

Development Control Committee 2 October 2019

Planning Application DC/19/1116/FUL – Land West of Unit D, Homefield Road, Haverhill

Date Registered:	28.05.2019	Expiry Date:	23.07.2019 – EOT 03.10.2019
Case Officer:	Kerri Cooper	Recommendation:	Approve Application
Parish:	Haverhill Town Council	Ward:	Haverhill South
Proposal:	Planning Application - Gas fired power plant within fenced compound containing 2 no. 2MW generators and associated equipment		
Site:	Land West of Unit D, Homefield Road, Haverhill		
Applicant:	Mr Ben Wallace		

Synopsis:

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Associated matters.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

CONTACT CASE OFFICER:

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Background:

The application was referred to Delegation Panel due to the objection from the Ward Member and Haverhill Town Council, which was contrary to the Officers' recommendation of APPROVAL.

The Delegation Panel determined that the application should be presented before the Development Control Committee.

Proposal:

1. Planning permission is sought for a 4MW gas fired power station consisting of 2no. 2MW generators and ancillary infrastructure. The development is proposed to increase local grid capacity by generating electricity locally, providing benefit to local business, developments and electric vehicle (EV) charging points.

Application Supporting Material:

2. Information submitted with the application as follows:
Application Form
Planning Statement
Supporting Statement
Noise Report
Site Location and Layout
Elevations, Floor Plans and Sections
3. The full list of plans and documents, which are relevant to the proposed development are detailed in full within Condition 2 in the recommendations section of the report.

Site Details:

4. The application site is located within the designated general employment area of Haverhill. The site measures 0.07ha and comprises unused hardstanding. The vacant site is surrounded by commercial and light industrial uses. An existing vehicular access serves the site.

Planning History:

5. No relevant planning history.

Consultations:

6. Public Health and Housing - Public Health and Housing concludes from the submitted report that noise will not adversely impact on the amenity of the area. No objection, subject to construction hours condition.
7. Environment Team – No objection.
8. Rights Of Way Support Officer – No comments received.
9. Ramblers Association - It would appear unlikely that the proposal will be visible from the footpath, once it has left Homefield Road, due to intervening

buildings, which may also prevent any noise nuisance reaching users of the footpath. No objection.

Representations:

10. Town Council - Haverhill Town Council objects to the application on the following summarised grounds:
 - This application directly contradicts West Suffolk Council's Sustainability Strategy to reduce CO2 emissions and to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to cut emissions ahead of statutory national targets;
 - The proposed development is not comparable to the appeal referred to within the submitted planning statement;
 - This application is for a 4Mw plant, which can support only 4000x8kw renewable generation and is on a constrained site unlikely to be useable for renewable energy production in the future;
 - Such small-scale plants cannot offer sufficient efficiency in power production to justify the disadvantages they bring, particularly in urban settings.

11. Ward Member - The local Ward Member, Cllr David Smith objects to the application on the following summarised grounds:
 - At a time when we are facing a climate emergency it would be wrong to approve the building of generator powered by fossil fuel;
 - Concerned at the proximity to the houses in Orford Road and Parkside, and any increase in the noise level coming from the industrial estate;
 - No guarantee that the power plant will not start up at unsociable hours;
 - Northern boundary only has trees acting as a screen;
 - Limited public benefit

12. Neighbours - 1no. letter of objection was received from owner/occupier of 6 Norton Road, which is summarised as follows:
 - Existing issues with noise from factory units, this will raise noise complaints due to proximity to residential areas.

Policy:

13. On 1 April 2019 Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council were replaced by a single Authority, West Suffolk Council. The development plans for the previous local planning authorities were carried forward to the new Council by Regulation. The Development Plans remain in place for the new West Suffolk Council and, with the exception of the Joint Development Management Policies document (which had been adopted by both Councils), set out policies for defined geographical areas within the new authority. It is therefore necessary to determine this application with reference to policies set out in the plans produced by the now dissolved St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

14. The following policies of the Joint Development Management Policies Document, the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy 2010 and Haverhill Vision 2031 have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

- Policy DM1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy DM2 Creating Places Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness
- Policy DM8 Low and Zero Carbon Energy Generation
- Policy DM13 Landscape Features
- Policy DM30 Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses
- Core Strategy Policy CS1 - St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy
- Core Strategy Policy CS3 - Design and Local Distinctiveness
- Core Strategy Policy CS9 - Employment and the Local Economy
- Vision Policy HV1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Vision Policy HV9 - General Employment Areas - Haverhill

Other Planning Policy:

15. National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

16. The NPPF was revised in February 2019 and is a material consideration in decision making from the day of its publication. Paragraph 213 is clear however, that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the revised NPPF. Due weight should be given to them according to their degree of consistency with the Framework; the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework; the greater weight that may be given. The policies set out within the Joint Development Management Policies have been assessed in detail and are considered sufficiently aligned with the provision of the 2019 NPPF that full weight can be attached to them in the decision making process.

