



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**DEVELOPMENT OF A 49.95MW PEAKING PLANT
ON LAND NORTH OF THE RAILWAY LINE BY NORTON
SUBSTATION, STOCKTON-ON-TEES**

STATERA ENERGY LIMITED

Date: July 2016

Project Ref: High Middlefield Farm, Norton

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1 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 The UK electricity network faces tough challenges to deliver the Government's target of reducing carbon emissions. Much of this will be achieved through decommissioning carbon intensive plants and concentrating on the delivery of low carbon generation such as wind and solar. The subsequent integration of significant renewables and nuclear energy supplies places an increasing demand for additional flexibility and reserve supply to be provided within the energy generation mix.
- 1.2 In response to the requirement for increased flexibility for local demand, the Application proposes to establish a gas-fired peaking plant on land near to Norton substation.
- 1.3 The Site comprises approximately 2.67 hectares of farmland. The proposed development will generate up to 49.95 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the local network during times of peak demand.
- 1.4 A site selection exercise assessing over 300 substations in England identified the subject site as one of 10 that are suitable for this use and subsequently a planning application is submitted for the development of a peaking plant to generate up to 49.95MW.
- 1.5 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide an assessment of the proposed development in relation to development plan policy and other relevant material considerations, as well as providing a Design and Access Statement. It also considers the policy of the UK Government towards the importance of lower carbon energy, reliable energy supplies and the benefits that will arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.
- 1.6 The site location is shown on accompanying site location plan and is supported by the following details;
 - 980 - 05. – Plan
 - 980 - 05.5 - Elevation and Section
 - ConstructionTrafficManagementPlan_HMF_Norton_V1
 - High Middlefield preliminary ecological appraisal
 - Norton PP Landscape Appraisal 28.07.16 lo res
 - 2.5 m high Security fencing 1 to 20 scale at A3
 - 4 m high Acoustic fence 1 to 30 at A3
 - 132_400 Norton 132 kv comp 1 to 250 at A3
 - 132_600 Norton Radiator detail 1 to 50 at A3
 - 132_700 Norton Sections through swale 1 to 200 at A3
 - 20160720_Vp 1_PROP
 - 20160720_Vp 1_SCREENED
 - SL153_100_Norton PP Block Plan 1 to 500 at A1 v3
 - SL153_500_Norton PP Location Plan 1 to 500 at A1 v2
 - 9081s_AQ_Norton_Report_Rev1_20160714
 - JAS9081_Norton_Noise_Rev1_20160722
 - Gas kiosk plan and elevation

The Applicant

- 1.7 Statera Energy Limited is a company established a year ago to develop this type of facility alongside other energy assets that will be able to respond to services that National Grid require to meet supply shortages and frequency balancing services. The company's staff have experience of developing over 400MW of solar and 80MW of biomass plants.

The Application

- 1.8 The Application is a full planning application to construct a peaking plant and ancillary components, with the ability to generate up to 49.95 MW of electricity.

2 THE SITE & ITS SURROUNDINGS

The Application Site

- 2.1 The Application Site comprises approximately 2.67 Ha of land that forms part a block of 6ha of farmland used primarily for grazing.
- 2.2 The Application Site is currently used for a horse paddock.
- 2.3 There are no public rights of way across the field. The Cycle Route 1 and Footpath Stockton 47 are 360m west of the site.
- 2.4 Access to the Site is via (Old) Durham Road, Thorpe Thewles.

3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Summary of Development

General Layout

- 3.1 The total application area is approximately 2.67Ha
- 3.2 The site layout is shown on SL153_100_Norton PP Block Plan 1 to 500 at A1 v3. This layout and the accompanying elevation details set the design parameters for the proposal. An appropriately worded planning condition can be applied to secure the final finished detail prior to commencement.
- 3.3 The Application seeks planning permission to provide a peaking plant to deliver electricity during times of peak demand to 49.95MW. The facility will be predominantly housed within one main engine hall building which will have a maximum footprint of 75m x 35m, with a maximum building height of 11m. The engine hall building would house either 33 x 1.5MW or 25 x 2MW gas engines depending on the engine manufacturer chosen. Protruding from the engine hall will be 25 or 33 stacks of up to 15m in height.
- 3.4 Other ancillary plant and infrastructure to be located on the Application Site are identified in Table 3.5 below. This ancillary plant and equipment will be situated on hard standings enclosed by a 3m high security fence.
- 3.5 Table 3.5 – Built components

