

Full Authority meeting

Item No: NPA15-2023

Application No: 23NP0023EL

Proposed Development Electricity Notification under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989: Erection of 12km of new overhead lines interspersed with 4.70km of interconnecting underground cables to secure mains electricity supply to three Emergency Telecom Cell Masts and electricity connections to off grid properties in the Coquet Valley, Alwinton, Northumberland

Applicant Name Northern Powergrid

Reason for Decision The consultation raises issues of significant public interest.

Recommendation Raise no objection subject to minor modifications and conditions.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is not a planning application but a consultation to the local planning authority under the Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989. Parliament has decided that it is in the public interest to have an effective public electricity supply which is managed under a dedicated regime rather than making them subject to the normal Town and Country Planning procedures.
- 1.2 This regime enables views to be gathered on the proposal before the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy makes a decision. The guidance explains that the relevant planning authority is in a good position to judge the degree of significance of what is being proposed for the local environment to help inform the Secretary of State's view. All applications for consent are considered by the SoS on a case by case basis and a decision is taken on the merits of each proposal. If consent under section 37 is granted the Secretary of State may also give direction for planning permission to be deemed to be granted for the development.
- 1.3 The local planning authority has two months to provide their views on the proposal. If the relevant planning authority has concerns about the proposals, they may make an objection to the Secretary of State who must hold a public inquiry unless the objection is withdrawn or the Secretary of State grants consent subject to modifications or conditions that meet the objection of the relevant planning authority. Even if the relevant planning authority or other statutory bodies consulted do not object to the proposal, they may propose conditions to be attached to the planning permission, which the SoS may decide to incorporate in the consent if given.
- 1.4 There is also the requirement for overhead line development to be considered under Environmental Impact Assessment regulations and an environmental screening has been undertaken by NNPA officers as part of the consideration of the documents provided.

Proposal

- 1.5 The proposal by Northern Powergrid on behalf of the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence, involves the construction of 12km of new overhead lines interspersed with 4.70km of interconnecting underground cables to secure mains electricity supply to three emergency telecom cell masts and electricity connections to 14 off grid properties in the Coquet Valley. It also includes 1.7km of existing overhead line (OHL) to be replaced (converting spans of 20kv overhead line to 3 phase specification) from pole 1 in Alwinton to pole 13 at Barrow Mill.
- 1.6 The development would include the erection of approximately 140 wooden poles, pole mounted transformers (substations), pole mounted aerial switches and pole mounted auto reclosers. The height of the poles would range from 8.1m to 12.9m above ground level. Six compounds are also proposed during the construction phase. The applicant advises the construction phase would be broken down into smaller sections and phased.
- 1.7 The proposed new OHL route will run from Alwinton to Blindburn and broadly follows the path of the River Coquet along the valley road with some sections on higher ground (east of Linshiels farm) and across higher ground at Linbriggs. There are twelve residential properties adjacent to the local road which would be connected to the OHL plus two further properties adjacent to the 1.4km tee-off from the north-western end of the OHL.



Figure 1 above: Line of proposed route in red

- 1.8 The applicant has provided an EIA screening report, preliminary ecological assessment, landscape visual impact assessment screening input, photomontages and Coquet Valley strategic options report with appendices. Northern Powergrid consider the proposal provides a technically feasible mix of overhead line and underground cable and confirm the line has been modified as a result of discussions with environmental consultants, residents and the NNPA.
- 1.9 Northern Powergrid confirm that due to the distance of the proposed connections from the source supply (Warkworth Primary Substation), there are technical restrictions on the amount of new 20kV High Voltage underground cable that can be installed to ensure the safety of the network. Northern Powergrid engineers have calculated the maximum length of high voltage underground cable allowable in the proposed route to be 4.7km.
- 1.10 The rationale behind the specific route selection has been provided in part 7 of the Coquet Valley [Strategic Options Report](#).

The Site

- 1.11 The Coquet Valley is a quiet river valley located entirely within the Northumberland National Park. The land cover is primarily rough grassland and bracken along the valley bottom, with moorland on higher ground. There are areas where the line proposes to pass close to coniferous forestry, such as on Bell Hill, and there are some other occasional areas of coniferous forestry visible on the higher ground. The valley is narrow and the farm steadings are generally located where the valley briefly opens out.
- 1.12 The majority of the Upper Coquet Valley is owned by the Ministry of Defence, with the MoD live firing range restricting access in some areas, mainly to the south of the valley road. Public access is limited to these areas at certain times when there is live firing. The land to the north of the valley road is nearly all open access land, with a network of public rights of ways and bridleways.
- 1.13 The valley is well used by recreational visitors, with walkers, cyclists and other visitors using the public car parks at Alwinton, Wedders Leap and Blindburn. Despite being popular with visitors the valley still is known for its high levels of tranquillity, including the absence of many artificial vertical structures in the landscape.
- 1.14 The site covers approximately 16.7km and includes the constraints highlighted below:
- Pubic footpaths (105/035, 105/037, 105/050, 105/057, 139/ 017, 139/018)
 - Public bridleways (105/009, 105/014, 105/010, 105/012, 105/020, 105/022, 105/037, 105/038, 105/037, 105/045, 117/011)
 - Restricted byway (105/018)
 - Listed buildings (Grade 2) at Shillmoor Farmhouse, and Stable, granary and pigsty east of Shillmoor Farmhouse
 - Scheduled Monument: Medieval and later dispersed settlement (north of Linbriggs)
 - Flood Zones 2 and 3
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC): North Pennines Dales Meadows, which incorporates the Barrow Burn Meadows SSSI

- River Coquet and Coquet Valley woodland SSSI; Harbottle Moors SSSI; Barrow Burn Meadows SSSI; Linbrigg SSSI
- Barrowburn Wood Local Nature Reserve
- SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Otterburn Military Training Area

2. Planning Policy & Guidance

2.1 Case law establishes that there is no requirement for determinations under the Electricity Act to be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (as is usually the case with planning applications). This is because it is not a determination under the planning acts. However, having said that, local planning policies may be a material consideration in determining an application under section 37.

2.2 National Policies

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021).
- National Planning Practice Guidance

2.3 Local Policies

Northumberland National Park Local Plan

Policy ST1 Sustainable Development

Policy ST2 General Development Principles

Policy ST3 Major Development

Policy ST4 Spatial Strategy

Policy DM1 Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Policy DM9 Transport and Accessibility

Policy DM10 Habitats, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy DM11 Landscape, Tranquillity and Dark Night Skies

Policy DM12 Trees, Woodlands and Forests

Policy DM14 Historic Landscape Assets and Built Heritage

Policy DM15 Archaeological Heritage

2.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- NNPA Building Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Design Guide SPD)
- NNPA Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (Landscape SPD)
- Northumberland National Park 2019 [Landscape Character Assessment](#)

2.5 Northumberland National Park [Management Plan](#): Adopted October 2022

2.6 Also relevant to the consideration is National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995

11A Duty of certain bodies and persons to have regard to the purposes for which National Parks are designated.

(2) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes specified in ...[the Act] and, if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park.

3. Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 There is no relevant planning history for this proposal. This is the first formal application/consultation for the provision of mains electricity to come before the National Park Authority for the Upper Coquet Valley.
- 3.2 In 2018 planning permissions were granted for 3 telecommunications masts as part of the government upgrade programme to replace the existing Airwave to provide emergency services coverage in the Coquet Valley:
- Reference 18NP0023 Land at Bell Hill. Installation of 20m high lattice mast. Approved.
- Reference 18NP0024 land at Quickening Cote. Installation of a 25m high lattice mast. Approved.
- Reference 18NP0026 Land at Barrowburn Farm. Installation of 20m high mast. Approved

4. Consultee Responses

- 4.1 The NNPA as the local planning authority is a consultee on this section 37 process on behalf of the local community. NNPA is the only local planning authority for the area of whole proposal. The Authority has carried out the consultation process and can report on the following responses being received. Copies of the consultee responses can be found in Appendix A.
- 4.2 Alwinton Parish Council: **Fully in support** of the long overdue provision of mains electricity to the Upper Coquet Valley. It cannot come soon enough for the farms depending on generators.
- 4.3 Historic England: **No objection**. No heritage concerns with the proposal.
- 4.4 Natural England: **Comments received**. The proposal is not likely to result in adverse effects on the site integrity of the SAC, or damage or destroy the special interest features of the SSSI, providing that the construction methodologies are followed. Recommend decision makers take careful account of likely impacts on landscape and visual amenity, as detailed in the response from Northumberland National Park Authority's Landscape Officer. Mitigation is important if consent granted. Also highlight the potential for enhancements to the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI, net gains for biodiversity and mitigation for landscape impacts to be delivered simultaneously through a comprehensive tree-planting scheme.
- 4.5 Environment Agency: **Objection** on insufficient information on flood risk and impact on otters and water vole

- 4.6 NCC Lead Flood Authority: No comments received.
- 4.7 NCC Highways: **No objection.**
- 4.8 Built Heritage and Design Officer (NCC): **No objection.**
- 4.9 NNPA Access and Trails Officer: **No objection.**
- 4.10 NNPA Ecologist: **No objection** subject to conditions.
- 4.11 NNPA Historic Environment officer: **No objection** subject to conditions
- 4.12 NNPA Head of Conservation (Landscape and Forestry): **Objection**, does not believe that the applicant has satisfactorily minimised or mitigated the effects on landscape character, tranquillity and visual amenity that would result from this proposed development. Mitigation essential if proposal accepted.

Public Responses

- 4.13 Nine site notices have been displayed along various routes on the Coquet Valley from Alwinton up to Blindburn. Notification letters have been sent to 16 properties along the route.
- 4.14 The Authority received 10 letters of support in January 2023 prior to receipt of the consultation. These letters were also submitted by the applicant as part of the application documents and can be found as part of Appendix B.
- 4.15 The Authority has received 32 letters of support for the proposal. Copies of these letters can be found in Appendix B. The main issues raised are as follows:

Masts

- Importance of reliable emergency masts in such remote area – for residents and visitors.
- Important for health and safety reasons, tourists relying on mobile for navigation.
- Increase safety of all who work, live and enjoy the area.
- Farmers often work alone, having mobile signal would allow help to be called immediately.
- Much needed connectivity for residents, businesses and visitors.
- Aid expansion of tourism.

Mains to properties and businesses

- Mains electricity will enhance the sustainability of the rural community.
- Reduce costs to rural homes and businesses.
- Reduce use of fossil fuels and improve carbon footprint.
- Everyone should have access to reliable mains electricity.
- Long overdue in providing basic utilities to many properties which are primarily working family farms.
- Mains electricity will help farmers and businesses to thrive, decreasing the risks of future depopulation.
- Mains electricity will help keep families and the younger generation in the valley.
- Problems, noise and costs with maintenance of diesel generators. Sometimes have to wait days/ weeks for engineers to fix the generators when they go wrong.
- Costs of buying and maintaining batteries, invertors and generator systems.
- Environmental impact of generators including pollution.

- Psychological problems with being reliant on generators as well as economic impacts.
- Generators are not reliable source of power especially for using technology eg. Remote learning for children difficult, impossible for college students and school children studying at home; electronic machines for children with additional needs.
- Becoming increasingly hard to buy appliances that can operate on generators due to their intermittent electricity supply.
- Possibility of residents owning electric car with mains supply.
- It's unacceptable that people should have to endure these conditions in a modern progressive society.
- Mains would help diversify farm businesses, as generators are too expensive and unreliable to power holiday lets .

Impact on National Park

- Any visual impact from the poles is secondary to the health and safety issues of not having electricity and mobile phone coverage.
- Visual impact of poles is subjective.
- Noise of generators harms the tranquillity of the area.
- Voices of those who live here and derive livelihoods should be prioritised, even though accept visual impact will be felt by visitors.

Other issues

- NNPA Management Plan supports this vision for mains electricity.
- It is an understatement that provision of power to this part of the valley will benefit residents and visitors to this part of the National Park greatly.

4.16 There have been no letters received raising an objection to the proposal.

5. Assessment

Introduction

5.1 As outlined above this is a consultation for a section 37 process. Outlined below are the key material considerations for the proposal.

- Principle of the development;
- Impact upon National Park Special Qualities;
 - Landscape;
 - Ecology;
 - Cultural heritage, including impact on listed building;
 - Tranquillity;
- Trees and woodland;
- Highways and public rights of way;
- Flood risk and other river matters;
- Soils;
- Other issues – public health and residential amenity

Principle of the development

National Park purposes

- 5.2 The proposal is entirely within Northumberland National Park. National Park statutory purposes are set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995:
- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the national parks;
 - to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the national park by the public
- 5.3 In delivering these two statutory purposes the Authority also has a duty to seek to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities within the National Park.
- 5.4 Where a development proposal would create conflict between the two statutory purposes, the purpose of conservation is given preference. This is a long-standing presumption known as the ‘Sandford Principle’, which needs to be taken into account in decision making. In this case the Sandford principle is not engaged as there is no recreational element to the proposal.
- 5.5 The special qualities of the National Park are set out in the Management Plan 2022 and identifies them as:
- A distinctive landscape character
 - A place rich in biodiversity and geology
 - A rich cultural heritage
 - A sense of tranquillity

Need

- 5.6 Guidance on Section 37 applications requires applicants to establish that an overhead line connection or reinforcement is needed and that the development applied for, including the route proposed, is an acceptable way of satisfying that need.
- 5.7 Northern Powergrid have set out in the scoping report the justification for the new line, to connect three telecommunication masts and a number of farmhouses and farm businesses on MoD land. The application is being supported by the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence.
- 5.8 National planning policy (NPPF para 114) confirms high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The mains electricity will provide a constant supply to the emergency telecoms masts. These masts were approved planning permission in 2018 on the basis of their importance to the emergency services coverage in the area. This means that the proposal will be hugely important for not only the residents of the valley but the visitors who come to visit this part of the national park, who may need to use the emergency services.
- 5.9 Building Digital, an executive agency for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has provided a letter of support, where they outline the importance of an electricity supply to the masts. Mains connectivity will increase resilience of the masts, are needed for

operational reasons due to their remoteness, and have environmental benefits with mains power being a greener energy solution than a typical diesel generator.