Officer Comment:

17. The issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:

- Principle of Development
- Environmental Impact
- Impact on Visual Amenity
- Impact on Residential Amenity

Principle of Development

18. Paragraph 148 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states 'The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of

existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.'

19. Policy DM8 states that proposals for generation or recovery of low carbon or renewable energy, such as wind turbines, biomass, and combined heat and power, will be encouraged subject to the following criteria: a. proposals will be required to demonstrate the new carbon saving benefit that they will create, taking into account both carbon dioxide savings from renewable energy generation and any additional carbon dioxide generation that results from the proposal; b. proposals will be required to include a landscape and visual assessment which should, where appropriate: i. show the impact of the proposal in the landscape or townscape. All development should be designed and sited to minimise intrusion and visual impact; ii. include mitigation measures to address the visual impact of the scheme; iii. include an appraisal of the impact on the environment of the proposal either in isolation or cumulatively with any other similar developments; c. where appropriate the proposal includes provision for mitigation and compensation measures, such as habitat enhancement or relocation.
20. All proposals will need to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that due regard has been given to the following: d. the impact of off-site and on-site power generation infrastructure including achieving underground connections to the electricity grid system; and e. in respect of proposals for wind turbines, current standards relating to noise emission, shadow flicker and other negative effects such as interference to television transmission and air traffic control systems and the effects on public health; and f. soil quality is not affected adversely by either construction or the operation or decommissioning of the development.
21. The proposed development is for a small scale 4MW gas fired power station consisting of 2no. 2MW generators and ancillary infrastructure. The development is proposed to increase local grid capacity by generating electricity locally, providing benefit to local business, developments and electric vehicle (EV) charging points. As such, the site is known as an 'Urban Reserve'. The purpose of an Urban Reserve is to generate electricity close to and in urban areas where demand for electricity is highest.
22. Electricity generated by Urban Reserve Projects is exported on to the local 11kV HV network. These networks are either 'Generation Dominated' - where more electricity is generated locally than the local area requires, or 'Demand Dominated' - where more electricity is consumed than the local area generates. The proposal is 'Demand Dominated' therefore, this means that the electricity generated will be consumed locally and not exported elsewhere.
23. Urban Reserve sites must be connected to the 11kV high voltage electricity distribution network. In this case, the electrical point of connection is located approximately 30metres from the site. In addition, the project is required to be connected to the local gas network. A medium pressure gas main is located approximately 400metres from the site.
24. Policy DM30 'any non-employment use proposed on sites and premises used and/or designated on the policies maps for employment purposes, and that is expected to have an adverse effect on employment generation, will only be permitted where the local planning authority is satisfied that the proposal

can demonstrate that it complies with other policies in this and other adopted local plans (particularly Policies DM1 and DM2 in this Plan), and one or more of the following criteria has been met (as appropriate to the site/premises and location): a. there is a sufficient supply of alternative and suitable employment land available to meet local employment job growth requirements; b. evidence can be provided that genuine attempts have been made to sell/let the site in its current use, and that no suitable and viable alternative employment uses can be found or are likely to be found in the foreseeable future; c. the existing use has created over-riding environmental problems (e.g. noise, odours or traffic) and permitting an alternative use would be a substantial environmental benefit that would outweigh the loss of an employment site; d. an alternative use or mix of uses would assist in urban regeneration and offer greater benefits to the community in meeting local business and employment needs; e. it is for an employment related support facility such as employment training/education, workplace crèche or industrial estate café; f. an alternative use or mix of uses would provide other sustainability benefits that would outweigh the loss of an employment site.'

25. The application site is designated within the General Employment Area of Haverhill. The proposed development will result in the loss of a small scale site, which has been designated for purposes falling within Class B1, B2 or B8. The site measures 0.07ha in area and was previously used for car parking but is currently not being used for any formal purpose. Given the scale of the site and the nature of the development being proposed, it is considered that the proposed development complies with criteria e and f of Policy DM30.

26. As such, it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable, subject to its impact and compliance with other policies.

Environmental Impact

27. As part of an application of this nature, it is important to assess the environmental impact arising as a result of the proposed development. Concerns have been raised by the Ward Member and Town Council in this regard. In respect of this, the applicant stated the following in their supporting statement:

28. 'In order to transition the electricity network to a low carbon system there is a need to move away from these high carbon intensive technologies in favour of lower carbon options. In the UK this has predominantly been new Solar and Wind Farms. Both technologies are however 'weather dependant' and are not 'dispatchable'. This means they cannot be 'turned on' at any time, and only operate when the weather permits.

29. Natural Gas has a significantly lower carbon intensity than coal and is dispatchable - in that it can be turned on, and off, as demand requires. Urban Reserve projects also export electricity at lower voltage providing electricity to the local area reducing losses experienced when transporting electricity through the transmission network.

30. The reduction in renewable generation capacity is most acutely felt during periods of high pressure in the winter months. During this time wind speeds are low, and the daylight hours are short meaning the UK is increasingly

reliant on 'dispatchable technologies' such as that proposed. Building new, localised, highly efficient natural gas 'back up' power stations therefore enables the further penetration of renewables in the UK without risking black outs and interruption to businesses (and similar disruption of residential supplies) and helps move away from large centralised carbon intensive power stations. The overall effect is to reduce the carbon intensity of grid supplied electricity, support further development of renewables and give resilience to the local network.