Equipment	Width	Length	Height	No.	Description	Function
Engine Hall	35m	75m	11m	1	Main building within the site	Provide visual and noise containment of gas engines.
Stacks	450mm	n/a	15m	25 or 33	Exhaust Stacks	Provide dispersion and dilution of the residual gas combustion emissions
HV Switch Room	5m	10m	3m	2	Low level building	Houses electrical switchgear equipment.
LV Switch Room	4m	5m	3m	2	Low level building	Houses electrical switchgear equipment.
Transformer	See drawing 'Typical 132 substation compound' Switch from LV to HV					
Gas Pressure Reducing Station	See drawing 'Gas kiosk plan and elevation'			1	Small element of ancillary plant	Reduce pressure of gas prior to injection
Control Room (to be designed – predicted measurements)	3m	12m	3m	2	Small low level container	House control equipment
Perimeter fence	-	TBC	3m	-	Open mesh steel panel fence	Provide a secure perimeter to the site

Operation

- 3.6 The peaking plant will operate during periods where there is a shortage of generation and peak demand and would be capable of serving the equivalent of up to 50,000 homes. This facility would be one of a total extra capacity of approximately 1.5GW (1500MW) that National Grid and DECC are looking to be deployed over the next 4 years. The facility is designed to provide back-up power at very short notice. The facility would not operate continuously, but would run as a flexible back up supply to meet periods of peak demand up to 2750 hours a year.
- 3.7 The plant will be able to reach full load in less than five minutes from cold.

- 3.8 For the majority of the time the station would be switched off, waiting for an instruction from National Grid to generate. These instructions would typically require generation support from the facility for between 1-7 hours per day, between 8am-8pm, generally on weekdays.
- 3.9 Outside of these hours, it is only likely to be required during a major power shortage or system stress event, where National Grid may require the facility to step-in and support in an emergency situation.
- 3.10 As a gas powered facility the development will not require the delivery of fuel to the site, nor will it require fuel storage, unlike diesel powered generators. The site will generally be unmanned but will undergo routine maintenance on a weekly basis. As such the facility will have very limited traffic movements associated with the operational period.

Construction

- 3.11 The construction period is anticipated to last 12 to 15 months with a workforce of up to 20 personnel, although this may peak initially at up to 50 personnel during the early ground works phases.
- 3.12 The maximum number of outwards movements of construction vehicles in any one day will be approximately 50 HGVs however this is the peak and will probably be confined to the early earthworks / civils phase of the project.
- 3.13 Construction work and construction traffic movements shall not take place on Saturday, Sundays or bank holidays unless such work is associated with an emergency or with the prior written consent of the local authority.

Lighting

- 3.14 As the facility will be unmanned, permanent operational lighting is not required, other than provision of some lighting for security and maintenance purposes when engineers are working on site in low light.

Security

- 3.15 In addition to the 3m high security fence, a closed circuit television (CCTV) system shall be provided to monitor the perimeter fence for intruders and also provide coverage within the main plant areas.

The Need for Development

- 3.16 The UK generates electricity in several ways including coal, gas, nuclear, and renewable resources. The electricity system is balanced in real-time and this demand is led by consumer behaviour which can have a significant impact on this demand balance.
- 3.17 The UK electricity generation mix is going through a time of reform. The energy balance is becoming increasingly reliant on renewable energy sources (principally wind and solar) which being weather dependant are intermittent and unpredictable. At the same time phasing out of coal power stations has created a growing need for new smaller and more flexible plants that can respond quickly to local demands and provide a secure supply of energy.

3.18 A report commissioned by the National Infrastructure Commission in February 2016 to support the report on ‘Smart Power’ states;

“There is significant evidence that operational flexibility will be a key driver for the efficient integration of low-carbon technologies. Flexibility can be provided by different sources. One such source is flexible generation; plants that have low minimum stable generation levels, high ramping rates and increased capability for ancillary service provision.”¹

3.19 The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Policy Paper titled “2010 to 2015 government policy: UK energy security” sets out the Government’s strategy for Electricity Market Reform (EMR)². It states that the reformed energy market will deliver:

- low carbon energy;
- reliable energy supplies; and
- minimised costs to consumers.

3.20 The proposed development is therefore required to compliment the mix of electricity generation and to meet the Government’s objective of maintaining a reliable electricity supply. Once operational, the new flexible and reliable facility will have the ability to respond rapidly to the short term variations related to local demand and fluctuations in the output from renewable energy sources.

3.21 Statera Energy Limited has identified that the Application Site is located within an area that requires additional backup capabilities to meet peak demand. Through discussions with the local Distribution Network Operator (DNO) a firm offer for capacity within the local distribution network has been received for this facility, when it is required.

Site Selection

3.22 While peaking plants up to a scale of 20MW can be deployed on the local distribution network, plants of greater generating capacity need to be on the 33kV network or adjacent to substations to operate effectively.

3.23 The principal selection criteria applied to this type of project which, needs to be close to GSP or BSP substations, are;

- Electrical capacity to export
- Land that was both suitable and available to be developed with a willing landowner
- Proximity to an adequate gas supply

¹ Imperial College London and Energy Policy Research Group (University of Cambridge), Delivering Future-Proof Energy Infrastructure, 2016

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/maintaining-uk-energy-security-2/supportingpages/electricity-market-reform>

- Located in an area that would not present a problem for either noise or air emissions.