- 5.10 Whilst the masts only provide the emergency service provision, the masts were designed to accommodate further telecommunications apparatus in the future. Should the masts be connected to mains electricity as part of the proposal, BDUK has confirmed that there will be opportunities for increased mast sharing, allowing the possibility of mobile coverage for rural communities, businesses and visitors.
- 5.11 The MoD is supporting the proposal to enable their tenanted properties to be connected to mains electricity. The proposal would enable the following properties in the Coquet Valley to be connected to the mains electricity: Linbriggs, Linshiels, Quickening Cote, Shilmoor Farm & Cottages, Bygate Hall Cottages, Lounges Knowe Farm & Cottages, Barrowburn Farm, Windyhaugh Farm, Rowhope Farm, Carlcroft and Blindburn Farm & Cottages. These properties currently use diesel generators which are considerably more costly, unreliable and require considerable maintenance. A switch from diesel generators to mains electricity would result in a considerable benefit in terms of reducing carbon emissions from fossil fuelled generators. Many residents said electricity in the Upper Coquet would be “life changing” and is essential for their businesses to keep up with modern requirements.
- 5.12 As well as satisfying the needs of the Home Office and the MoD, the proposal would improve wider the sustainability of the area. The proposal to get mains power to approximately 14 farms and farm holdings will meet with the Management Plan Objective 5.3 in Thriving Communities: *Enhance and enable all forms of connectivity (power, broadband, mobile, transport) to create resilient, innovation ready networks*. The number of support letters received as part of this consultation highlight the importance that mains electricity would have to the community and visitors.
- 5.13 As well as the need for a new line, the acceptability of the method of provision also needs to be considered. Therefore, whilst the need for the development is clearly accepted, the rest of the report will consider whether the route proposed is an acceptable way of satisfying that need.

Major development

- 5.14 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the importance of the landscape designation within National Parks, and in para 176 states:

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

- 5.15 National policy also confirms that when considering applications for development within National Parks ‘... permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances...’. The footnote to this advice states that:

‘Whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale, and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined’.

- 5.16 Policy ST3 of the Northumberland National Park Local Plan focuses on major development and reflects national policy in its wording. In the preamble to the policy, it is noted that development is classed as major *‘when its characteristics and specific impacts are likely to have a significant impact on the special qualities of the National Park’*. It is further noted that *‘Major development is only permitted inside National Parks in exceptional circumstances. Proposals are subject to the most rigorous examination and have to demonstrate that they are genuinely in the nation’s interest if they are to proceed’*.
- 5.17 It is clear that this proposal is a significant infrastructure scheme, covering in excess of 16km, in a National Park which does not experience such large-scale levels of development. Having consideration for the proposal’s nature, scale and setting, it is considered the proposal would constitute major development.
- 5.18 Taking the requirements in Policy ST3, it is evident from the above paragraphs that there is a strong need for the development, with the opportunity to provide mains electricity to off-grid properties and 3 emergency masts. It is also accepted that the line cannot be located outside the National Park or in a different, less sensitive location as its specific need relates to the masts and the off-grid properties in the Coquet Valley. It is also accepted that there are clear economic and social benefits from the proposal to the local communities and visitors to the area.
- 5.19 Parts d) and e) of the major development policy ST3 relate to the extent to which the proposal has been designed and sited to respect the character of the landscape and consideration of whether all possible measures have been taken to minimise and mitigate any adverse effects on the special qualities of the National Park. This will be discussed in more detail below. However, if the proposal is considered to result in harm to the character of the landscape, or other special qualities, and it is found that all measures have not been taken to minimise and mitigate adverse effects then the proposal would fail to meet the major development test.
- 5.20 In the absence of conflicting information, it has to be accepted that the technical explanation provided by Northern Powergrid that only a specific length of line can be undergrounded. Whilst it would be preferable in terms of landscape impact for the route to be undergrounded in full (archaeology and ecological constraints notwithstanding) it is acknowledged that any new provision should not harm the line security and supply for other users down the line closer to the Warkworth Primary Substation . Officers accept that there is a clear need for the mains electricity provision along the Upper Coquet valley.

Infrastructure development

- 5.21 The Local Plan recognises that infrastructure which is essential for meeting day to day needs of communities should be considered positively, and supporting the development of new infrastructure will increase the quality of life for those living, working and visiting the National Park. Local Plan policy DM1 is supportive of new infrastructure, where they represent the least harmful option reasonably available having regard to any operational

requirements and technical limitations that are applicable. The agent has outlined the operational requirements and the challenging terrain of the Upper Coquet is also accepted.

- 5.22 Local plan policy DM1 requires the design of new infrastructure needs to minimise impact on visual amenity and there to be no unacceptable adverse impacts on the National Park special qualities. The extent to which the proposal, including 12km of overhead line supported by 8m to 12m high wooden poles and undergrounding works, will impact upon the special qualities are considered below.

Impact on National Park Special Qualities

Landscape

- 5.23 As with all UK national parks, Northumberland National Park was designated for its natural beauty. With regard to this specific development proposal, consideration has to be given to the likely effect of the proposed development on the natural beauty as well as the other special qualities of Northumberland National Park.
- 5.24 A preliminary landscape and visual screening input document has been submitted which provides an initial screening appraisal. The document is clear in that a full Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has not been undertaken and the purpose of this initial screening appraisal is to set the landscape and visual context to the development site and provide a summary of key landscape and visual matters to inform an EIA screening decision.
- 5.25 The document identified that the narrow valley landform with steep valley sides contains potential visibility of the wood poles to the valley itself. It references the section of the proposed route that crosses the higher ground at Linbriggs, to the north of Linshiels Farm, crosses an area of higher ground with little existing vegetation and would be visible against the skyline, particularly for users of the valley road and from receptors on the lower ground to the east of the proposed route. Visibility also extends at the eastern end of the route, where there is a wider valley floor. The screening document concludes that due to the valley topography and the small scale of the overhead line (wood poles ranging from 8.1 m to 12.9m above ground, pole head and carrying three power cables), landscape and visual impacts are likely to be very localised.
- 5.26 Natural England, as Government's advisor on protected landscapes, refers to national and local policies, which together with local landscape expertise and information should be used to determine the proposal. They encourage the Authority and the Secretary of State to take careful account of the advice provided by the NNPA Head of Conservation (Landscape and Forestry). They also refer to ensuring the maximum possible length of cable is undergrounded to avoid impacts where possible and that mitigation for residual landscape impacts is revisited through suitably worded planning conditions. It is suggested such mitigation should incorporate tree planting to provide screening or backdropping and should be sited to maximise the benefits for biodiversity.
- 5.27 A detailed response has been provided by the Head of Conservation (Landscape and Forestry), as landscape lead for the Authority. The response includes reference to the 2019 Landscape Character Assessment for Northumberland National Park. Understanding the sensitivity of different landscapes to development or to changes in the way they are managed can help inform decisions made about change. Due to the length of the proposed

line, the proposal would pass through several Landscape Character Types (LCT) specifically the Foothills and Fringe Valleys LCT, the Upland Burn Valleys LCT and the Rounded Hills LCT.

