

Melksham Substation Access

Planning Statement

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Commented [MB1]: Update on completion

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The application and purpose of this document

This application for full planning permission is submitted by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (National Grid) and seeks approval for a new access (the Proposed Development) at the Melksham substation site at E: 389923, N: 166500 (the Site).

The location of the proposed access is shown in Figure 1. The application boundary is demarcated on the accompanying Site Location Plan (dwg ref. 102261-MES-CIV-ZZ-LAY-ZZ-DR-0001-01).

Figure 1: Site Location



Image: Airbus

This Planning Statement has been provided in accordance with the requirements as set out in Wiltshire Council's local validation requirements. It should be read in conjunction with the other documents and drawings submitted with this application, as listed below.

- Site Location Plan (102261-MES-CIV-ZZ-LAY-ZZ-DR-0001)
- Existing Site Plan (102261-MES-CIV-ZZ-LAY-ZZ-DR-0002)
- Proposed Site Plan (102261-MES-CIV-ZZ-LAY-ZZ-DR-0003)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (30231235-EcIA-PA-2)
- Speed Survey Results

Commented [MB2]: Update on receipt of final drawings.

The applicant

National Grid is the owner and operator of the high-voltage transmission network in England and Wales. The system operates mainly at 400,000 and 275,000 volts (400kV and 275kV respectively), connecting electricity generators to substations where the high voltages are transformed to lower voltages, enabling the power to be distributed to homes and businesses by Distribution Network Operators (DNO) who operate at a maximum of 132,000 volts (132kV).

National Grid is the only company licenced to transmit electricity in England and Wales. National Grid's Transmission Licence was granted under the Electricity Act 1989. When developing proposals for new network infrastructure, National Grid has a duty under the Electricity Act 1989 to do so in an efficient, co-coordinated and economical way. National Grid also has environmental responsibilities under the Act.

National Grid is regulated by the Office for Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) and through the terms of its transmission licence and obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989. National Grid is required to operate its transmission system in an economic, efficient, and coordinated manner whilst having regard to the preservation of amenity.

Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act requires National Grid to have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, conserving flora, fauna, and geological, or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings, and objects of architectural, historic, or archaeological interest. The Schedule also requires National Grid to do what it reasonably can to mitigate any effect which its proposals would have on such features.

In addition, when considering the design and siting of new substations, National Grid gives due regard to the degree to which potential options comply with guidelines contained in 'the Horlock Rules', in order to minimise the environmental impacts of such developments.

National Grid's responsibilities under the Electricity Act and the commitments made in carrying out electricity and gas projects are set out in 'Our stakeholder, community and amenity policy' at the following link:

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/81026/download>

Relevant Recent Planning History

Review of Wiltshire Council's planning portal indicates that the relevant site planning history comprises the following:

- 20/06840/FUL – *"Construction of a solar farm and battery storage facility together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure."*

This scheme is located to the north of Westlands Lane, with Melksham Substation located to the south. The red-line boundary in this permission

includes areas of the northern part of Melksham substation wider boundary. This will not be implicated by the currently proposed development.

- PL/2021/08690 – *“Installation of a solar farm and battery storage facility with associated infrastructure.”*

This permission includes underground cable routes along Westlands Lane. This will not be implicated by the currently proposed development.

Proposed Works

Need for the Proposed Development

National Grid is preparing for works to facilitate the construction of a Gridpark at Melksham Substation to facilitate 3no. 33 kilovolt customer connections. These works include a new internal road to provide vehicular access to the existing substation site and new substation. They will be undertaken on operational land and fall within the thresholds for permitted development on operational land.

The current application proposes a new bellmouth access to allow vehicular access from Westlands Lane to the above-mentioned new internal road. While the construction of the internal road falls within National Grid's permitted development rights, Westlands Lane is a classified 'C' road, and therefore planning permission is required for the bellmouth only. Consequently, National Grid have submitted this planning application.

Project Description

A brief description of the proposed is set out below:

- The application site measures 3,540m².
- The laydown area for the wider grid park works will be used to construct the proposed bellmouth.

Construction

Construction would take approximately six months, and it is National Grid's intention to commence construction following grant of planning permission.

Proposed construction hours are between the hours of 7.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Friday (subject to agreement with the Local Authority). These construction hours correspond to the approved DCO construction hours.

Operation

The proposed bellmouth will facilitate vehicular access to a Gridpark within operational land at Melksham Substation, which is being sought via permitted development rights provided it meets all requisite criteria.

When operational, it is estimated that the access will accommodate 1-3 vans per month, required for monthly maintenance and dealing with faults.