- 3.24 Within the Borough there are 2 principal NG substations; Norton and Saltholme. The substation at Saltholme is adjacent to the Cowpen Marshes SSSI and Ramsar site. This would limit the scale of the plant and its operation primarily because of NO₂ deposition and possibly noise. The habitat would be sensitive to additional N deposition and as an important migratory bird habitat the location is not ideal. Further there are grid constraints at this GSP that would make a connection, at the present time, unworkable.
- 3.25 Other smaller substations in the Borough are either too small and or do not have enough land.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING

- 4.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (the EIA Regulations) set out in Schedule 1 those developments for which an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory and, in Schedule 2, those where an EIA may be required.

Schedule 1

- 4.2 The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. So, the requirement for EIA is not mandatory.

Schedule 2

- 4.3 It is considered that the proposed development falls under the following development type in paragraph 3(a) of Column 1 of Schedule 2:

“Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1).”

- 4.4 Where development is listed under Schedule 2, the need for EIA is dependent on the likelihood of significant environmental effects arising from factors including the nature, size and location of the development. This is established through successive tests, sequentially applied, based on:

- location within a sensitive area, or
- specified thresholds and criteria on the scale of development; and
- consideration of likely significant effects.

- 4.5 These tests are considered below in relation to the proposed development.

Sensitive Area

- 4.6 Sensitive areas are defined in the EIA Regulations as follows:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- National Park;
- The Broads;
- A UNESCO World Heritage Site;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Land to which Nature Conservation Orders apply.

4.7 The Application Site is not located in, or partly in, a sensitive area as defined in the EIA Regulations. It is outside any of the Stockton-On-Tees Biodiversity areas.

Applicable Thresholds

4.8 The thresholds and criteria applicable to Category 3(a) are stated in Column 2 of Schedule 2 as:

“The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares.”

4.9 The proposed development covers approximately 2.67 hectares.

Significant Environmental Effects

4.10 In determining whether EIA is necessary for an individual project, Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations set out the criteria to assess the significance of effects. In summary, the criteria fall under three broad headings:

- Characteristics of development – taking into account aspects such as size, raw material usage, emissions and risk of accidents;
- Location of development – the environmental sensitivity of the areas likely to be affected including existing land uses and the capacity of the existing environment to ‘absorb’ the new development;
- Characteristics of the potential impact – in particular with regard to its extent, complexity, probability, duration and frequency, in relation to the characteristics and location of the development.

4.11 This Planning Statement (Chapter 8) and the accompanying detailed environmental reports which accompany this planning application provide information on the key environmental issues associated with the proposed development. These assessments include:

- Air Quality Impact Assessment;
- Noise Impact Assessment;
- Preliminary Ecology Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; and
- Flood Risk Assessment/Drainage Plan.

4.12 On the basis of this information it has been established that there would not be any significant environmental effects arising from the proposed development.

Conclusion

4.13 Although the proposed development falls within a type of development listed within Schedule 2 and meets the applicable thresholds for this development type, it is not considered that the nature, scale or location of the proposed development is such that it is likely to give rise to significant environment effects. This conclusion has been confirmed by the environmental reports undertaken in support of the application. On this basis it is concluded that the proposed development does not constitute an ‘EIA Development’.

5 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework identifies in Paragraph 188 that *'Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community'*.
- 5.2 To ensure early engagement in the planning process, the Applicant undertook a pre app with Stockton-On-Tees District Council. Outline plans and reports were submitted to the Council as well as a face to face meeting. The pre app was processed under reference number 16/1480/PREAPP
- 5.3 Further to the pre application engagement with the Council the Applicant held a public exhibition event in Gindon Parish Hall, Durham Road, Thorpe Thewles, TS213JU, on Tuesday the 26 July 2016. At the event plans were shown to the public illustrating the proposed development and providing an explanation of the need for the facility. The exhibition was advertised to local residents, 200 leaflets were posted directly to people living in Thorpe Thewles, Old Durham Road and Lecht Lane. Over 20 people attended. Photographs of an attendee list can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 Following the Public Exhibition taking into account local concerns, construction traffic will not operate on Saturday.
- 5.5 Grindon Parish Council was contacted.
- 5.6 The applicant is in discussion with the Local Parish Council about a Community Benefit Deed.

6 DESIGN AND ACCESS

Introduction

- 6.1 This section comprises the Design and Access Statement (DAS) and has been written to meet the requirements of Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as well as the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 6.2 This section describes the physical characteristics of the scheme and the assessment process that has led to the design of the layout. This document also contains an access statement which considers the suitability of the proposed access for its users, both vehicular and pedestrian.

