Dear Mr Hoar

SL/2018/0388: 49.99 MW Gas Fired Electricity Generating facility to be connected to the National Transmission Gas Pipe to generate electricity during times of peak demand with associated infrastructure and landscaping (revised scheme SL/2017/0426), Land directly to the north of the existing Old Hutton Substation, Old Hutton, KENDAL LA8 0NT

Friends of the Lake District is the only charity wholly dedicated to protecting the landscape and natural environment of Cumbria and the Lake District.

We have assessed the above proposal and consider it to be inappropriate in the open countryside. Therefore, we object to the proposal on the basis of detrimental impact to landscape character and visual amenity. In addition, we have concerns relating to cumulative impacts and impacts on the local road network.

Comments on Previous Proposals

This application is a revision and replaces two earlier applications that were refused; one for a gas fired electricity generating station (SL/2017/0426) and another for an adjacent battery storage facility (SL/2017/0425). Friends of the Lake District objected to the original schemes and we consider that although this application represents only one element of the original two proposals and thus is reduced in scale, our earlier concerns remain relevant and the reasons for which the original applications were refused also apply to this proposal.

In summary, we have concerns that the proposal:

- remains significant and at 49.99MW is only just under the threshold for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (50MW);
- has unacceptable landscape character and visual impacts;
- has cumulative effects on the landscape with the existing substation (including exacerbating the impacts of the existing sub-station);
- has unacceptable transport impacts on the local rural roads, including roads through nearby villages and hamlets;
- remains contrary to South Lakeland Core Strategy policies CS1.2, CS8.2 and CS10.2.
In this respect, please find attached a copy of our earlier comments; we would ask that these be taken into account as the basis of our response to the current proposal, supplemented with our further points below.

**Current Proposals**

We note that the Design & Access Statement accompanying the application states that the scheme is of national importance and recognises that the scheme represents the intensification of an “adverse landscape character trait”.

It is unclear why the Design & Access Statement for the current proposal refers to the scheme as being ‘temporary’ (para. 9.19) and uses this as part of the justification for the scheme, stating that the landscape impacts will therefore also be temporary (para. 7.36). The application is not put forward as a ‘temporary’ development with a stated time limit and there are no references to reversibility or restoration plans for the site. We would therefore ask that evidence is made available to justify and clarify the applicants’ claim that the proposal is for a temporary development, with temporary impacts.

Furthermore, we do not agree with the assertion in the Design & Access Statement that the presence of the existing sub-station reduces the landscape impacts in terms of screening the proposal and vice versa. We are pleased to see that the application is now accompanied by photomontages, although we are concerned as to the extent to which these accurately represent the local and more distant visual impacts of the scheme.

Whilst the amount of traffic resulting from the current proposal is reported to be significantly less than for the original proposals, we consider that the reduced amount will, nevertheless, have negative impacts on the local road network and the amenity and character of the local area, contrary to CS10.2. The information provided about the traffic impacts remains limited and misleading. Para. 9.42 of the Design & Access Statement states that vehicle movements in the construction phase will not take place on Sundays, Bank Holidays or after 13:00 on Saturdays whereas para. 9.43 states that they will not take place on weekends at all. Para. 9.43 states that during the construction phase there will be 4-6 HGV movements a day, whereas 9.41 refers to 4-6 ‘outwards’ movements, suggesting that that the figure for vehicles moving into the site may be different. There is no information on the number of abnormal loads, with an indication that this will depend on the final configuration and layout of the site. This suggests that the layout is not yet certain but also provides no certainty regarding the overall transport impacts; abnormal loads will have additional and different impacts on local roads and communities.

Information on existing trees and hedgerows is also misleading. The application form and para. 6.23 of the Design & Access Statement state that there are no existing trees or hedgerows on the application site. The application form states that there are no trees or hedgerows adjacent the site that could influence the development or that are important to landscape character. However, the plans clearly show that this is not the case: there is a hedgerow including trees running along much of the boundary of the application site and along the stretch of the B6254 that lies within the application site, as well as trees and hedgerows on land immediately adjacent the site. Furthermore, a Tree Survey has been undertaken and accompanies the application.

Since the previous proposals were considered, preparation of South Lakeland’s new Development Management Policies document has progressed to Examination and the proposed policies can now be given moderate weight having reached this stage.
The current proposal is contrary to Policy DM1 ‘General Requirements for all development’ and DM2 ‘Achieving Sustainable High Quality Design’. In particular, DM1 states that development will be only acceptable provided it responds appropriately to the proposal site’s locational context, local and settlement character and distinctiveness. It also requires development to ensure the protection and enhancement of the District’s natural environment qualities and its distinctive landscapes, including their public visual amenities. DM2 also places requirements on the design, location, materials, and landscaping of new developments, including the need for a high standard of landscaping and boundary treatment that retains and enhances the existing landscape and that materials used should be sympathetic to landscape characteristics and setting.

The Design & Access Statement asserts that the proposal is for ‘low carbon’ energy development. Whilst we would contest this description, on the basis that a gas fired power station uses a fossil fuel, if the proposal is assessed as a low carbon proposal, DM21 would also be relevant. DM21 requires that such developments:

- minimise landscape impacts and protect landscape character;
- are sensitively designed in response to their context to minimise their visual impact;
- incorporate appropriate landscaping to mitigate their visual impact and enhance their surroundings;
- can be satisfactorily served by the local highway network and will not have unacceptable impacts on it during their construction or operational phases;
- include measures for the removal of the technology and restoration of the site should the technology become non-operational; and
- will not have unacceptable cumulative adverse impacts with other installed and permitted renewable and low carbon energy projects and vertical infrastructure structures.

The current proposal does not comply with the requirements of DM1, DM2 or DM21 due to the industrial nature of the proposal and its proposed location in a rural, agricultural landscape, its impacts, including cumulative impacts, on the landscape character, visual amenity and the qualities of the natural environment and the highly structured planting and landscaping proposed, as well as the lack of any restoration plan.

Conclusion

Friends of the Lake District objected to the original schemes and we consider that the issues raised by the previous scheme still stand. The proposal is inappropriate in this location on the basis of harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of the area, cumulative impacts and impacts on the local road network. The proposal remains contrary to the Development Plan for South Lakeland and is also contrary to emerging additional Development Plan policies. It lacks information that would allow a proper assessment of its landscape impacts, impacts on the local road network and the indicated temporary nature of the proposal. Accordingly, the reasons for which the proposals were refused by SLDC are equally applicable to the current proposal. The perceived benefits of this development do not outweigh the detrimental impacts it would have at this location within a valued landscape in the setting of and between two National Parks. The proposal presents a range of conflicts with both local and national planning policy and, as such, should be refused.

Please record these representations as those of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE-Cumbria Association). We would be grateful to receive a copy of the decision notice.

Yours sincerely,

Lorayne Woodend Wall MRDPI
Planning Officer