Commented [MB3]: Ryan - could you please confirm vehicle nos?

Consideration of Environmental Information

Drainage

Drainage arrangements relating to the bellmouth will be designed and constructed in accordance with the relevant standards.

During pre-application discussions with Wiltshire Council, it was requested that surface water drainage does not drain onto the highway. It is considered that this requirement can be secured via a suitably worded condition.

Traffic and Transport

The proposed bellmouth access has been designed in accordance with relevant highway standards to ensure it facilitates safe vehicular access and egress to the Site.

Speed surveys have been undertaken to ensure adequate allowances for visibility are made.

Pre-application discussions with Wiltshire Council were undertaken. As part of these discussions, it was requested that speed surveys are undertaken to determine the 85th percentile speeds to guide visibility requirements to the South-East along Westlands Lane. The maximum achievable splay has been plotted on the accompanying Location Plan (Sheet 2 of 2, dwg ref. 102261-MES-CIV-ZZ-LAY-ZZ-DR-0001), and the speed survey results accompany this application.

A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be produced prior to commencement of works on site.

Flood Risk

Desktop review indicates that the site is not located within Flood Zone 1. The site is also less than 1 hectare in size and, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework a site-specific flood risk assessment is not required.

Ecology

Commented [MB4]: Ecology section to be updated with any new conclusions following Arcadis' update of EclA.

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report (doc ref. 30231235-EclA-PA-2) has been prepared by Arcadis and is submitted alongside this application. The assessments undertaken to inform this report included a desktop study to gather information about wildlife sites and protected species in the local area, and a Phase 1 habitat, BNG habitat, and protected species walkover to identify important ecological features.

The accompanying EclA and BNG Report confirms that no statutory or non-statutory locally designated ecological sites exist within two kilometres of the proposed

application site. The Bath and Bradford-upon-Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated as a site of international importance for bats, lies within 10 kilometres of the Site. The EclA confirms that no habitats of particular value to the relevant bat species were identified on the proposed development site and concludes that any resultant impacts on these bat populations are unlikely.

The Site primarily comprises hardstanding and a small area semi-improved grassland, the latter of which will be cut into to facilitate construction of the bellmouth to the necessary standard (11m² will be removed). The proposed development does not necessitate the removal of any trees or hedges. The EclA confirms that the Site does not have potential to support protected or notable species, due to only containing a small area of poor quality grassland.. The report further concludes that there will be no impacts on designated sites, habitats or species provided fencing is installed to ensure adjacent habitats are protected from construction works. For further details, refer to the accompanying EclA.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposed application site comprises hardstanding and a small area of grassland. The area of habitat that would be affected is less than 25m².

The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 outlines the De Minimis exemption in respect of BNG. This exemption exempts development from the biodiversity gain planning condition where the development:

- does not impact any onsite priority habitat;
- impacts less than 25 square metres of non-priority onsite habitat; and
- No other onsite habitats will be impacted.

It is considered that, by virtue of its location on hard standing, the proposed development meets all of the above-mentioned criteria. In this light, the accompanying EclA, in Section 7, confirms that:

- *“The development does not impact any onsite priority habitat;*
- *The development solely impacts areas of artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface which has a biodiversity value of zero under the statutory biodiversity metric so no gain is required;*
- *No other onsite habitats will be impacted.”*

In consideration of the foregoing, the proposed development meets the De Minimis exemption.

Archaeology and Heritage

Review of Historic England mapping does not indicate that the proposed application site contains or has the potential to include heritage assets of archaeological

Commented [EP5]: As above.

Commented [MB6R5]: As above - this is the conclusion in the EclA. Since confirmed that there's a small area of grass verge, so we need to check that this doesn't implicate this conclusion.

significance. The site is also not within a conservation area or within an area of special interest.

The closest listed buildings to the site comprise Westlands Farmhouse (Grade 2; list entry no. 1021774) to the north-west, various Grade 1 and 2 listed buildings associated with Beanacre Manor to the south-east. There are Grade 2 listed building nearby (scattered to the east, and one to the north – Westlands Farmhouse). The wider Melksham site also contains record of archaeological events. There is notably no record of any such events within the proposed application site. A Cultural Heritage Constraints Report was prepared for the wider site and confirms the above position.

The nature and scale of the proposed development does not indicate that there will be any significant impact on the above-mentioned listed buildings or archaeological records. For further detail, refer to the accompanying Cultural Heritage Constraints Report.

Noise and Vibration

Some construction noise would be associated through construction traffic and the use of equipment on site. The methods used will seek to minimise noise and vibration to any surrounding receptor. Any potential construction noise or vibration would be temporary in nature, and thus no significant effects from noise and vibration are expected.