Planning Application Documentation

- 6.3 This DAS should be read in conjunction with the details contained within this Planning Statement and the associated submitted material to gain a full understanding of the proposed development. Together these documents provide a comprehensive assessment of the proposed development and its impact on the local environment.
- 6.4 In March 2014 the Government published online National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which, amongst other things, provides guidance on the content of Design and Access Statements. The PPG explains that a DAS must:
- Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development; and,
 - Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes context into account (Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 14-031-20140306).
- 6.5 In order to assess the design principles and concepts of the proposed development, the following criteria have been used:
- Use and Function;
 - Amount;
 - Layout;
 - Scale;
 - Landscaping; and,
 - Appearance.

Use and Function

- 6.6 In order to progress a development's design, it is important to understand its use and function i.e. the purpose of the development.
- 6.7 As discussed in detail within Section 3 of this Planning Statement the development comprises the provision of a gas-fired electricity facility that will deliver up to 49.95MW of electricity, enough energy to power the equivalent of 50,000 homes.
- 6.8 The facility is designed to provide flexible back-up power at very short notice. Unlike a traditional power station, the engines would be operated as a flexible peaking plant meaning that they can respond rapidly to peaks in energy demand. The plant will be limited to just 2750 hours running per year.

Amount

- 6.9 The Development covers a total site area of approximately 2.67Ha.
- 6.10 The Development will be predominantly housed within one main engine hall building which has a maximum footprint of 75m x 35m, with a maximum building height of 11m. The engine hall building would house up to 33 small gas engines. Attached to the engine hall will be 25-33 stacks of up to 15m in height. Details of the ancillary components and equipment are set out within Table 3.5 of this Planning Statement.

Layout

- 6.11 The layout of the proposed facility has been led primarily by functional requirements and specifications of the infrastructure. This is to locate the engine hall and ancillary components within a small a footprint as possible, whilst enabling the safe access and movement within the site.
- 6.12 The proposed layout is set out within the master plan.

Landscape

- 6.13 There are no existing trees or hedgerows within the Application Site itself. However, established vegetation within the locality, alongside the established built form, will assist in buffering the development and providing landscape separation. The facility will be seen against the backdrop of the existing Norton substation. Additional planting will be proposed.
- 6.14 Site security will be afforded by fencing and CCTV (including infrared CCTV), as detailed in Section 3, rather than through the use of floodlighting in order to minimise potential landscape and visual impacts.

Crime

- 6.15 The facility will be enclosed by new 3m high fencing to offer site security and ensure that the equipment is protected from vandalism.
- 6.16 The CCTV units will include infrared capability for use at night-time. As the facility is unmanned only limited lighting is required.

Scale

- 6.17 The master plan sets out the dimensions of the proposed development and associated equipment respectively.
- 6.18 The building could have a maximum height of 11m with stacks of up to 15m in height.
- 6.19 The scale of the ancillary infrastructure and switchgear is dictated by their function.

Appearance

- 6.20 The external appearance of the proposed buildings is intended to be agricultural in style. The colour of the cladding and roof will be agreed with the council.
- 6.21 The grey colour of the stacks is considered to be the most visually recessive colour solution in terms of minimising their landscape and visual impact.
- 6.22 Boundary Screening using vegetation will also be used to minimise the visual impact on the landscape.

Access and Circulation

Construction Phase

- 6.23 Construction of the facility is anticipated to take 12 to 15 months.
- 6.24 The maximum number of outward movements of construction vehicles in any one day will be circa 50 Heavy Duty Vehicles (HDVs) however this is the peak and will be confined to the early earthworks / civils phase of the project.
- 6.25 The deliveries (and staff) will be directed to the construction compound. Equipment will be stored in the construction laydown area until it is required within the construction site, however much of the equipment will arrive pre-assembled and be installed directly on arrival.
- 6.26 Construction traffic will access the site from the Old Durham Road. There is sufficient space within the adjacent land to achieve acceptable vehicular movements and turning within the established internal roads.

Operational Phase

- 6.27 Due to the nature of the facility, once installed, there is minimal on-site activity required during the plant life-cycle. The facility will be remotely controlled / monitored and operatives will visit the site on an ad hoc basis.
- 6.28 Parking during the operational phase of the development has been accommodated within the Application Site.

Access

- 6.29 During the life time of this development access to the facility will be via Old Durham Road to the north of HMF. Considering the limited operational traffic movements and the previous use of the Application Site no upgrades to this access are required.
- 6.30 Provision has been made for both pedestrian and vehicular access when required.

7 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Introduction

- 7.1 Section 38 (6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2 The following section identifies the Development Plan policies and other material considerations relevant to this Application. An assessment of the proposed development against the determining issues from these policies is undertaken in Section 8.

Development Plan Context

- 7.3 The saved policies within the Local Plan Review that are considered to be of relevance to the proposed development are identified below.

