

Bengeworth Road Community Liaison Group

Minutes of the meeting

Overview

On Tuesday 8 March 2022, the eighth Community Liaison Group (CLG) meeting was held to discuss the works at Bengeworth Road, as part of National Grid's London Power Tunnels project (LPT). All residents who previously signed up for the CLG were invited to attend the meeting. Emails were also sent to all ward (Herne Hill) councillors, as well as local MP, Helen Hayes and local community group Loughborough Junction Action Group.

Seven residents and one councillor, Cllr Jim Dickson, attended the session. The CLG followed three online engagement events in February 2022 on the design options for the Bengeworth Road substation and headhouse, and seven previous CLG meetings held throughout 2021 and 2022. National Grid also held three public information sessions, two held on 7 December 2020 and one held on 20 January 2021, about the overall works at Bengeworth Road.

Meeting called by: National Grid

Date: Tuesday 8 March 2022

Time: 6-7pm

Venue / format: Zoom

Speakers and panel members (6)

- Mark Farmer (MF), Project Manager, National Grid
- Sarah Harris (SH), External Affairs Manager – London and South East, National Grid
- Tony Markwick (TM), Markwick Architects
- Phoebe Adams (PA), Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Manager, UK Power Networks
- Andrew White (AW), Project Manager, UK Power Networks
- Joe Cawley (JC), Director, Grayling

Technical Support and notetakers (2)

- Priya Aggarwal-Shah, Grayling
- Natasha Hall, Grayling

Residents and members of the local community (8)

Presentation

Joe Cawley (JC) opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending the CLG meeting. He introduced the team, starting with himself as a Director at Grayling, noting that he would also be chairing the meeting. The rest of the team then introduced themselves and outlined their role on the project.

JC then discussed housekeeping rules, asking attendees to raise the hand function or post in the chat if they had any questions to ask. He mentioned that the meeting would be recorded for internal purposes and that the minutes and Q&A would be made available on the London Power Tunnels website following the meeting.

He continued on to the agenda, noting that it would cover the following:

1. Site works update
2. UK Power Networks update
3. Public Engagement for substation and headhouse design
4. Next steps and timeline
5. Your questions and AOB

Site works update

Mark Farmer (MF) first showed construction images of the shaft at Bengeworth Road by way of an update. He confirmed that the team would be completing this with some reinforced concrete work over the next four months. He also explained that the team would be constructing a dividing wall through the centre of the shaft.

MF then showed an image of how the site currently looks, noting that a crane is still on site. He explained that deliveries of materials would occur on site when needed and that concrete would also be delivered when periodic concrete pours were scheduled. He noted that there would be a relatively low volume of traffic on site.

MF also confirmed that the team were not expected to work beyond normal working hours of 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturday.

UK Power Networks update

Andrew White (AW) began by introducing himself as the new UK Power Networks project manager at Bengeworth Road. He outlined the four key updates from UK Power Networks:

- UK Power Networks are in the early stages of assigning an architect and design consultant to work with them on finalising designs for the switchhouse (substation) building at Bengeworth Road.
- He then went on to explain that the application for the permitted development for the switchhouse building will be submitted towards the end of summer 2022.
- Prior to this submission, UK Power Networks will be hosting public consultation events where they will share designs for their substation building. They will also involve residents on the development process.
- Letter drops and other communications will be going out in due course and that himself and Phoebe Adams (PA) would be personally introducing themselves to members of the local community.

Public Engagement for substation and headhouse design

Sarah Harris (SH) stated that National Grid shared the initial design options for the headhouse and substation designs with the local community and asked for feedback in February. We held the two originally planned online engagement events with an additional event being held to account for technical issues. She explained that this was to allow the community ample time and opportunity to feed back their views to the community relations team, who were on hand to discuss any issues either on live chat or over the phone. SH added that multiple reminders and communications were sent out throughout the engagement period, due to initial low engagement.

SH then discussed the outcome of the feedback from the engagement events. She explained that the website received 224 visitors throughout the engagement period from 10 – 24 February and that only three feedback forms were received, all of which selected brick as the preferred option. She added that, whilst National Grid hoped for more extensive feedback, due to the limited feedback received, we would progress the brick option with the local authority.

Substation design: brick option

Tony Markwick (TM) explained that the design would involve brick cladding on the east, south and west elevations of the building [images of these design options can be found on Slide 15 of the CLG presentation], with the south elevation facing Ruskin Park. He stated that the rear of the building would feature vertical metal cladding that goes up the back of the building and onto the roof. TM also clarified that both the substation option and the headhouse have an overhanging canopy, with the metal vertical cladding running up the back and onto the roof of both buildings [A 3D view of the substation and its design can be found on Slide 15 of the CLG presentation]. He added that the middle section of the brickwork part of the building will have three 'feature' bands of 'saw tooth' brickwork bands, with a dark grey brickwork base [This design option can also be viewed on Slide 15].