31. The locations for Urban Reserve sites are chosen as local to areas with a risk of power outages and being small under-utilised sites within the areas they are intended to serve. The Urban Reserve sites do not replace renewable energy generation capacity but support its use and further development.
32. Finally, it is worth noting that the development of the use of electric vehicles (a mainstay of the low carbon initiative) requires stable and resilient grid infrastructure and supply; the Urban Reserve sites provide these factors in areas where the electricity supply companies would otherwise be unable to support such development.
33. In summary, low carbon gas fired Urban Reserve energy generation plants, such as that proposed, are part of addressing a nationally recognised need for transitional low carbon energy supplies to facilitate an orderly and effective conversion of the UK's power supply network to renewable energy sources and a carbon neutral state. Therefore, far from working against the renewable energy policies and targets approving the Homefield Power proposal would be contributing to the ultimate achievement of the policies and targets.
34. Whilst in most cases it would be preferable to see new power production generated from renewable sources of energy, the proposed development provides a low carbon energy and is not replacing existing renewable energy but will in fact support its use for further development and capacity. Furthermore, there is no National or Local Policy at present which states that only renewable energy will be permitted.
35. Therefore, for the reasons set out above it is considered that there will be no adverse environmental impact as a result of the proposed development.

Impact on Visual Amenity

36. Policy DM2 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document seeks to provide developments that respect the character, scale, density and massing of the locality, in accordance with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework for good design.
37. The site would be enclosed by palisade fencing measuring 2.4 metres in height, along all boundaries. Within the site would comprise 2 no. 2MW generators in steel containers measuring approximately 12.2 metres in length and 2.45 metres in width, with an exhaust stack measuring 7 metres high from ground level and ventilation/cooling equipment mounted on the roof. An associated gas kiosk would be situated to the front of the site measuring approximately 2.5 metres in height.

38. The application site sits at a lower level to Homefield Road, with the site itself being set behind a landscaped verge, which runs along the vast majority of the road. Any associated vehicles accessing the site will use the existing access and will enter and exit through the west. The industrial buildings surrounding the site are large in scale, varying in height and position along the street scene.
39. The exhaust stack in particular will be highly visible along Homefield Road, with glimpses in longer views. Given the surrounding uses and the context of the site, it is considered that there will be visual harm arising as a result of the proposed development will be modest.

Impact on Residential Amenity

40. Policies DM2 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document seeks to safeguard residential amenity from potentially adverse effects of a new development.
41. The closest residential properties are located north of the site off Orford Road, approximately 220 metres away. Residential properties to the east they are in excess of 800 metres in streets off Hamlet Road. The sites immediately adjacent to the application site comprise a range of industrial units.
42. A noise report has been submitted with the application. This has been reviewed in detail by our Public Health and Housing Team. The report states during the daytime the operation of the site would be between 1dB(A) and 14dB(A) below the background sound level at the receptors assessed. In accordance with BS4142:2014 the site would have a low noise impact during the daytime. During the night-time the operation of the site would be between 4dB(A) above and 10dB(A)s below the background sound level at the two receptor locations assessed. In accordance with BS4142:2014 the site would have a low noise impact during the night-time at the Receptors to the south, and potentially a marginal adverse noise impact during the night-time at the receptors on Orford Road. The operation of the site would meet the noise rating curve internal to each receptor assessed, with only a slight exceedance at 500Hz at the commercial premise by less than 1dB. It is therefore concluded that the potential for a marginal adverse noise impact, identified by the BS4142:2014 assessment at night at the receptors on Orford Road, is not significant. The slight exceedance at 500Hz at the commercial premises is also not considered significant.
43. It is therefore concluded that the noise generated from the proposed development will not result in a detrimental impact to residential amenity as to cause harm by reason of disturbance.

Conclusion:

44. In conclusion, the principle and detail of the development is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendation:

45. It is recommended that planning permission be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following approved plans and documents:

Reason: To define the scope and extent of this permission.

Reference No:	Plan Type	Date Received
(-)	Noise Report	28.05.2019
(-)	Planning Statement	28.05.2019
(-)	Energy Efficiency Statement	07.08.2019
(-)	Supporting Statement	28.08.2019
(-)	Application Form	28.05.2019
HOM-01	Location Plan	28.05.2019
HOM-07	Fence Plan	28.05.2019
HOM-06	Proposed Elevations	28.05.2019
HOM-05	Proposed Elevations & Floor Plans	28.05.2019
HOM-03	Proposed Floor Plans	28.05.2019
HOM-02	Proposed Site Layout Plan	28.05.2019

- 3 Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside 08:00 hours to 18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays and 08:00 hours to 13:30 hours on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays, public holidays or bank holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties from noise and disturbance, in accordance with policies DM2 and DM14 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and all relevant Core Strategy Policies.

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online <DC/19/1116/FUL>

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