National Grid will develop a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will be available prior to commencement of development on site, which will include dust management to the relevant standard.

Air Quality

Desktop review does not indicate that the site is within an Air Quality Management Area. Notwithstanding, the nature and scale of the proposed development does not indicate that it is likely to have any adverse impacts in respect of air quality post-construction.

National Grid will develop a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will be available prior to commencement of development on site, which will include dust management to the relevant standard.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed development is not of a nature or scale that will result in any significant material impacts in respect of landscape or visual impact.

Green Space

The Wiltshire Council Core Strategy Interactive Map identifies the site as being within an area of Local Green Space within the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan. However, review of the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan indicates that the site lies

outside the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan area, and the site is not identified as a community greenspace in Appendix 2 of this document; '*Detailed Community Green Space Maps.*'

The site lies within the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan area. The Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 includes a map of designated local green spaces at Figure 15. The proposed application site is not affected by any such designation.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposed application site, comprises primarily hardstanding in addition to a small area of grass verge. In consideration of this, the proposed development will therefore not significantly impact the surrounding green areas, whether designated or not.

Commented [EP7]: As above.

Commented [MB8R7]: As above. Potential discrepancy between EclA and actual proposed site. This needs checked.

Planning Policy Context

The relevant planning policy context is set out in this section.

National Planning Policy

The overarching National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (NPS EN-1) (December 2025) is part of a suite of NPSs issued by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. It sets out the Government's policy for delivery of major energy infrastructure. Paragraph 2.4.1 recognises the role of energy to economic prosperity and social wellbeing, and that it is therefore important that our supplies of energy remain secure, reliable, and affordable. Paragraph 3.3.10 highlights the importance of maintaining sufficient supply of electricity to meet demand during the current transition to net zero.

The proposed development forms part of wider works within Melksham Substation, the remainder of which are being pursued under permitted development. These wider works, including the proposed development, will ensure that adequate infrastructure is available at Melksham Substation for current and future demand, allowing National Grid to undertake its statutory duty under the Electricity Act to maintain an efficient, coordinated, and economic electricity transmission system in England and Wales.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF provides the national policy context against which planning decisions should be considered and is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It has three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (Paragraph 8).

Central to the NPPF is 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development' (Paragraphs 10 and 11). This is highlighted in Section 4: Decision Making '...Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible' (Paragraph 39).

NPPF paragraph 161 requires that the planning system supports the transition to a low carbon future through helping to support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

The proposed development comprises a new bellmouth access to the existing Melksham substation site. This substation forms part of the country's network of essential infrastructure for electricity transmission, which contributes to the above-mentioned transition to a low carbon future.

The proposed development will contribute to ensuring that adequate infrastructure is available at Melksham Substation for current and future demand, allowing National Grid to undertake its statutory duty under the Electricity Act to maintain an efficient, coordinated, and economic electricity transmission system in England and Wales.

Local Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that decisions made under the planning acts should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan in the case of this application is the Wiltshire Core Strategy which was adopted on 20 January 2015.

This section assesses the proposed development against the relevant Development Plan Policies. Policies relating to the principle of the proposed development are assessed first. This is followed by an assessment of the remaining Core Plan Policies, which inform the detail of the proposed development after the principle of development has been established.

Commented [JM9]: Update this section as it doesn't read well.

Principle of Development

The site lies within the Melksham Community Area, as demarcated in Figure 5.10 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Melksham Core Strategy Core Policy 15 *Spatial Strategy: Melksham Community Area* states that development in the Melksham Community Area should be in accordance with the Settlement Strategy set out in Core Policy 1.

Core Policy 1 concerns development proposed within Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres, and Large and Small Villages. The Melksham Core Strategy does not identify the site as being within any of these areas.

In addition, the Core Policy 15 narrative, at paragraph 5.83, outlines issues and considerations to be taken into account for development proposals with the Melksham Community area. It is not considered that the proposed development is of a nature or scale which is relevant to this policy narrative.

Notwithstanding, it is considered that the proposed development and the wider Melksham Substation works will contribute to ensuring that the electricity infrastructure network remains fit for purpose for local and national needs, and in this sense supports the sustainable growth of communities in Wiltshire, in line with Core Policies 1 and 15.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy Strategic Objective 6 seeks to ensure that essential infrastructure is in place to support Wiltshire's communities. The proposed development forms part of wider works at National Grid Melksham Substation which is a significant component of the national electricity infrastructure network. In consideration of this, the proposed development aligns with the aims of Core Strategy Strategic Objective 6.

