Waterman has been coordinating the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for Battersea Power Station and preparing Environmental Statements and further environmental information to accompany a number of planning applications for Phases 2, 3, 4a and Cringle Dock since obtaining outline planning permission in 2011.

Owing to the scale of the redevelopment and the length of the programme, the project has evolved through numerous detailed design amendments and the addition of two new sites (Sleaford Street (Phase 4a) and Cringle Dock) that have subsequently become an integral part of the regeneration of Battersea Power Station. These changes and extensions to the project have been sought through a number of detailed, hybrid, Section 73 and Section 96a applications. Key considerations were therefore the strategy, scope and approach of the EIAs to not only accord with the EIA Regulations but also to present the environmental information in a manner that could be understood by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), statutory consultees and the public, which is the focus of this study.

The regeneration of Battersea Power Station and surrounding former industrial land by Battersea Power Station Development Company on behalf of the site owners will provide an iconic new mixed use development and community; a catalyst to the regeneration of the wider Vauxhall Nine Elms Opportunity Area. The focus of the redevelopment is the landmark Grade II* listed Power Station that is being refurbished and brought back into use.

The regeneration of Battersea Power Station will be constructed in eight phases (or development zones), over an approximately 12-year period.

Once completed, Battersea Power Station will provide a new neighbourhood on the Thames river front comprising homes, workspaces, shops, restaurants, cafés and cultural venues, together with 18 acres of new public open space.
Lessons learnt

Owing to the complex planning history and the requirement under the EIA Regulations to assess the likely significant environmental impacts of the development in its entirety (rather than a site, phase or development zone in isolation), as changed by design amendments and extended by the two new sites, environmental information has been presented to the LPA with each planning application resulting in multiple layers to the Environmental Statement.

The potential lack of transparency for the decision-making process when submitting further environmental information, owing to the complexity and volume of environmental information, making it difficult to discern the impacts arising from the changes and / or extensions to the project and ‘new’ environmental information of relevance, soon became apparent. For this reason, the way in which the environmental information was presented was critical to enabling a clear and transparent understanding of the likely environmental impacts of the development in its entirety, to satisfy the requirements of the EIA Regulations, but also the need for the LPA to understand the impacts of the new sites in isolation; to assist in their determination of the planning applications.

Lessons learnt

Establishing how to present the environmental information in a way that satisfied these various requirements at the outset was a priority. As well as reporting the likely significant impacts of the development, as changed or extended, it became apparent that additional commentary was required to highlight where either new impacts were predicted or where the significance of impacts differed from those previously reported.

Where complex and lengthy environmental information needs to be communicated, a proportional scope to the EIA should be considered from the outset (which is often not the case as Environmental Statements become over scoped and excessively long). Whilst this does require ‘buy in’ from the statutory consultees, it provides more concise and focused documentation that is easier to understand, and it thus provides greater transparency for the reader.

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