- 5.28 The landscape character of Upper Coquetdale is remote, wild, tranquil, surrounded by rounded hilltops with steep valley sides creating a narrow valley landform and where human manufactured structures are generally not prominent. The Head of Conservation explains these are the adjectives that are often used to describe Upper Coquetdale's unique 'Sense of Place'. From Linbriggs up, all existing telecommunications infrastructure has historically been undergrounded by BT and the MOD, recognising the uniqueness of this upland valley and its visual sensitivity. Where vertical infrastructure does exist, such as the BT line between Alwinton and Linbriggs and the occasional MoD notice, this is often visually prominent when viewed from the valley road and has a negative effect upon people's appreciation of the valley and its natural beauty. This is a unique landscape that is sensitive to even a small degree of change.
- 5.29 It is recognised that the most sensitive and well used visual receptor that will be affected by the proposal will be the Coquet Valley road, used by public vehicles, cyclists, horse riders and walkers. Photomontages have been provided from several places along the road.
- 5.30 The Head of Conservation makes reference to the Holford Rules which is referred to in the applicant's Strategic Options Report. This is guidance that Northern Powergrid state they adopt when considering route selection and should help minimise the potential landscape impact of such infrastructure. It needs to be appreciated that these guidelines were originally proposed in relation to large scale pylons rather than the wooden poles being proposed here. Nevertheless, these rules provide a helpful understanding of how background and foreground features should be utilised to reduce the domination of overhead lines in views and to minimise siting of infrastructure on prominent ridges and skylines. It is accepted that lines are more prominent where there is no backgrounding and they are viewed against sky backgrounds.
- 5.31 Having considered these rules, the Head of Conservation remains concerned that the principles of filtering, screening, backgrounding and distance from receptor has been very weak in this proposal. Whilst there are topographical constraints, comments state it is disappointing that in the majority of situations, the proposed overhead line and the valley road are in close proximity to each other. Subsequently, there is concern that there is not sufficient space to permit visual screening in the form of tree planting to take place. Lower growing shrub species may be able to be planted closer in the form of light open planting.
- 5.32 The applicant states that the use of trees will help mitigate the effects of the overhead line on landscape and visual amenity and they state the landowner (MOD) and NNPA, are both committed to introducing new planting to the valley. Whilst the applicant suggests such tree planting mitigation would not form part of this proposal and would form a separate project, it is considered it would be essential for the acceptability of the scheme to include mitigation through specific areas of tree planting, notably on the areas identified as causing landscape harm.
- 5.33 The Head of Conservation has assessed in detail the whole route and has provided detailed observations, included in Appendix A. He has also considered the photomontage imagery and has concern over a couple of the viewpoints as well as the absence of one viewpoint that would have been helpful to have been submitted.



Figure 1 Photomontage above, looking west (Viewpoint 2b):
showing BT poles on left hand side and proposed electric line on right hand side of road.

- 5.34 The most notable concerns raised by the Head of Conservation relate to **pole 21 to pole 31**. This stretch would have a significant visual effect due to the cumulative effect with that of the existing BT telephone line, starting as the powerline crosses the road at the Carnaby Bank Information Panel (poles 20 – 21) through to pole 31 just before Linbriggs Farm. As can be seen from the image above, the existing phone line is visually prominent and viewed against the skyline. The overhead powerline will be seen on the other side of the road on higher poles, breaking the skyline and creating a corridor effect of visually prominent overhead transmission lines. The cumulative effect of both lines will have a detrimental effect upon the landscape character and significant effect upon the visual amenity of this part of the National Park.
- 5.35 Officers have queried whether this stretch could take an alternative route, with the applicant confirming there is insufficient underground cable capacity to underground it. The applicant has advised that a few large trees could be incorporated and the existing hedge line could be extended. As the existing 2m high hedge does not provide much screening at present, further landscaping would be considered essential to soften the impact of the two parallel wires running either side of this part of the valley road.

Figure 2 below showing poles 21 to 31 north of valley road



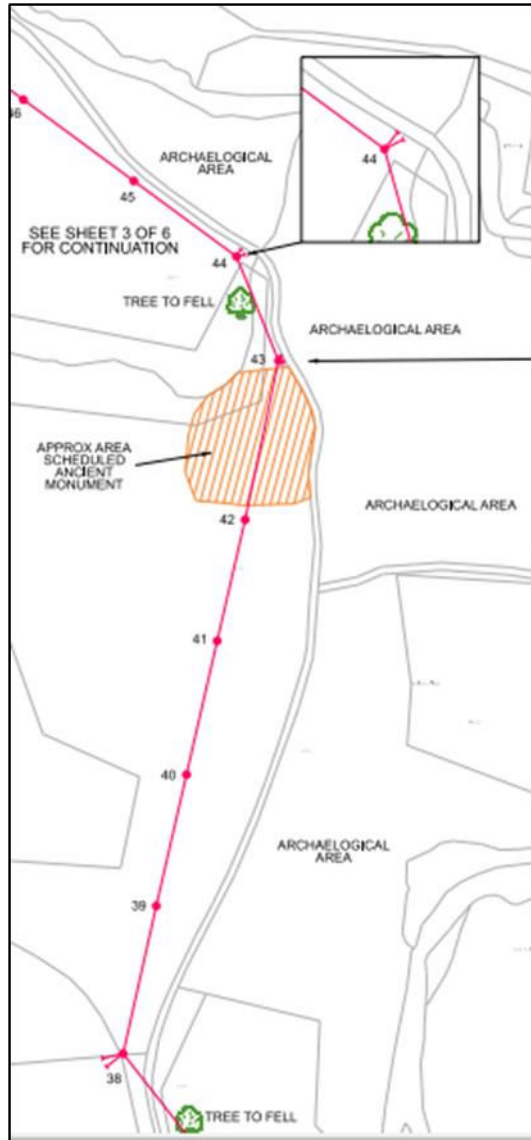


Figure 3: plan showing overhead line and poles 38 to 46

- 5.36 The stretch of overhead line between **poles 38 to pole 46** (map shown above) also is of concern from a landscape perspective. From Linbriggs onwards, the BT infrastructure has been undergrounded alongside the road. Traversing on the higher ground to the western side of the valley road, this section of the powerline will be visually prominent and viewed against the skyline when seen from the valley road in either direction, as well as from more distant receptor sites such as Alwinton Public Footpath 38 to the east. There is scope to mitigate the visual effect by planting some native/broadleaved trees between the road and proposed development and even consider some additional tree planting to act as a backdrop to the development along this section but as it currently stands, without such mitigation measures, this section will have a significant effect on the landscape character and visual amenity.