For the purposes of the application for planning permission, the development plan comprises:

- Saved policies of the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan (1997)
- Saved policies of the Local Plan Alteration Number One (2006)
- Stockton-on-Tees Core Strategy Local Development Document (March 2010)
- Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Local Development Document (September 2011).

a. Relevant Saved Policies of the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan (1997) and

Alteration Number One (2006).

The Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan (1997) adopted the limits to development that the earlier, now-cancelled, Cleveland Structure Plan had defined around settlements within the Teesside conurbation. In general, new development was to be permitted within the limits to development.

Saved Policy EN13 aims to restrict development outside development limits to that needed to support farming or forestry, tourism, the diversification of the rural economy, sport or recreation. In Section 3 the applicant has explained why the proposal has to be in close proximity to the substation and why the site at Saltholme substation is not suitable.

b. Relevant Policies in the Stockton-on-Tees Core Strategy Local Development Document (March 2010)

Objective 10: To ensure better use of resources ... In helping to meet the Government's carbon reduction targets, energy efficiency will be at the heart of all new development. More renewable energy will be generated whilst reducing energy consumption, as the technology has become integral to all development. This proposal helps meet this objective as it is critical infrastructure required to support the intermittency of renewables.

Objective 11: To provide a safe, healthy and attractive environment ... [and] helping to mitigate the effects of climate change, will continue to be integral considerations.

Core Strategy Policy 3 (CS3) - Sustainable Living and Climate Change aims to ensure that energy efficiency measures are embedded in all new buildings and that opportunities are taken to employ on-site district renewable and low energy schemes, to use micro renewable and micro carbon energy technologies, and to make use of renewable and local carbon decentralised energy systems to support sustainable development. Suitable proposals for medium to small scale renewable energy generation will be supported in appropriate locations. As with policy EN13 this facility is crucial back-up to support renewables.

Core Strategy Policy 10 (CS10) - Environmental Protection and Enhancement is intended to maintain the setting of urban areas by directing development away from strategic gaps, green wedges and urban open space, encouraging habitat protection and creation, and establishing and maintaining a comprehensive and integrated framework of green infrastructure. The proposal does not conflict with this policy as the site does not function as strategic gap or green wedge and although in countryside is positioned in visual continuity with the existing substation.

The Council has begun the production of a new Local Plan which will replace existing policy documents and supersede the previous approach of producing a 'Regeneration and Environment Local Plan' (RELP). Having recognised that changing economic circumstances had militated against the delivery of the housing requirement for the Borough envisaged in the Spatial Strategy central to the adopted Core Strategy, the Council embarked on a review of the Strategy which culminated in the publication draft of the RELP.

Given the concerns highlighted in the report considered by Stockton's Cabinet on the 3rd December 2015 that, on the one hand, the Core Strategy "... is not compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because it was adopted prior to its introduction in 2012, and its housing and employment figures are based on the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)" the Council has decided to halt the preparation of the RELP, to review and supplement its evidence base and ultimately to produce a new Local Plan for the Borough.

To date, there are no substantive policies which can be assessed in the context of the proposed development.

Relevant Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

7.4 NPPF represents the Government's planning policies for England, and sets out how they are to be applied (paragraph 1).

Paragraph 6 of the NPPF highlights that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219 of NPPF, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

7.5 Central to the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the need for the planning system to support economic growth. Although there is nothing directly comparable in current Development Plan policy, it is anticipated that the proposed new Local Plan will reflect the emphasis of the NPPF on

sustainable development. Paragraph 14 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the application of the policy for decision making states:

'At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking'.

For decision taking this means:

- ***Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and***
- ***Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting planning permission unless:***
 - ***any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or***
 - ***specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.'***

The development proposed will be located outside the designated limits to development. Although the development will not be in line with the criteria set out as justifying development in countryside locations, the Core Strategy provides support for medium to small scale facilities for renewable energy generation. Buildings enclosing the generating plant will have an agricultural character and will be located so as to limit the degree of intrusion into the landscape. The nature of the local topography, coupled with the engineering of the site, will ensure that the building is satisfactorily assimilated into the landscape, its lines and massing being softened by appropriate planting around the site. No protected or valued landscape will be adversely affected by the development proposed.

