



E-ON

Kingsnorth Coal Fired Power Station

Response to English Heritage

Report

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Kingsnorth Coal Fired Power Station

Response to English Heritage

The following report responds in part to English Heritage's letter dated 29 January 2007 commenting on the Environmental Statement submitted in support of E.ON UK's application for Section 36 consent to construct supercritical coal-fired power plant at Kingsnorth Power Station. In paragraph 4, the letter queried the number and location of the representative viewpoints assessed within the landscape and visual chapter of the Environmental Statement which assesses the impacts of the proposed replacement coal-fired units. The archaeological issues raised have been dealt with elsewhere. This report deals with the visual impact issue only.

Methodology

The methodology used to carry out the landscape and visual assessment of the effects of the development, as contained in the ES, is primarily based on the revised guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment published by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Assessment, 2002.

An indicative Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) is identified in order to show the possible extent of visibility of the existing Power Station and the proposed development. Viewpoints (representing the views of the proposed development from key visual receptors) are identified within this ZVI. Views of the development other than those assessed are acknowledged to exist, but visibility of the site in these instances is very limited, generally due to distance and/ or heavy localised screening. The viewpoints are not intended to provide an exhaustive or fully comprehensive catalogue of views of the proposed development site; rather they provide a representative sample for the purpose of the landscape and visual impact assessment.

Visual impacts result from change to the appearance of the landscape as a result of the development proposals either intruding into, or obstructing existing views, or by their overall impact on visual amenity and character. Where relevant, seasonal differences in effect are identified. The sensitivity of receptors relates principally to three factors as below:

- Receptor's function whilst exposed to view (work, recreational activities, resident)
- Degree of exposure to view; and
- Period of exposure to view.

Based on these factors, residents are considered as highly sensitive, users of recreational spaces and public rights of way as high-medium sensitive and business users and motorists as low sensitive.

The criteria used to assess the magnitude of visual impacts are as follows:

- Value of existing views;
- Degree of change to existing views;
- The availability and amenity value of the alternative views; and
- Distance of the receptor.

The visual assessment identifies a range of potential key visual receptors that will sustain some degree of effect as a result of the development, resulting in eight representative viewpoints being selected. These viewpoints were agreed in consultation with the Planning Department of Medway Council as part of a previous application for a proposed FGD Plant on land at Kingsnorth Power Station. These viewpoints are considered adequate to ensure that the likely significant effects of the development can properly be assessed.

Of the eight viewpoints that have been selected for assessment the viewpoint from St Mary's Island from the west is from a similar direction to the potential viewpoint suggested in the English Heritage letter, on the A228 leading into Rochester.

Character of the Area

The proposed development is located at the interface of the Greater Thames Estuary and North Kent Plain Countryside Agency Character Areas, which are flat, open and low-lying, containing sparse tree cover with widely dispersed settlements. Industrial buildings and complexes dominate views and have become characteristic of the area.

The landscape pattern within the Hoo Peninsula, as detailed in The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) prepared by Jacobs Baktie for Kent Council, is incoherent and open, with large-scale industrial developments creating visual detractors in the landscape. To the north the isolated industrial complexes of Grain and Kingsnorth dominate the Marshes. The landscape character of the site and immediate setting is considered to be of low sensitivity.

Scope of Proposed Development

The proposed development, in the short term, will be viewed against the existing Power Station Units 1 to 4. This increases the visibility of the site (both existing and proposed development) resulting in views from the west containing two standalone developments.

Visual Impact

The proposed development will be located to the north of the existing Power Station. From locations within St. Mary's Island there will be clear views of the new units and chimneys, which will appear as a standalone development from the existing station. This would be for a limited period of time until the existing power station is decommissioned and demolished.

It is assessed that views from the west would result, during the construction stage, in a medium to high magnitude of impact with effects on highly sensitive receptors assessed to be severe/ moderate in the short term. The proposed development is viewed from a distance of 4 to 5 km from St. Mary's Island.

The example of and the location of viewpoint within the letter from English Heritage would provide a view of the proposed development from a distance of approximately 8.4 km. Although this view would include the castle, cathedral and the covered slips of the dockyard (proposed World Heritage Site) it is predicted that the resulting impact would be less than that identified for the receptor at St. Mary's Island due to the long distance and the diminishing impact of the development upon that view.

The predicted impact on visual amenity from this location would be no greater than medium in the short term. The resulting predicted significance of effect on visual amenity would be no greater than moderate in the short term, depending on the sensitivity of receptors at this location.

At future assessment year 2027 the views from St. Mary's Island will result in a low magnitude of impact. The view will contain a single mass of tall buildings, resulting in a similar impact as the baseline assessment year. The long term impact on visual receptors is assessed to be low, resulting in a moderate/ low effect on visual amenity. The impact for receptors views along the A228, which include the castle, cathedral and covered slips of the dockyard would be reduced, predicted to result in a low/ negligible effect on visual amenity in the long term.

Conclusion

The proposed development will not change the character of the surrounding landscape. Large-scale industrial developments currently dominate the landscape and influence views towards the Hoo Peninsula.

The proposed development will amplify the visual intrusiveness of the site, increasing the effect on surrounding visual amenity, but this is a temporary impact. However, the increased effects on visual amenity in the short term are replaced by a minimal increase in effects on visual amenity in the long term. The decommissioning and demolition of the Units 1 to 4 will result in a single power station dominating views in the long term. It is predicted that in the long term there would be no greater effect on views of the cultural features of the castle, cathedral and covered slips of the dockyard.