

## Bengeworth Road Public Information Event

### Minutes of the meeting

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#### Overview

On Wednesday 20 January 2021, a public information session was held for the works at Bengeworth Road, as part of National Grid's London Power Tunnels project. The session was called following two previous information sessions, both held on 7 December 2020. Residents and stakeholders were informed of the January 2021 session via a direct mail which was sent on 8 January 2021 to a total of 1,373 neighbouring residents. Emails were also sent to all ward (Herne Hill) councillors, as well as local MP Helen Hayes – all of whom attended the session. Alongside elected representatives, 60 residents attended the online meeting.

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**Meeting called by:** National Grid

**Date:** Wednesday 20 January 2021

**Time:** 6pm – 7:30pm

**Venue:** Zoom Webinar

**Attendees:**

*Speakers and panel members (6)*

- Gareth Burden, Project Director, National Grid (GB)
- Darren Kempson, Senior Land Officer, National Grid (DK)
- Sam Chesman, Project Manager, National Grid (SC)
- Sarah Harris, Regional External Affairs Manager, National Grid (SH)
- Farhan Nomani, Project Manager, UK Power Networks (FN)
- Joe Cawley, Director, Grayling (JC)

*Technical Support and notetakers (3)*

- Ed Lavelle, Grayling
- Flora McCaul, Grayling
- Priya Shah, Grayling

*Elected representatives (4)*

- Helen Hayes MP, Member of Parliament for Dulwich and West Norwood
- Councillor Jim Dickson, Ward Councillor for Herne Hill, Lambeth
- Councillor Rebecca Thackray, Ward Councillor for Herne Hill, Lambeth
- Councillor Pauline George, Ward Councillor for Herne Hill, Lambeth

*Residents and members of the local community (60)*

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## Presentation

Sarah Harris (SH) opened the session by making a number of “housekeeping” points and introducing fellow members of the panel, before handing over to Project Director Gareth Burden (GB) who provided a short introduction to National Grid and the London Power Tunnels (LPT) project. GB noted that the LPT project forms a vital part of London’s critical infrastructure and is essential to ensure a safe and secure energy supply for London.

Sam Chesman (SC), Bengeworth Road Project Manager, continued, providing an overview of the proposed works at the Bengeworth Road site, explaining the legal obligation National Grid has to connect companies such as UK Power Networks to the network. SC outlined how the proposed new substation would operate in relation to the other LPT sites, before passing over to Farhan Nomani (FN) from UK Power Networks. FN explained that currently, Bengeworth Road is a UK Power Networks site, with the substation serving properties across South London whilst also serving as an operational depot for UK Power Network teams.

SC presented the proposed tunnel design for the new Bengeworth Road development, whilst also detailing the newly proposed layout of the site. Moving on, SC showcased an indicative design of a headhouse, yet noted that the actual design of the Bengeworth Road headhouse was still under development through conversations with Lambeth Council. SC reiterated that National Grid’s new substation would not exceed a height of 15m, while the proposed headhouse would have a height of 10m.

FN noted that UK Power Networks are currently in the process of designing the structure of their new substation, which will be fully enclosed to limit excess noise and disturbance. FM explained that by ensuring UK Power Network’s new substation is gas insulated, rather than air insulated (as per the existing substation), the site will be more visually appealing, efficient and quieter when running at maximum capacity.

Moving on to working hours, SC outlined how below ground engineering works will require 24/7 working, whilst for all works above ground, usual working hours will be 8am-6pm (Monday-Friday) and 8am-1pm on a Saturday. For traffic movements, SC stated that 120 movements (60 vehicles) a day will be needed during peak activity and that residents would be updated when days of peak activity would likely occur. On an average working day, 80 movements (40 vehicles) will be required to move materials.

Discussing access routes, SC explained that the current proposal will see vehicles access the site down Padfield Road and along Southwell Road, before turning into Bengeworth Road. Vehicles will then egress along Southwell Road and Harbour Road. SC noted that all vehicles will comply with the latest emission standards, before briefly touching on a number of measures which will be in place to help reduce noise and light pollution. SC confirmed that National Grid were in discussions with third parties about using alternative access routes.