- 7.6 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF Paragraph 17 identifies a set of 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These twelve core principles include the need for planning decisions to *'support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate...'*
- 7.7 Paragraph 19 highlights the Government's commitment to ensuring that the planning system actively supports sustainable economic growth and that it does not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. The NPPF places significant weight on the need to support economic growth.
- 7.8 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that *'local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century'.*
- 7.9 Paragraph 93 emphasises the key role that the planning system has in helping places to; *'secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development'.*
- 7.10 Paragraph 97 emphasises that local planning authorities must help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, accepting the *'responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources'.*

- 7.11 Paragraph 122 of the NPPF states that *'local planning authorities should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impact of the use, rather than the control of processes or emissions themselves where these are subject to approval under pollution control regimes. Local planning authorities should assume that these regimes will operate effectively.'*
- 7.12 Paragraph 123 of the NPPF requires decision making to *'avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development.'*

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)

- 7.13 Paragraph 3 of the NPPF states that *'National policy statements form part of the overall framework of national planning policy, and are a material consideration in decisions on planning applications.'* As such the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) is a material consideration which must be taken into account in the determination of this planning application.
- 7.14 Paragraph 2.2.20 of EN-1 states; *"It is critical that the UK continues to have secure and reliable supplies of electricity as we make the transition to a low carbon economy. To manage the risks to achieving security of supply we need sufficient electricity capacity (including a greater proportion of low carbon generation) to meet demand at all times. Electricity cannot be stored so demand for it must be simultaneously and continuously met by its supply. This requires a safety margin of spare capacity to accommodate unforeseen fluctuations in supply or demand."*
- 7.15 Paragraph 3.3.29 of EN-1 supports the development of decentralised electricity generation facilities: *"The Government would like to see decentralised and community energy systems such as micro-generation make a much greater contribution to our targets on reducing carbon emissions and increasing energy security from current levels of these systems. These technologies could lead to some reduction in demand on the main generation and transmission system."*
- 7.16 EN-1 recognises that a flexible approach to energy generation is required to provide backup supply for intermittent renewable energy. Paragraph 3.3.11 states; *"...the more renewable generating capacity we have the more generation capacity we will require overall, to provide back-up at times when the availability of intermittent renewable sources is low. If fossil fuel plant remains the most cost-effective means of providing such back-up, particularly at short notice, it is possible that even when the UK's electricity supply is almost entirely decarbonised we may still need fossil fuel power stations for short periods when renewable output is too low to meet demand, for example when there is little wind."*
- 7.17 Paragraph 3.6.1 continues to state that; *'Fossil fuel power stations play a vital role in providing reliable electricity supplies: they can be operated flexibly in response to changes in supply and demand, and provide diversity in our energy mix. They will continue to play an important role in our energy mix as the UK makes the transition to a low carbon economy, and Government policy is that they must be constructed, and operated, in line with increasingly demanding climate change goals.'*
- 7.18 EN-1 recognises that the increasing reliance on renewable energy sources with Paragraph 3.3.12 stating that *'we need more total electricity capacity than we have now, with a larger proportion being built only or mainly to perform back-up functions.'*

8 DETERMINING ISSUES AND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

- 8.1 This section outlines the determining issues identified from the planning policies in the preceding section and assesses the proposed development against these issues in order to determine whether it complies with the Development Plan and other relevant policy guidance.
- 8.2 The acceptability of the principle of development is assessed as well as a detailed assessment of the main policy considerations pertinent to the proposal. These specifically cover design, landscape and visual, highways, water management, heritage, ecology, noise and air quality. Detailed considerations of these elements are also provided in the assessments supporting this Application.

Sustainable Development

- 8.3 Among the key changes introduced by The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was a new policy presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development. This is reflected within The Stockton-On-Tees Local Plan (1997). As the proposed development is to support the consistent delivery of renewable energy it is considered by its very nature to be a sustainable development. Notwithstanding this, this section demonstrates the compliance with the three strands of sustainable development set out within the NPPF which comprise of social, economic and environmental benefits.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

- 8.4 The proposed development will provide the following benefits:

- **Supporting the transition to a lower carbon economy**

The Policies within the Stockton-On-Tees Local Plan, NPPF and EN-1 support the shift towards the delivery of low carbon energy generation. The proposed development will help to achieve this by providing a supporting role to renewable energy generation at times when they are not operating and/or unable to generate sufficient energy to meet demand.

- **Maintaining energy security**

The need for flexible and decentralised energy generating facilities is well established within the national planning policy context. The NPPF sets out at paragraph 93 the importance of the planning system in minimising vulnerability and providing resilience in energy generation and supply. The proposed development is therefore required to compliment the mix of electricity generation and to meet the Government's objective of maintaining a reliable electricity supply. The new flexible and reliable facility has the ability to respond rapidly to the short term variations related to local demand and fluctuations in the output from renewable energy sources.

- **Employment Benefits**

The construction of the proposed development will directly support approximately 20 workers for 12 to 15 months. Indirectly, the construction of the facility could potentially also generate employment opportunities within the local supply chain for those companies providing services to the proposed development, for example engineering and maintenance services, plant and equipment supply and haulage. Once operational the proposed development, in conjunction with other similar developments, will provide two part-time jobs for operation and maintenance of the facility.

The Principle of the Development

8.5 The site lies within local countryside, 120m north of the existing electricity substation at Norton. There are no landscape or ecology designations on or in close proximity to the site. The site is greenfield, currently comprising open grazing land which is classified as Grade 3.