*Photo 4 above: taken close to location of pole 38.
Showing open nature of route, for the proposed overhead line (not shown) running to the left hand side (west) of the road, with open sky backdrop. Veteran alder to the right-hand side.*

- 5.37 Officers would prefer to see the route, (approximately 800m in length), moved through a modification to the eastern side of the road and further from the road on lower ground where the impact on landscape would be minimised. This was suggested to the applicant who stated that the steep terrain and topography on the lower ground would be difficult to build and maintain, and would cross a known archaeology area. Given the view of the Head of Conservation that the line could be mitigated to some extent with additional planting it is acknowledged there will be harm to the landscape but no suitable modification would be possible.



Photo 5 above: showing location of pole 112 (not shown) on highest ground towards the centre of the image. Star indicates position of pole 112

- 5.38 The sighting of **pole 112** atop an elevated piece of ground that would be in direct line of sight when travelling north west up the valley as you approach the Trows Road junction would be visually prominent and in this case would be harmful to the landscape. The

applicant explains that the pole is necessary as it is not possible to cross Rowhope Bridge within an underground cable due to the lack of depth of cover. As the line will be undergrounded elsewhere this pole would be particularly prominent. The plan below shows the location of pole 112.

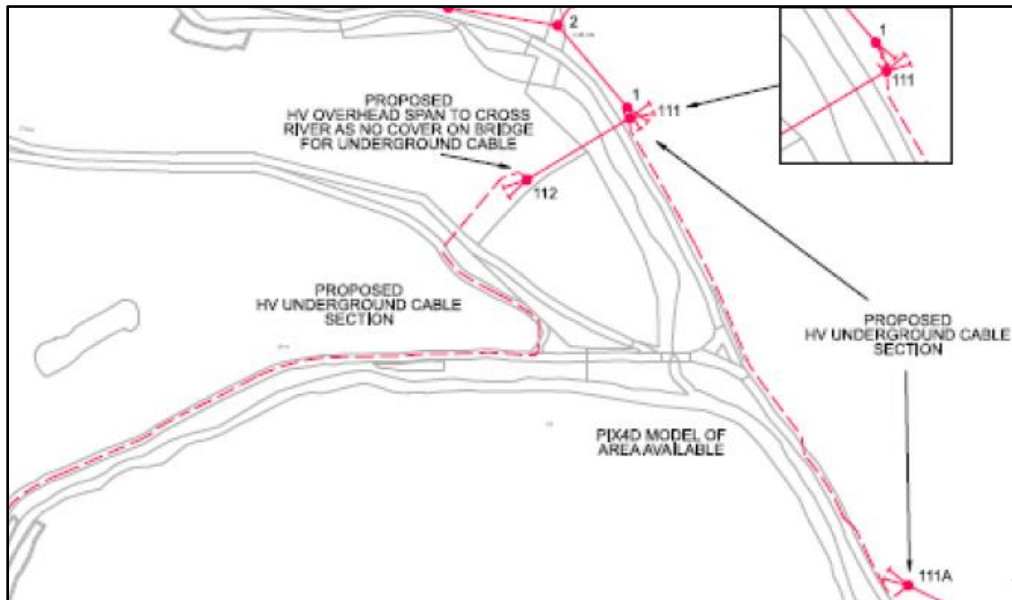


Figure 6: Plan above showing pole 112 on highest ground

- 5.39 In discussions with the applicant, they have confirmed that the pole 112 location was chosen due to limitation on archaeology features in the area and if moved closer to the road would exceed the underground cable limit. However, officers consider a minor modification is required for the siting of this pole to minimise the adverse impact on landscape.
- 5.40 Further observations regarding possible improvements and preferred alignments of the powerline have been provided by the Head of Conservation for further lengths of the overhead infrastructure continuing up the valley. In many cases it is accepted that there are no technically feasible alternatives. For example, poles 70 to 72 and 75 to 80 the line will be seen against the skyline backdrop and will be visually prominent in this part of the valley, directly affecting the natural beauty of this area. However, it is accepted that there is no technically feasible alternative.
- 5.41 To conclude, the Head of Conservation welcomes the undergrounding of 4.7km of the power line in sections that are deemed to be constrained technically or be the most visually sensitive in the Upper Coquetdale landscape. However, whilst recognising the many benefits that this infrastructure will provide, the Head of Conservation **objects** to the proposal on the basis that the applicant has not satisfactorily minimised or mitigated the effects on landscape character and visual amenity that would result from the proposal, as required by both national policy (para 176 of the NPPF) and local planning policy (Policies ST1, ST2, ST3 and DM11).
- 5.42 The proposal will result in harm to several parts of the landscape of the Upper Coquet Valley. Officers have calculated that the sections with the most significant impact comprise two locations, totalling 1km (poles 21 to 31) and 0.8km (poles 38 to 46) and would account

for approximately 15% of the proposed overhead line, and approximately 11% of the total overall proposed line including the undergrounding sections.

- 5.43 The Head of Conservation has recommended, should there be no objection raised to the scheme as a whole, that a condition would be essential for the applicant to produce a mitigation plan, including specific areas of tree planting, to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. This plan should identify appropriate locations where tree planting should take place to mitigate the effects on visual amenity, both by screening and providing extended backdrops. Natural England also highlight this as a requirement and identify an opportunity to deliver multifunctional environmental enhancements through comprehensive tree planting schemes.
- 5.44 Officers consider the visual harm resulting from the proposal needs to be weighed up against the public benefits of the scheme. It is not the whole length of the proposed route that will cause visual harm, and the stretches with greatest landscape impact are outlined above and in the detailed response from the Head of Conservation. Officers agree that there would be better ways and locations of installing the line, however this route is the one that Northern Powergrid have submitted as technically feasible.
- 5.45 To conclude landscape considerations, officers believe there will be harm from the current proposals that could have been minimised with some minor modifications to the scheme and essential mitigation measures. None of the proposed modifications would result in any fewer properties being connected to the mains electricity supply. Without modification and mitigation it is considered the proposal would conflict with national and local planning policies, in that it would not satisfy the NPPF that states: *'The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas'*.

Ecology and biodiversity

- 5.46 As outlined above, the proposal follows the River Coquet for the length of the extension. The River Coquet SSSI is designated from source to sea *'as a relatively unmodified fast-flowing upland river supporting characteristic fauna and flora the Coquet is of key significance in the national resource for nature conservation.'* There will be some poles (1, 60, 70 and 71) that would lie within the SSSI, and many more located adjacent to or within 10 m of the SSSI perimeter. The preliminary ecological appraisal confirms the works at each pole will be temporary and short term and any potential disturbance must be mitigated. The applicants acknowledge assents are required from Natural England prior to works commencing.
- 5.47 The North Pennine Dales Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) incorporates the Barrowburn Meadows SSSI. The proposal has been designed to avoid the designated site and to route the powerline around the perimeter of the meadow underground. The time period for doing the works are likely to be time limited to minimise potential damage to the habitat.
- 5.48 Natural England have provided comments with respect to the impact of the proposal upon the designated sites. Comments received outline that the applicant is required to complete a Habitats Regulations Assessment for the proposal. As the NNPA is not the determining body

for the decision, but a consultee, it is not for the National Park Authority to adopt a Habitats Regulations Assessment and so the Authority has not requested one. It is accepted that one would be required and would need to be assessed by the Secretary of State.