On the project timeline, SC noted that following initial survey works in March 2020, site set up will begin in early 2021, with tunnelling looking to begin towards the second half of 2021. Construction of National Grid’s and UK Power Network’s substations and headhouse will begin in 2022.

SH moved on to community engagement and reiterated that the project has a dedicated community relations team. She detailed the project’s engagement to date with local residents, yet noted that despite efforts, a number of residents may have missed previous communications. In addition, SH explained that NG are proposing to create a Community Liaison Group (CLG), which can help coordinate information to residents and ensure a regular dialogue between the community and the project. Residents were asked to email the community relations team if they wished to be a part of the group moving forward.

Before concluding the presentation, SH outlined how the project is working with local community groups and investing in the area, detailing the project’s partnership with social enterprise, MyKindaFuture, as well as National Grid’s Community Grant Fund. Again, SH stated that residents should get in touch with National Grid if they were interested in the grant fund.

## Questions

*Please note that this is a summary of the questions and responses and there is a separate document with all questions and answers for your reference. For ease, we have grouped questions under themes.*

### **Noise and dust pollution**

The question session began by a number of residents expressing their concern around noise and dust pollution, particularly with Ruskin Park and a local playground being in close proximity.

SC reiterated that all vehicles would comply with all the necessary emission standards, whilst the site team will do everything possible to minimise dust from the site – for example, materials will be kept separately. GB also noted that the contractor who is awarded to carry out the Bengeworth Road site works will be a member of the Considerate Contractors scheme.

As echoed by a number of resident questions in the Q&A function of the event, concerns around noise pollution were expressed by Cllr Pauline George, with SC noting that the project will use noise barriers around the site where appropriate to reduce disruption to residents. Monitors will be placed around the site with levels not allowed to exceed those as stipulated by Lambeth Council. In addition, SH spoke briefly about the project's future apprenticeship programme in response to Cllr George's query, noting that National Grid would be working with contractors to ensure opportunities are afforded to those in the local area. SH promised to provide Cllr George with further details.

On a specific point around possible noise raised by a resident of Southwell Road, FN noted that residents should not be able to hear any additional noise above current rates once the substation is complete, due to the lack of moving parts and full enclosure of the new building [in comparison to the open aired 'air insulated' site]. He also stated that the design of the development has been made so that louder machinery, such as the Super Grid Transformers (SGTs), has been positioned away from properties and nearer to the existing railway line. GB confirmed the team would be happy to share information which has been submitted to the Council to help inform the site's development.

An additional point was raised around vehicle dust, with GB reassuring those present that all vehicles leaving the site will pass through a wheel wash, whilst also using heavy covers to ensure minimum dust impact on the community.

### **HGVs and access routes**

Moving on, Cllr Dickson welcomed the formation of the Community Liaison Group, yet raised the issue of vehicle access, which was also mentioned by a large number of residents in the Q&A. Cllr Dickson asked what was being done to minimise the impact of vehicle movements and if alternative routes were being explored. GB stressed that the project team was looking at all potential access routes, with Darren Kempson (DK) noting that conversations with third parties were ongoing in attempts to explore alternative access/egress routes.

A further resident raised the issue of vehicle movements and asked if consideration had been given to all existing routes entering the current site, including one from King's College business park. On the issue of removing excavation material, they also asked if it was possible to use the existing railway – a point which was later raised by a large number of residents. GB confirmed that the team would speak with Network Rail about the possibility of using these lines for the removal of excavated material, having already engaged with them over the proposed engineering works. On the issue of access roads, DK stressed that the project was actively engaging with third parties who own parts of existing access routes to ensure all avenues are explored regarding the ingress/egress of vehicles.

A resident of Harbour road enquired further about the proposed traffic movements. SC noted that at present there was a two-day point where the project would need to utilise 120 movements (60 vehicles), but for the majority 80 movements (40 vehicles) a day would be needed over an estimated 18-month timeframe. SC reiterated he would investigate the railway as a possible alternative to remove materials and that the vehicle movement numbers stated were a worst-case scenario – with reduced engineering and hence reduced numbers under review.

A number of stakeholders raised concerns around the size of the HGVs. SC remarked that typical vehicles would weigh around 20 tonnes, with rare occasions when heavier equipment would need to be brought into site.