Landscape and Visual Impact

8.6 A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) has been submitted in support of this application. The Landscape Assessment identifies and assesses the proposals against the key characteristics of the National and County Landscape Character Areas relevant to the proposed development.

There are 2 public rights of way, to the west and north of the site, which have very limited open views of the site.

8.7 There are limited long distance views to the site as the surrounding land is undulating. The existing substation is though dominant in the landscape. Boundary screening and planting is proposed.

8.8 Overall, it is therefore concluded that the proposed development would not be harmful to the distinctive character of any designated County Landscapes and therefore complies with Policy CS10 of the Local Plan Review. The proposed development will also not result in any unacceptable impacts upon landscape and visual effects and therefore complies with Policy N1 of the draft Local Plan in this regard.

Air Quality

8.9 The potential air quality impacts of the proposed development have been assessed in detail in the Air Quality Assessment (AQA) which is submitted in support of this application. The AQA includes the result of the stack height determination exercise which was undertaken, in accordance with guidance from the Environment Agency, to establish the height at which there is minimal additional environmental benefit associated with the cost of further increasing the stack height. The AQA and detailed modelling undertaken conclude that a stack height of between 12.5 and 15m would be appropriate, based on a worst case scenario.

8.10 The AQA considered the air quality impacts during the operational phase of the proposed installation of a peaking plant at Norton sub-station, Stockton-On-Tees. The operational effects of NO₂ emissions from the facility's stacks have been predicted using best practice approaches. The assessment has been undertaken based on a number of worst-case assumptions, including using the worst-case meteorological conditions and modelling the stack emissions for 2750 hours. The results show that with the gas engines operational, the predicted concentrations are below the relevant air quality standards and the impacts are 'negligible' to 'slight

adverse'. Using professional judgement and experience of similar projects, the resulting air quality effect of the proposed development is considered to be 'not significant' overall.

- 8.11 On the basis of the above assessment, it is concluded that the proposed development does not, in air quality terms, conflict with national or local policies. There are no constraints to the development in the context of air quality.

Noise

- 8.12 The potential noise impacts of the proposed development have been assessed in detail in the Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) which is submitted in support of this Application. The scope and methodology for the NIA is consistent with the approach typically taken by the Environmental Health Department.

- 8.13 The results of the noise assessment carried out for the proposed development can now be summarised as follows:

- The design of the proposed development will incorporate in design mitigation measures to minimise noise levels to the lowest reasonably practicable level.
- The BS 4142:2014 assessment indicates that no adverse impact is likely during the daytime or evening, but that an adverse impact could occur at night, depending on wind direction, in the unlikely event that the plant is required to operate at that time.
- Noise from the plant will be well below the noise standards contained in WHO guidelines for avoidance of annoyance during the daytime.
- Noise from the plant will not exceed the noise standards contained in WHO guidelines for avoidance of annoyance sleep disturbance at night.
- Ambient noise levels will increase slightly at residential receptors. However, it is unlikely that small changes in ambient noise will be noticeable during the daytime and will be just noticeable during the evening and night-time. When the changes are considered alongside the absolute noise levels, it is considered that ambient noise level increases will not yield any adverse impacts.

On the basis of the above and in conclusion, noise from the proposed development will be mitigated such that it does not cause a significant adverse impact, as defined by the NPSE and PPG-N. The potential for noise affecting living and working conditions has therefore been minimised, in line with the requirements of the Stockton-On-Tees 1997 Local Plan.

- 8.14 On the basis of the above assessment, it is therefore concluded that that with the proposed mitigation in place that noise impacts from the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable health and safety or environmental effects. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the Stockton-On-Tees 1997 Local Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 8.15 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and therefore not at risk from flooding.
- 8.16 An FRA has been submitted as part of this application where the main issues to consider are the surface water flooding and the management of surface water runoff; particularly as the site is predominantly Greenfield.

Traffic and Highway Safety

- 8.17 The construction period is anticipated to last 12 to 15 months with an average workforce of up to 20 personnel, although this may peak briefly at 50 personnel for particular milestones during the construction period.
- 8.18 The maximum number of outwards movements of construction vehicles in any one day will be circa 50 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) however this is the peak and will be confined to the earthworks / civils phase of the project.
- 8.19 For the majority of the works duration the number of outwards movements of construction vehicles in any one day will be between 10 and 30 HGVs. The number of abnormal loads will ultimately depend on the final configuration of the engines and building layout.
- 8.20 Construction work and construction traffic movements shall not take place on Sundays, bank holidays or after 13.00 on a Saturday unless such work is associated with an emergency or with the prior written consent of the local authority
- 8.21 It should be noted that apart from the construction phase of the development where there would be an increase in traffic movements, once installed, the development will be unmanned and a passive installation with very minimal extra traffic movement. Once operational, the proposed development will be unmanned and would be operated remotely, although access would be needed for occasional maintenance inspections and an annual service to ensure continued efficient operation. Traffic generated during operation would therefore be negligible. 5 parking spaces are proposed. Given that the proposed development will be unmanned it is considered that this level of parking is appropriate.
- 8.22 Overall, it is therefore concluded that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable adverse impacts on the function, safety and character of the local or strategic highway network and that adequate parking provision is provided.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

- 8.23 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting.
- 8.24 There are no records of heritage value on the site. The nearest listed building is 1400m to the east, 'Howden House', St James church in Thorpe Thewles is 1.6km away. These points of interest are not visible from the site or vice versa.