- 5.49 In respect of North Pennine Dales Meadows SAC and Barrowburn Meadows SSSI, Natural England have confirmed that the applicant has provided them with a Habitats Regulations Assessment for this proposal through their application for Assent for works within North Pennine Dales Meadows SAC and Barrowburn Meadows SSSI. Providing that the proposed operations are undertaken as set out and that the construction methodology is followed, Natural England is satisfied that there will not be an adverse effect on the site integrity of North Pennine Dales Meadows SAC and that the proposal will not damage or destroy the special interest features of the Barrowburn Meadows SSSI.
- 5.50 In terms of the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI, Natural England have concluded that based on the information provided the proposal will not damage or destroy the special interest features of the River Coquet and Coquet Valley woodlands SSI, providing the proposed operations are undertaken as set out and that the construction methodology is followed. However, they identify an opportunity to deliver a multifunctional environmental enhancements through a comprehensive tree planting scheme. Such a scheme could significantly enhance the SSSI in the Upper Coquet Valley by increasing river shading through riparian planting and buffering the existing woodland of the SSSI with more trees or scrub. Not only could this reduce the impacts on landscape and visual amenity, as described below, but it would further the protection and enhancement of the SSSI, as well as providing net gains for biodiversity. Natural England confirm they would welcome the opportunity to work with the applicant to develop a sensitive tree planting scheme.
- 5.51 As well as Natural England's comments, the Authority's ecologist has considered the proposals. They have identified the types of impact from the development that might affect the designated assets of the River Coquet SSSI such as silt from installing the poles, pollution from machines used to install poles, disturbance of bankside vegetation or habitat where otters are residing or birds such as dippers, common sandpipers are nesting, removal of trees due to overhead wires (and the need to keep areas adjacent to the line free). It is noted that the proposed line crosses the River Coquet SSI several times. This could affect riverine birds such as dippers, common sandpiper and grey wagtail that fly along the river corridor. It is noted however that the line is approximately 8m or more above the water height and likely to be above flight height for birds travelling along the corridor.
- 5.52 The ecologist has identified the Linbrigg SSSI (defined by open ash and hazel woodland with andesite crags and associated flora) as being affected by the proposal. There is a tree to be felled which is within the SSSI. The tree would be a feature of interest and the proposed substation at pole 34 means it needs to be felled. A slight realignment of the line would mean the tree could be retained, especially in a landscape where there are few mature trees.
- 5.53 In conclusion the Ecologist does not think there will be significant damage to protected sites or species and if there is a possibility of moving pole 34 to avoid felling the tree in the SSSI that would be an improvement. Any trees that are felled should be checked for nesting birds and bat roost potential prior to felling and bankside vegetation and habitat that might be disturbed and suitable for otters should be checked as outlined in the Preliminary Ecological

Appraisal. Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) will help prevent pollution and siltation and disturbance.

- 5.54 Similarly to Natural England, the Ecologist raises the great potential for more native woodland in the valley which could be a gain for biodiversity as well as helping with landscaping of the scheme.
- 5.55 Subject to appropriate conditions, including ensuring the works are carried out in accordance with method construction details, the proposal would accord with national and local planning policies ST1, ST2 and DM10.

Cultural heritage and the historic environment

- 5.56 The proposal will span over a scheduled monument known as “Medieval and later dispersed settlement, 730m north and 860m north of Linbriggs”. The proposed line would stretch around 100m across the southern portion of the scheduled monument, but the poles will be placed outside the northern and southern monument boundary. The significance of the monument lies in the buried archaeological evidence it contains which will provide information about the period of use of this settlement type in the region. Historic England have concluded that the poles and overhead lines will cause minor level of harm to the setting of the monument. However, they are satisfied that the scheme has been designed so there will be no impact to buried remains of the monument as all intrusive development lies outside of it.
- 5.57 Historic England confirm the proposal will cause limited harm to the designated heritage asset, but acknowledge that it is for the local planning authority to weigh up any harm against the public benefits of the proposal. As set out above in the report relating to the need for the proposal, it is considered there is strong public benefit in bringing mains electricity to the emergency masts and the local community.
- 5.58 The Authority’s Historic Environment Officer acknowledges that the proposal is an extensive undertaking in an area of outstanding scenic beauty and an area of high historic landscape significance. The documents submitted note 60 historic environment features within a 75 metre assessment corridor. He explains that consideration should be given to the setting of these heritage assets, both designated and non-designated and of local significance. These heritage assets are evidence for landscape change over time, in particular the use of the land in medieval and post-medieval times, from when the area was more densely populated by medieval farmers, through a period of instability and later resettlement, to modern times where this section of valley is occupied by dispersed farmsteads, pasture by sheep grazing, hay meadow management and public recreation.
- 5.59 The view of the Historic Environment Officer is that the scheme would result in harm to heritage assets and their setting. However, given the public benefits of the scheme and the limited nature of the harm, he raises no objection on the basis that there is an agreed scheme in place to mitigate this harm. A condition would enable the applicant to commission a qualified and experienced archaeologist to conduct an archaeological mitigation scheme in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. This would be limited to those poles and undergrounding sections as highlighted in table 2 of the Archaeological Assessment.

- 5.60 As well as the archaeological heritage assets there is also the grade II listed Shilmoor Farmhouse and grade II listed stable granary and pigsty. The Built Heritage and Design Officer (NCC) notes the buildings lie on low land adjacent to the River Coquet and are important in their landscape setting, surrounded by the Cheviot Hills. The closest poles and their associated wiring would be poles 49 to 53 (5 poles). Pole 51 is to accommodate a substation which would feed Shilmoor farmhouse and the adjacent cottages via a low voltage underground cable, enabling removal the existing diesel generators. The details of the proposed substation at Shilmoor have been provided, and the officer is satisfied these are acceptable.
- 5.61 The Built Heritage and Design Officer considers the installation of this part of the series of poles and associated wiring would alter the character and appearance of the landscape and would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the important listed buildings of Shilmoor farmhouse and associated stable, granary and pigsty. As set out in the national policy (para 196 of NPPF) this harm should be weighed up against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 5.62 As outlined above in the principle of development, the public benefits of connecting mains electricity to the three emergency masts and the farmhouses and farm businesses is substantial, as is reducing the reliance of polluting diesel generators in terms of the climate impact of the proposal. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of the impact upon the cultural heritage and historic environment of the area, including the designated listed buildings.

