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19 April 2024

Dear Sirs,

**SOUTH KESTEVEN LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (REGULATION 18) - REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF NATIONAL GRID ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION (SOUTH WEST) PLC**

These representations are prepared on behalf of National Grid Electricity Distribution (South West) Plc (NGED) (formerly Western Power Distribution (South West) Plc, in response to the South Kesteven Local Plan Review Regulation 18 draft local plan which is subject to public consultation.

**Introduction**

NGED owns and is responsible for electrical distribution apparatus within the area subject to this Local Plan and is the licensed network operator with statutory duties and powers including compulsory purchase powers.

In preparing development plans, local planning authorities (LPA) have a duty to safeguard the operation of National Grid's infrastructure to enable NGED to supply electricity in the most efficient and cost effective manner. In the majority of cases this will involve retention of the existing infrastructure in situ, including overhead power lines and pylons.

***Towards Net Zero***

The Government is committed to achieve net zero by 2050. The shift towards electricity to heat our homes and power our cars is critical to achieving this goal and the National Grid is playing a crucial role in meeting this commitment by increasing capacity to meet the growing demand for electricity. As a result of the increased demands for energy within our existing towns and cities, the capacity of

the National Grid is limited and may not be able to accommodate further development without deliver of new infrastructure, including new sub-stations.

NGED strongly recommends that local planning authorities contact them at the earliest possible opportunity for confirmation of the National Grid's capacity to accommodate planned growth in their area. If capacity is limited, LPAs should explore alternative locations for growth which may be less constrained or allocate land, in consultation with NGED, to accommodate a new sub-station. NGED should also be involved in the masterplanning of any development allocation which includes a large sub-station.

### ***132kV Overhead Lines***

Where diversion and/or undergrounding of overhead lines is deemed necessary to enable the development of a proposed allocation, lower voltage lines (up to 33kV) supported by wooden poles can normally be undergrounded or diverted without significant concern. However, where land allocations affect lines supported by steel lattice towers, particularly 132kV, the LPA are advised to engage with NGED at the earliest opportunity in the plan-making process to confirm:

- a) whether the lines can be accommodated within the development site; or
- b) the viability and feasibility of diverting and/or undergrounding overhead lines.

This includes, where relevant, ensuring the agreement of third party landowners to the provision of new infrastructure on their land and subsequent agreement between the LPA and NGED to appropriate wording within the allocation policy.

In allocating land affected by high voltage power lines, the LPA should take into account the additional costs involved in their diversion and/or undergrounding, the need for additional new infrastructure and its visual impact, including larger terminal towers at either end of an undergrounded line, and the potential impact on timescales for delivery of the development.

LPAs should also be aware that where high voltage electricity lines are undergrounded National Grid is unable to support any development which could affect the operation of or obstruct the line, including buildings, tree planting, public highway or attenuation features. A 10m wide corridor of open ground is required above the undergrounded cables. Accordingly, the retention of overhead lines in situ provides greater opportunities to deliver an efficient and effective masterplan, with the potential to deliver a range of uses beneath the lines including green infrastructure, public highway, drainage features and some biodiversity net gain measures.

NGED cannot be held accountable for the absence of a planned solution for a proposed diversion route or undergrounding of an overhead power line or any subsequent reduction in the allocation site's development capacity, where the LPA and/or developer/landowner has not agreed proposals with NGED prior to the adoption of the Local Plan.

### ***National Grid Capacity***

In light of the above, NGED requires LPAs to make early enquiries to ensure the National Grid has sufficient capacity to accommodate planned growth. If electricity capacity is limited, the LPA should engage with NGED to ascertain whether a new sub-station can be introduced to increase capacity and if so, where this should be located. Land should be safeguarded for the sub-station through the Local Plan. The timescales for delivery of a new sub-station and the implications for occupation of new homes should be taken into account in preparing the LPA's housing trajectory.

### ***Summary***

NGED does not object to the allocation of land upon which its infrastructure is present, however, in the context of the Government's commitment to reach Net Zero by 2050 and the role which National Grid has to play in delivering significant new infrastructure to meet existing and future energy demands, all reasonable efforts should be made by LPAs and developers to safeguard to retain the existing grid infrastructure and the associated embodied carbon.

In preparing Local Plans, LPAs should take the following steps :

1. Contact NGED as early as possible in the Plan making process to establish whether capacity exists in the grid to accommodate planned development.
2. Where land is allocated, priority should be given to retention of high voltage overhead lines wherever possible, with design principles included within the allocation policy to safeguard the retained lines and incorporate sensitively into the development, whilst achieving high standards of design and an efficient use of land.
3. Where necessary, early engagement with NGED to establish whether its infrastructure can be accommodated within the development or whether diversion/undergrounding is feasible;
4. Where diversion/undergrounding is required, ongoing dialogue with NGED to agree a potential route prior to adoption of the Local Plan, as outlined above.
5. For strategic allocations and sites significantly affected by overhead lines (e.g. with 5 or more pylons on site), NGED recommends early masterplanning and the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents to demonstrate site capacity and establish principles for the retention/diversion or undergrounding of overhead lines and safeguarding of land to accommodate new sub-stations, where necessary, with the agreement of NGED.

### **Spitalgate Heath Garden Village**

NGED comments specifically on the proposed allocation of land for delivering of Spitalgate Heath Garden Village including 3,700 new homes.

A 132kV overhead line traverses the allocation to the west of the railway line, with 3 steel lattice pylons sited within the proposed allocation land.

NGED does not object to the proposed allocation, however, as outlined above, the proposals should serve to retain the overhead line in situ and incorporate the line into the proposed masterplan. The diversion or undergrounding of the relatively short section of the overhead line which crosses the site would be illogical; undergrounding of three pylons would result in a requirement for two larger terminal towers, potentially involving third party land.

As referenced above, the local planning authority should contact NGED at the earliest opportunity to ascertain the capacity of the national grid in this area and whether an additional sub-station is required to increase capacity to serve the development.

Should you have any queries regarding the above, NGED would be happy to provide further advice and guidance.

Yours sincerely,



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**Director**

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