- 8.25 Given the distance and separation it is not considered that the proposed development would have a significant adverse effect upon the setting of these designated heritage assets.
- 8.26 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the guidance contained within the NPPF and PPG in relation to Heritage and Archaeology.

Biodiversity

- 8.27 'Naturally Wild' were instructed to undertake a preliminary ecological assessment, including a protected species risk assessment, at Norton, Stockton-On-Tees. The survey area comprised the site and surrounding fields.
- 8.28 The preliminary ecological assessment comprised two parts: a desktop study and a site visit. The desktop search collates all available public information regarding the biodiversity of the area, the habitat structure of the surrounding area and statutory designations. Biological records within 1 Km of the development site were requested for the Environmental Records Information Centre (ERIC) North East.
- 8.29 The site visit consisted of an assessment of all habitats on site and in the surrounding area to determine their ecological importance to protected species and was conducted on 13/06/2016 by ecologist Phil Askew.
- 8.30 The surveyed area was found to be of low ecological value. The main site is of low value for protected species, with no signs of activity of protected species and low habitat suitability for most species.
- 8.31 Having regard to the above it is considered that with the inclusion of appropriate mitigation, to be agreed with the Local Authority, there will not be a significant impact to protected species or habitats as a result of development.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposed development seeks planning permission for the construction of a gas-fired electricity facility of up to 49.95MW to meet peak supply demands on the local distributed power network.
- 9.2 The proposed development accords with the Government's national planning policy including the NPPF and EN-1 with respect to providing reliable electricity generation capacity to support the shift towards a low carbon, reliable electricity supply and the relevant saved policies of the Stockton-On-Tees Local Plan. The facility will provide for the need for efficient and flexible supply to meet peak energy demands within the local power network. This should be afforded significant weight in the assessment and determination of this Application.
- 9.3 For the reasons demonstrated in Section 8 of this report and the supporting statements, there are no significant adverse impacts associated with the proposed development.
- 9.4 In the balance of considerations, therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is confirmed, as the benefits identified significantly and demonstrably outweigh any potential adverse impacts, and the case in favour of the Development is compelling.
- 9.5 There are no other material considerations that indicate that planning approval should not be granted. Instead it is concluded that the proposed facility draws considerable support from these material considerations.

10 APPENDIX 1 – ATTENDEE LIST PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Attendee List

Public Exhibition Event – Proposed gas-fired energy reserve facility of up to 49.95MW, Grindon Parish Hall, Durham Road, Thorpe Thewles, TS21 3JU, Tuesday 26 July 2016.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
1	Pam Russell	HORSESHOES TS21 2 LETCH LANE 12E. CARLTON STOCKTON
2	LINDA HUMPHREY	15 Durham Rd Thorpe Thewles,
3	CAROLE SHARKEY	17 Durham Rd Thorpe Thewles
4	LYNN JOHN	4 Durham Road Thorpe Thewles.
5	Gareth Rees	
6	PAUL JOHN.	4 DURHAM ROAD THORPE THEWLES PAUL JOHN 1946 @HOTMAIL.COM.
7	JOHN TAIT	8 DURHAM ROAD THORPE THEWLES
8 9	JIM GRAVES & JACKIE GRAVES	7 LETCH LANE CARLTON
10	LYNNE WILLIAMS	25 DURHAM RD THORPE THEWLES.
11	Cathy Duen	High Middlefield.

Attendee List

Public Exhibition Event – Proposed gas-fired energy reserve facility of up to 49.95MW, Grindon Parish Hall, Durham Road, Thorpe Thewles, TS21 3JU, Tuesday 26 July 2016.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
12	Kevin Leonard.	4 St James Close Thorpe Thewles.
13	John Twibean	WOODLEIGH LEITCH LANE
14	Graff Reed.	LEITCH LANE. CARLTON.
15 16	Tom + Lynn Lindsay	LEITCH LANE, CARLTON
17	Paula Rushton	Shalom Thorpe Thewles.
18	DEMI & BRUNN	4 SCHOOL CLOSE THORPE THEWLES
19	NICOIA PROSSER	3 Hamilton Court Thorpe Thewles.