Tranquillity

- 5.63 The special quality of tranquillity can include noise, traffic, light and the lack of visual disturbance through man-made structures. The valley is popular with visitors however it still maintains good levels of tranquillity. The MoD operations are occasionally audible within the valley and close to the farm steadings there is the sound of diesel generators. The proposal would not affect the baseline tranquillity levels to a significant level in terms of noise or traffic. Some support letters have suggested that the removal of diesel generators will have an improved impact upon the tranquillity of the area.
- 5.63 Policy DM11 explains that as well as noise, traffic and light, intrusive external features including hard surfaces and artificial structures could affect levels of tranquillity. The policy requires the sense of openness and quiet enjoyment of the landscape is maintained. The proposal will result in visual disturbance through the proposed poles and overhead wires, but given the presence of the valley road, the telecommunication masts and the valley has some intrusive external features it is considered the proposal would not harm the tranquillity of the valley and would accord with Local Plan policy DM11.
- 5.64 The proposal would not raise concerns relating to the International Dark Sky Park. There is unlikely to be a direct impact upon the Dark Sky Park status of the National Park as a result of this application since there are no external lighting units identified within the proposal. There may be the desire of residents to increase lighting once mains electricity is installed and National Park Authority officers would be happy to provide advice to ensure that any future new external lighting is appropriate to the Dark Sky Park status. The proposal accords with Local Plan policy DM11 in relation to tranquillity.

Trees and woodland

- 5.65 The applicant identifies that approximately 70 trees, mainly conifers, may require felling as part of the proposal. The Head of Conservation has reviewed the route alignment and the impact upon existing trees that have been identified to be felled. He notes there are very few veteran trees remaining in the Upper Coquet Valley, and so it is regrettable to see a veteran alder tree that lies between poles 37 and 38 shown to be removed. He notes a slight re-alignment of poles 34 to 38 could be reconsidered to avoid the felling of the tree. Nevertheless the removal of the veteran tree would not warrant an objection to the overall scheme.
- 5.66 The second location where trees will be directly affected would be between poles 110A and 111A (see below). By removing a single span of overhead line (one pole) at the end of the run before the line goes underground at this location would negate the need to fell this group of trees. The trees currently provide a visual screening effect of the proposed line as you travel southeast down the valley. The applicant explains there is no further underground capacity to allow this proposed modification. Officers consider this should be a minor modification to the scheme.



Above: Line of trees to be removed between poles 110A and 111A. Photos taken from Preliminary Ecological Assessment p. 65

- 5.67 Local plan policy DM12 requires development that would result in the unavoidable loss of an existing trees, but the wider benefits of the development significantly outweigh the loss, proposals will be expected to minimise harm and provide net biodiversity and amenity gain with appropriate trees to be provided. As such it would be important that a condition requiring the applicant to have to plant twice the number of trees that are lost, thereby allowing for any subsequent losses of replacement trees and ensuring that there is no net loss of trees occurring as a result of this development proposal. Subject to such a tree replacement condition, there is no objection to the proposal in relation to trees.

Highways and public rights of way

- 5.68 The Highways Authority (Northumberland County Council) have considered the proposals and raise no objection, on the basis the scheme is unlikely to lead to substantial harm to the highway network in terms of safety or capacity. They confirmed that the applicant is likely to utilise existing field gate accesses to gain access to placement locations for pole upgrade works. Any works to be conducted within the highway will need licenses for traffic lights from NCC.

- 5.69 The NNPA access and trails officer confirms there are a number of public rights of way in very close proximity to the site of the line, both on the proposed overhead line and the underground sections. The officer has raised no objections subject to care being taken not to obstruct access to the rights of way or any way prevent or deter public use of the paths without the necessary legal diversion or closure order made. This can be achieved through an informative.

Flood risk and other river matters

- 5.70 Some areas of the proposed line and poles will pass through Flood Zones 2 and 3 of the Coquet Valley, which is land defined by the planning practice guidance as having a medium and high probability of flooding. The Environment Agency have objected to the proposal on insufficient information. In the absence of a Flood Risk Assessment, they state the flood risks posed by the development are unknown. A FRA needs to demonstrate that the development is safe without increasing risk elsewhere and where possible, it should reduce flood risk overall.
- 5.71 The applicant has confirmed that the River Coquet is not a main river and that it should be considered as an Ordinary Water Course. They also confirm that during the design and survey process they have purposefully kept the pole locations away and out of potential flood prone areas. Further information provided also confirms that no poles are located within Flood Zone 3. As such, officers are satisfied the development has been designed to avoid flood risk areas, is not vulnerable development and would not increase flood risk elsewhere. Flood risk would not be a reason to object to the proposal in these circumstances.
- 5.72 The Environment Agency have also objected due to insufficient information to assess the risks posed by this activity on otter, water vole and their habitat, and insufficient details of mitigation or compensation measures have been submitted to address any identified risks. The otter and water vole are protected species and the Environment Agency are concerned about the absence of adequate information about the measures proposed to protect the otter and water vole in this location.
- 5.73 The applicant has confirmed that only poles 35 and 129 may potentially have suitable cover for otters and an otter survey can be undertaken prior to any works starting on site. They also confirm that any construction works would be undertaken during daylight hours where otters are less active, being nocturnal. Officers are satisfied that this matter can be dealt with through a condition requiring a further survey and would not form a reason to object to the proposal.
- 5.74 The concerns raised by the Environment Agency relating to water voles are not considered to warrant objection. The presence of water voles and their habitat assessment would only be applicable where the proposed works are within 5 metres of the waters edge. As such officers do not consider this would be a reason to object to the proposal.

Soils

- 5.75 Natural England refer in their response to the impact of the proposal upon soils and agricultural land quality. They consider the proposal would not be likely to affect a significant area of best and most versatile agricultural land (land graded as 1, 2 and 3a). This is because the temporary elements of the proposal will be removed following construction

with no permanent loss of agricultural land quality likely to occur and the permanent elements form a small area of land in total. A condition would be required to request a Soil Management Plan to ensure the soil resources and agricultural land is safeguarded.

Public health and other matters

- 5.76 The presence of overhead lines can sometimes give rise to concerns about possible adverse health effects within local communities. No comments have been received raising this as a concern, however the applicant have confirmed their adherence to the appropriate health guidelines for electricity infrastructure.
- 5.77 There are no concerns raised in terms of the proposal on residential amenity, and as outlined above, the proposal has been designed in discussion with the landowner (MoD), the tenant farmers and residents.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The options available to the local planning authority in responding to this consultation are to object or not object to the proposed development to provide 12km overhead wires and 4.7km underground electricity from Alwinton to Blindburn. The Authority will need to confirm whether as the LPA it requires a public inquiry to be held before the SoS reaches their decision on the application. If the LPA objects, the reasons need to be set out clearly. If the LPA decides not to object it can state whether this is subject to modifications and/ or conditions.
- 6.2 The LPA also needs to provide an opinion as to whether it has received sufficient information to determine whether the proposal is EIA development and whether or not an environmental impact assessment should be undertaken. Officers conclude, taking into account representations from consultees and technical specialists, that the proposal would not raise significant environmental issues that would warrant an EIA.
- 6.3 The need for the proposal has been clearly demonstrated, as have the significant public benefits of providing mains electricity to the three emergency masts and the properties in the valley. As such the proposal accords with the aims of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan 2022, notably objective 5.3 which seeks to *enhance and enable all forms of connectivity to create resilient, innovation ready networks*. It is recommended therefore that there is no objection to providing mains electricity to the Upper Coquet valley.
- 6.4 The proposal has been designed to ensure there will be no harm to cultural heritage and the historic environment, ecology, tranquillity, highways or public rights of way. The Environment Agency object to insufficient information, which officers consider can be provided and considered by the Secretary of State, or controlled through suitably worded conditions. This is not considered sufficient to warrant an objection to the proposal.
- 6.5 The Head of Conservation, as the Authority's landscape lead officer, has raised an objection in relation to visual amenity and landscape harm for a number of stretches of the proposed overhead line. The undergrounded stretches of the line are welcomed. The overhead line would be 12km in total length and it is considered that there are two stretches of the line (covering 1.8km in total) where the landscape harm could be avoidable by the applicants making modifications. The applicant, however, has explained that these modifications are not

technically feasible in these areas. Many other stretches of the overhead line that cause harm to the visual amenity and landscape character could be mitigated through tree planting.