Next steps and timeline

MF reiterated that National Grid would be taking forward the preferred brick option following the feedback from the engagement sessions. The designs will be submitted to Lambeth Council in early April due to ongoing design development. MF expected the application to be determined within 8 weeks, depending on any outstanding queries, so that the construction of the headhouse can commence in summer 2022, once shaft works are complete.

He added that UK Power Networks will also be engaging with residents on its substation design in summer 2022 and that the National Grid substation construction is anticipated to commence in early 2023, leading up to a completion date on site in summer 2025.

JC then opened the floor to questions.

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.

Substation design (National Grid):

Several residents raised concerns around why the elevation that would face Southwell Road would not be brick clad. One resident stated that the metal cladding on the southern elevation of the building was more imposing than the brickwork and asked why more isn't being done to mitigate the visual impact of the substation from Southwell Road.

TM responded by confirming that the elevation facing Southwell Road would be in vertical metal cladding as the design team felt that having this on the rear of the building and onto the roof was an effective way of 'breaking up' the brickwork cladding. This would avoid an entirely brickwork building and tie the substation in with the design of the headhouse building. TM also clarified that the northeast face of the building is 72 metres from the properties and gardens on Southwell Road, with some UK Power Networks buildings in between the substation and the properties. JC added that it would be helpful if TM could provide further drawings and assessments on the view from Southwell Road onto the substation – TM confirmed that he would follow up with this information.

A resident then asked about the possibility of putting the brick cladding on the fourth side that would face Southwell Road.

MF explained that whilst it was simpler for the team to make changes to the design during the public engagement sessions that occurred in February, none of the feedback forms received requested a change in design to the rear elevation. He added, if there was a universal view that the brick cladding was more aesthetically pleasing than the metal cladding, the design team could explore this possibility. MF went on to suggest that he believed the view of the rear elevation of the building from Southwell Road would be largely obscured by the existing UK Power Networks substation. MF expanded on this by assuring attendees that the team would provide further drawings of the viewpoint onto the substation from Southwell Road.

A resident asked on the chat function whether National Grid already know what the height of the substation will be.

MF answered that the National Grid substation has a height restriction of 15 metres. He added that if the team can reduce the height in any way, they would do this, but that they are restricted by the height of the equipment housed in the building.

A resident asked what effect the cladding would have on mitigating noise pollution that may come from the substation.

MF explained that, through the detailed design process, the team would make sure that the walls of the substation are appropriately insulated to keep operational noise within the permitted limits.

A resident raised a question about National Grid's site at Seven Sisters, asking whether the same mesh and fencing would be used at the Bengeworth Road site, once completed.

TM stated that, because the Seven Sisters site was a site of critical national infrastructure, there were security requirements for very tall perimeter security around the site. He explained that mesh was placed on top of the walls as a way to mitigate the visual impact of the security requirements. MF added that a fence would be constructed around the National Grid area at Bengeworth Road, within the overall site perimeter. He elaborated that National Grid anticipate the design of a 3m high palisade fence and that the submission to the council can be shared, when available.

Substation design (UK Power Networks):

A resident asked about when discussions would take place around the design of the UK Power Networks substation and enquired about the height of the building.

AW explained that UK Power Networks are currently in the process of appointing an architect/design consultant. Once appointed, UK Power Networks will start a public consultation to gather thoughts on what residents would like to see in the design. AW added that until the architect/design consultant was appointed, they could not give an accurate answer on the height of the building. He confirmed that there is currently an internal tender process taking place for the internal switchgear for the building, which would dictate what the overall height would be.

A resident asked whether it would be possible to dig down to lower the overall height of the building.

AW responded that UK Power Networks are governed by the assets that are already in the ground as well as what assets need to remain. JC followed this up adding that it may be helpful to share what assets are in the ground, so that UK Power Networks could justify their approach.

A resident followed up on this response by asking UK Power Networks to confirm that they would prioritise using the smallest equipment possible, so that the corresponding height of the substation could be as low as possible.

AW confirmed that UK Power Networks will do what they can to make the overall footprint and height of the building as small as technology would allow. He added that, whilst he could not promise anything about the height of the building at this stage, he acknowledges the concern of the residents. AW repeated that he would be meeting people in person with Phoebe Adams, so they can gather thoughts from the community and gauge views around the initial design process for their substation.

Community engagement:

A resident asked whether TM was briefed on community engagement.

TM explained that when Markwick Architects became involved in the project, the form of the substation had already been established, so they were consulting only on external design enhancement. TM added that he had been involved in community engagement through the creation of the boards for the virtual events and the presentation of various design options.

Community grants:

A resident raised a question in the chat function, requesting an update on the Community Grant Fund.

JC responded by strongly encouraging the local residents around the Bengeworth Road site to submit details at any time, explaining that the fund is assessed every quarter, and that amounts can go up to £20,000.

Closing remarks

JC drew proceedings to a close and thanked everyone for their time. He also reiterated that the Community Relations team will be available for any further questions which might arise. PA also clarified that UK Power Networks would contact residents separately on any upcoming events and consultations on the UK Power Networks design plans that would be occurring later in the year.

MEETING ADJOURNED