### **Building design and structure**

A resident of Southwell Road raised an issue concerning the impact on properties backing onto the current site, noting the possible impacts on light, as well as noise. On the issue of the new substations blocking light, SC explained that NG had conducted a daylight shadings assessment, which was submitted to Lambeth Council as part of the Lawful Development Certificate application. FN also stated that new building structures on the development would be built at a distance from the boundary wall, as to not immediately back on to properties on Southwell Road, before stressing that the height of these buildings would be kept as low as possible.

Another resident of Southwell Road stressed that a number of properties would be overshadowed by the proposed works and that the daylight assessment conducted on behalf of the project was factually incorrect. Both SC and GB promised to look at these concerns in further detail and encouraged the resident to send examples through to the community relations team. An issue was raised about the independence of the assessment, to which GB stressed that the project had followed due process and would continue to do so. On the overall issue of further independent assessments, GB noted this is a point which could be taken away and explored further, but reiterated that the project had followed due process. GB noted that the community relations team would be in touch with the resident to discuss her concerns further, and promised to look into the points which she raised in greater detail separately.

Another resident of Southwell Road asked an additional question regarding the proximity of the new substation to the boundary wall. FN noted that he would look into this specific point further as there would be differences between individual properties, but that he believed the distance to be 8m from the boundary to the proposed new substation.

### **Needs case**

A number of residents expressed confusion as to why the tunnels were needed and existing infrastructure not appropriate. GB noted that the new development was critical to the long-term electricity supply for London. Noting the current circuits, which are oil filled, water cooled cable technology, have reached the end of their operational life and are buried within the local roads and cannot be replaced in situ.

### **Impact on properties / compensation**

Another resident raised an additional point around property values and expressed concerns about prior agreements with National Grid not being honoured. GB stated that the project would honour all agreements it had previously committed to, and, alongside DK, would be looking into the resident's query in further detail.

A large number of residents raised concerns regarding compensation and the process should any buildings be damaged as a result of the development. GB confirmed the project would make good any impacts which have resulted from National Grid's works and reassured residents that constant monitoring of equipment would reduce the likelihood of any impact on properties.

### **Permitted Development Rights**

Helen Hayes MP asked a number of questions to the project team, noting that she would continue to represent the concerns of constituents through the construction and operation of the site. The team confirmed that residents with specific questions mentioned in the Q&A would receive a reply to their concerns via email, while the meeting would be minuted to capture the main conversation.

Ms Hayes asked the panel about the planning process for the site and which elements of the site are under permitted development – a point mirrored in a number of questions on the Q&A. GB explained that National Grid and UK Power Networks both operate under the Electricity Act, which allows for

development of existing brownfield sites currently in use. The project has submitted its proposal for the development of Bengeworth Road under permitted development. On the subject of the visual impact of the final buildings, GB stated that the final design of the buildings were yet to be developed and further conversations on their design could be had with local residents. DK noted that if the buildings fall under 15m in height – this would fall under permitted development, with anything over needing planning permission. DK mentioned that Lambeth Council would be a close partner on the design of the buildings and that the project would not object to residents sharing their opinions for the design. SH confirmed this would be a topic of the community liaison group.

A further question was asked around permitted development rights, to which FN explained that all was being done to reduce the height of proposed buildings falling within permitted development. FN and GB further explained that all engineering solutions were being looked into in order to reduce the height of buildings. GB noted that National Grid has constructed substations under full planning permissions and permitted development in recent years in Wimbledon and Highbury and that the sizes of the buildings are not materially different.

### **Monitoring of works**

A further question was asked live, and reiterated in resident Q&A questions, about how National Grid would monitor the overall impact of traffic movements, noise and light pollution. GB mentioned that the information in the project's logistics plan would be used as a baseline reference point for works and that all avenues, including reducing the size of the tunnels, would be looked into to reduce the overall impact on residents. Residents expressed their desire that future conversations with the community liaison group would lead to further details being shared with local residents.

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### **Closing remarks**

Joe Cawley drew proceedings to a close and noted that those who had raised specific points separately in the Q&A would be responded to via email. He also encouraged residents to contact the community relations team to express their interest in joining the community liaison group.

MEETING ADJOURNED

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