limited due to the various copses and tree belts within the surrounding landscape, and the relatively low height of the proposal.

The site would be largely screened by the existing copse to the north and west of the site although there may be some visibility during the winter months when trees are not in leaf. In terms of the proposals effect on landscape character, this would be mainly confined to the site itself. Excluding the flues, the low height of the development would mean that visibility would be limited from residential properties and Clitheroe Road and the A59. Views of the site would be gained by passing trains but would be very brief in duration. Whalley, Wiswell and Barrow Cemetery is located off Clitheroe Road around 125m to the south-east of the application site. The cemetery is well-contained by existing vegetation including deciduous trees and mature hedgerows. The application proposes the introduction of a new native hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the site to be maintained at a height of 2.5m – 3m and this would provide some screening of the development from views from the cemetery.

The most prominent element of the scheme would be the flue stacks which would have a height of 8m. The development would be seen in the context of the adjacent farm buildings which would have an estimated height of 6m. Subject to appropriate planning conditions to control the colour of the flue stacks, external lighting and landscaping it is considered that the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the landscape would not be so adverse as to outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

Residential and local amenity

The nearest residential properties to the development are the farmhouse and bungalow at Shaw House Farm itself which are located around 185m south of the site and separated from the site by existing farm buildings. Aside from these, the nearest dwelling is Mead Croft, a single dwelling on the east side of Clitheroe Road, properties along Clitheroe Road south of the A59 underpass and properties at Lamb Roe Gardens.

The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment. The air quality effects associated with the proposed facility, with the generators operating for up to 2,000 hours, would be 'not significant'. The Council's environmental health officer has reviewed the document and has raised no objection to the development on air quality grounds.

A Noise Assessment has also been provided to consider the potential impact on the nearest residential properties outside of the development. At the nearest residential receptor, Paddock Bungalow, noise levels generated by the proposed development would be below the background noise level during the night time period. The Council's environmental health officer is satisfied that the noise generated from the proposed operations would not

adversely impact upon nearby residents and has recommended appropriate conditions to control noise emitted from the site. Cemeteries are often characterised by tranquillity. In this case, Whalley, Wiswell and Barrow Cemetery is located adjacent to a main road and so visitors experience traffic noise. Given that noise generated by the development would be below the existing background noise levels there would be no negative impact on the experience of visitors to the cemetery arising from the proposals.

The environmental health officer has also recommended a planning condition to control external lighting at the site. Continuous lighting is not required at the site. Lighting would be timer controlled and motion sensor activated security lighting.

Biodiversity

A Phase 1 ecology survey has been submitted. The site itself is of negligible ecological importance. The survey indicates that the trees outside but adjacent to the site boundary could be impacted through root damage during construction works. As such, trees would be protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012. Himalayan balsam is present close to the application boundary and an appropriate stand-off of 5-7m would be demarcated to prevent the spread of this species. The Council's countryside officer is satisfied with the report.

The application proposed the provision of a new 70m long native hedgerow and the placement of two bat boxes on mature trees within the ownership boundary in accordance with Core Strategy Policy DME3 which seeks to secure biodiversity enhancement.

Other Considerations

The application site is well-related to the transport network being located in close proximity to the A59 the main strategic route through the Borough. The scale and type of development would not result in a significant increase in traffic movement to produce any undue problems or disturbance. The County Highways Surveyor raises no objections subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

The comments provided by Network Rail have been noted and the application considers that the points raised can be satisfied through the imposition of appropriately worded planning conditions.

Conclusion

The application site has a viable grid connection for electricity and gas. The proposed development, due to its siting, has a low impact on ecology and biodiversity, is a substantial distance from sensitive land uses, has low visibility and is well-related to the highway network.

It is acknowledged that the development would result in some negative visual and landscape impact when compared with the existing arrangement and this cannot be avoided. The proposed plant and apparatus required to operate the site are industrial in their appearance and conflict with the surrounding countryside. However, the harm caused by the development would be minor in nature due to the site location and characteristics and it's siting in close proximity to farm buildings at Shaw House Farm.

The site would offer significant benefits to the three dimensions of sustainable development. There is a recognised need to provide backup energy generation in the UK moving forwards and the proposed scheme would contribute towards ensuring that there is sufficient reliable electricity capacity to meet demand as it increases. A secure energy supply is essential to the economic and social wellbeing of the general population and it is considered that the benefits of the proposed scheme outweigh any negative effects. Accordingly, it is recommended that the application be approved subject to planning conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:	That planning consent be approved.
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