- 6.6 As outlined by Natural England, the NNPA ecologist and the NNPA Head of Conservation, tree planting to provide mitigation will be essential to minimise the harm of the proposal to this part of a designated and protected landscape. Tree planting as mitigation cannot be part of a separate project but needs to be integral to this proposal.
- 6.7 Subject to the above mentioned mitigation, 85% of the overhead element of the line would cause no significant landscape or visual harm and would satisfy the requirements of Local Plan policies ST1, ST2 and DM11, including the major development policy ST3. For the remaining 15% of the overhead length there would be significant visual harm to the landscape that is not being minimised. As such there are parts of the proposal that would, as proposed, conflict with development plan policy. However as outlined earlier, it is important to remember that the Local Plan is simply a material consideration, and full compliance with planning policies is not essential for the consultation under the Electricity Act, as is the case here.
- 6.8 The conservation first approach set out in Section 62 of the Environment Act must be considered when weighing the community benefits against conservation harm. Officers consider that with minor modification and essential mitigation the most harmful parts of the scheme could be minimised in order to safeguard the landscape designation.
- 6.9 Whilst it is disappointing that the proposal will result in avoidable harm to the landscape, officers conclude that the considerable public benefits outweighs this harm and recommend that no objections are made to the proposal subject to the recommended minor modifications and conditions outlined in section 7 below.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 Officers recommend that **no objection** is raised subject to the following minor modifications to the proposed route:
 - Pole 34 – adjustment of location to allow tree to remain in SSSI (not felled) for ecological reasons.
 - Poles 110A to 111A – undergrounding or re-alignment to prevent loss of trees, for Ecological and landscape reasons.
 - Pole 112 – adjustment of location to less prominent siting due to landscape harm.
- 7.2 Officers recommend that **no objection** is raised subject to the 7 conditions and 3 informatives outlined below.
- 7.3 Officers recommend that the Authority **does not request** a Public Inquiry be held before the Secretary of State reaches their decision.
- 7.4 Officers consider the application should not be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Conditions

Tree planting plan

1. Prior to commencement of development, a detailed Landscape and Tree Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall make provision for the planting of new trees and hedgerow and any ongoing maintenance of existing and new woodland and provide a timeline for the plan. The agreed Landscape and Tree Management plan shall be implemented in full to the timescale agreed, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity and landscape character of the area and to ensure the development is in accordance with Local Plan Policies ST1, ST2, ST3 and DM10, DM11 and DM12 and the NPPF

Replacement trees

2. Prior to commencement of development, a scheme showing replacement trees (including locations and species) for those lost as part of this proposal, shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. This scheme shall show replacement broadleaved planting that secures a biodiversity net gain. The approved scheme shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details in the first planting season following the commencement of development. Any trees which die, or are otherwise removed, within a period of five years of the completion of the development shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: In order to provide an adequate level of compensation and net biodiversity and amenity gain for the loss of several trees as part of the proposal, in line with Local Plan Policies ST2, DM10 and DM12.

Ecological conditions

3. Prior to works commencing a further survey at the locations recommended in the Appendix 8 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal document Sections 6.3.3 otter and 6.3.4 water voles, and any other poles within 20m of the water course shall be carried out. The results of the survey shall inform the timing of works, methods and materials to be used, and the details of which shall be submitted and approved by the Environment Agency. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development poses no risk of unacceptable harm to protected species and to ensure the development is in accordance with Northumberland National Park Local Plan policies ST1, ST2 and DM10, and the NPPF.

4. Prior to construction works commencing, a Construction Ecological Management Plan shall be submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include details of how the otter, water vole, bats, nesting birds and other protected species are to be protected during construction works.

Reason: To ensure the works can be carried out without harm to protected species and to ensure the development is in accordance with Northumberland National Park Local Plan policies ST1, ST2 and DM10, and the NPPF

5. Any works to trees or tree felling should not be undertaken unless a checking survey has first been undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist. Bats should not be disturbed and

any birds that are found to be nesting being allowed to finish nesting before such work commences.

Reason: To ensure the works can be carried out without harm to protected species and to ensure the development is in accordance with Northumberland National Park Local Plan policies ST1, ST2 and DM10, and the NPPF

Soil management

6. A soil management plan shall be submitted to and approved by Natural England prior to construction of development. This should include the following:
 - i. An assessment of agricultural land and soil resource of the site will be undertaken before work commences (as per Natural England's Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land) which is considered to represent UK good practice.
 - ii. Mitigation should include reference to the Defra Construction Code
 - iii. The methods by which the applicant intends to restore affected areas to agricultural use after works including excavations and restoration has finished.
 - iv. An aftercare programme which would enable a satisfactory standard of agricultural after-use to be reached, with regards to cultivating, reseeding, draining or irrigating, applying fertiliser, or cutting and grazing the site.

Reason: To ensure the methods and mitigation relating to soil removal retains suitable quality for reuse, in accordance with local plan policies ST1 and ST2

Archaeology

7. The applicant shall commission a qualified and experienced archaeologist to conduct an archaeological mitigation scheme in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This will be limited to those poles and undergrounding sections as highlighted in table 2 of the Archaeological Assessment.

Reason: In order to ensure that there is no unacceptable risk to potential or unknown archaeology on the site and to safeguard the cultural heritage of the National Park, by providing an adequate opportunity to investigate archaeological remains on the site before development is carried out, in accordance with Northumberland National Park Local Plan policies ST1, ST2 and DM15, and Chapter 16 the NPPF.

Informative Notes

Licenses to work within the Highway (NCC Highways)

1. The applicant is advised that if works are required to be conducted within the highway, or there is a requirement for temporary traffic signals, Streetworks must be contacted prior to the commencement of any works that may require licences from the Local Highway Authority. Please contact Streetworks@Northumberland.gov.uk

Works to Scheduled Monument (Historic England)

2. No works should take place on the scheduled monument known as "Medieval and later dispersed settlement, 730m north and 860m north of Linbriggs" (NHLE No. 1016471) without consent from the Secretary of State at DCMS.

Ecology

3. Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) set out in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal shall be carried out to help prevent pollution and siltation and disturbance.

Contact Officer: For further information contact: Susannah Buylla, Head of Planning & Policy on 01434 611577 or Susannah.Buylla@nnpa.org.uk

Background papers: 23NP0023EL
<https://nnpa.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display/23NP0023EL>