

Huntshaw & Alverdiscott Parish Council – XLinks Site Visit on 25th November 2022

Present:- Caroline Lewis, James White, Helen Bolton

Reason for Visit:-

XLinks held a presentation session about the construction of their proposed 3.6 GW power supply from Morocco to the UK on the 23rd November that includes the building of a HVDC Conversion Station in the fields between Greater Huxhill and Higher Huxhill. Torridge District Council had previously advised against the site preferred by XLinks which is a field known locally as the Old Show Ground Field situated between Gammaton Cross and Webbery Cross on the grounds of visual harm and had recommended that XLinks find an alternative. Our visit was made to judge for ourselves the validity of the TDC recommendation to XLinks. Our visit also included viewing the Show Ground site from various vantage points around the parish.

Findings:-

1. It is true that this location is high but all the view points are either very distant or largely hidden by intervening ground so visual impact is minimised. The field in question slopes down from the road in a south easterly direction such that the lower hedge is some 11metres below the level of the road according the OS map. XLinks have demonstrated that they are prepared to excavate sufficient material from a site to achieve a level building platform thereby reducing the apparent height of the buildings. If this is done and the spoil used to create banks much could be achieved to reduce the impact of the construction as they have already demonstrated.
2. When consideration is given to the view points from the north west the site is surrounded by many other higher objects both adjacent and further to the south east. In particular National Grid transmission line towers, wind turbines and a TV mast so it is difficult to accept that a new building, where screening has been applied and sympathetically painted, would stand out significantly bearing in mind the substantial distances to the various view points that would be involved.
3. There is already a solar farm adjacent to the Show Ground site and a major expansion is in the pipeline that will probably treble the area covered with panels. When viewed from distant viewpoints these panels have a substantial impact on the eye so this area is already viewed as essentially an industrial park. There is no hiding solar panels from distant viewpoints and the National Grid station is going to have to expand as well to accommodate the additional power
4. Additionally there are significant advantages in siting this plant at XLinks preferred location namely the Old Show Ground.
 - a. Access is easier
 - b. It is much closer to the National Grid site
 - c. The site is broadly level and there should be less earth to move
 - d. It is further away from residential habitation than the Huxhill site
 - i. The nearest habitation is 350m away on the other side of the hill
 - ii. The second nearest is 550m away and the next nearest is 750m distant
 - iii. At the Huxhill site the nearest habitation is 100m away and the second nearest is 200m away and there are others between 200 -300m distance and all look down onto the site.
 - iv. Really distant viewpoints such as Saunton Sands are 13.5 km away and a telescope would be necessary to identify any construction on the Show Ground if well designed.
 - e. Water run off and pollution risks at the Show Ground would be much reduced and more contained particularly during construction. The steep nature of the land at

Huxhill risks serious pollution problems as the fast flowing streams would carry it into the Torridge in a matter of minutes.

- f. The local population recognise this project as being of national strategic importance and simple opinion sampling indicates they would be relaxed about using the Show Ground for this facility but are fiercely opposed to the proposed Huxhill site.

Conclusion

It is our strongly held view that TDC Planning and XLinks need to look again at the Show Ground Site and carry out a substantial design exercise to determine if the perceived issue of visual impact can be reduced to acceptable levels thereby allowing the project to proceed without local opposition.

Signed

J.V. White

C. Lewis

H. Bolton

25/11/22