In consideration of the assessment made in this section, the principle of the proposed development is acceptable.

Supporting Policies

The remaining Core Plan Policies relevant to the proposed development are considered in the below table.

Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy Assessment

Policy	Summary	Assessment of Policy
Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Seeks to protect features of nature conservation and geological value. In particular, this policy requires that all development proposals incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.	As outlined in the Ecology section of this report, the accompanying EclA and BNG Report considers that there will be no impacts on designated sites, habitats or species provided fencing is installed to ensure adjacent habitats are protected from construction works. For further details, refer to the accompanying EclA. The proposed development therefore complies with Core Policy 50.
Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure	Seeks that development proposals make provision for the retention and enhancement of Wiltshire's green infrastructure network.	As noted in the Green Space section of this report, there is a conflict between what is shown in the Wiltshire Core Strategy Interactive Map and the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, in that the former indicates that it is within an area of Local Greenspace, and the latter indicates that it is not. Notwithstanding, the site currently comprises primarily hardstanding with a small area of grass verge and therefore the proposed development will only result in the loss of a small area of grass verge, and therefore no significant loss of existing green infrastructure, whether it is designated or not.

Commented [MB10]: As noted above, updated with any new EclA conclusions once received.

		The proposed development therefore complies with Core Policy 52.
Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping	Requires a high standard of design for all new developments. In particular, criterion ii seeks <i>“the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features.”</i>	The proposed bellmouth will be suitably designed and constructed in line with relevant standards. The proposed development is sited to avoid impacts on surrounding natural features. The site is currently hardstanding, and as such, there will be no such impacts. The recommendations of the accompanying EclA will be upheld, which includes installing fencing throughout construction to mitigate any potential impacts on surrounding natural features.
Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment	Seeks the protection, conservation, and enhancement (where possible) of the historic environment.	As outlined in the Archaeology and Heritage section of this report, the proposed development site is not subject to any archaeological or heritage related designations. Nearby archaeological records and the setting of nearby listed buildings will not be impacted by the proposed development by virtue of its nature and scale. For further detail, refer to the Archaeology and Heritage Section of this report and the accompanying Cultural Heritage Constraints Report. The proposed development therefore complies with Core Policy 58.
Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport	Seeks to promote the sustainable, safe, and efficient movement of people and goods within and through Wiltshire. This is to be achieved by, <i>inter alia</i> , assessing and mitigating (where necessary) any impacts of development on transport	The proposed development seeks to formalise a vehicular access route to Melksham substation. This will ensure safe vehicular movement to and from the substation site. It will not result in the creation of any

	users, local communities, and the environment.	additional vehicular access points to the site. Speed surveys have been undertaken to determine the appropriate visibility splays to ensure safe vehicular access and egress from the site.
Core Policy 61: Transport and New Development	Seeks development to be sited and designed to reduce the need to travel by private car and encourage sustainable transport alternatives.	The siting of the proposed development is relative to the existing Melksham substation, therefore consideration of alternative siting is not feasible. In respect of design, the substation is essential infrastructure and the proposed development is required to facilitate National Grid to undertake its statutory duty under the Electricity Act 1989 to facilitate electricity transmission in an efficient, co-ordinated, and economical way.
Core Policy 62: Development Impacts on the Transport Network	States that development should provide appropriate mitigation, where required, to offset any adverse impacts on the transport network that arise as a result of a proposed development. The policy states that new development should not be accessed directly from the national primary route network unless an overriding need can be demonstrated.	It is not anticipated that the proposed development will result in any significant impacts on the transport network. The proposed development does not adjoin the national primary route network.
Core Policy 67: Flood Risk	States that development proposed in Flood Zones 2 and 3 will need apply the sequential test in line with requirements of national policy and established in best practice. New development is to include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and improve rainwater infiltration to soil and ground, including SuDS.	The site is not within Flood Zones 2 or 3. The development will be appropriately constructed and drained in accordance with relevant standards.

Summary and Conclusions

This Planning Statement sets out the details of the proposed access at the existing Melksham substation.

The proposed access extension is required to formalise the vehicular access to a Gridpark within operational land at Melksham Substation, which is being sought via permitted development rights provided it meets all requisite criteria.

Supporting environmental information, including for ecology and transport has been provided by National Grid and is summarised in this statement. It is considered that, subject to suitably worded planning conditions and the subsequent implementation of the approved mitigation contained within the various management plans, the proposed access is acceptable in terms of national and local planning policies and any potential effects on the environment.

National Grid is satisfied that the proposed development will not result in significant and/or unacceptable environmental effects. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the overarching policies of the NPPF and of the Development Plan.