EIA Quality Mark
Case Study

Dobson Park Way Capacity Mechanism Power Generation Project

Key Issues –
Although the proposed works do not constitute EIA development under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011, this case study is also applicable to EIA scoping and assessments. Following best practice the Local Planning Authority was contacted to agree to the scope of environmental assessments to be undertaken as part of a planning application.

It was agreed that noise, air quality, ecology, landscape and visual, and a coal mining risk assessment would be undertaken.

Following submission of the planning application, concerns were raised from local residents and councillors regarding potential noise and vibration.

Noise assessment had identified the need to restrict operation from 24 hours to between 7am – 11pm.

Purpose of the project
The purpose of the development is to provide near instantaneous electricity generation to the grid when increased capacity is required.

As a backup electricity supply, developments such as these can typically become operational at any time. For the proposed development it is anticipated that operation will be less than 1000 hours per year and would be operated only during the period 7am – 11pm.

Description of the project
Planning permission was sought for a reserve power generation facility comprising of 3 x 2MW gas engines at an existing industrial estate in Ince, Wigan.

The site is located to the rear of residential housing, on an area of vacant hardstanding adjacent to industrial warehouse units.

Additional infrastructure included the need for transformers, a small electricity substation, associated pipework and cable ducting, portacabins and parking for three cars.
**Lessons learnt**

The planning application was to be determined by Planning Committee.

During the preparation of the Environmental Report and the noise assessment, there were regular discussions between the council’s EHO and RSK’s noise team.

The application was recommended for approval, however, at a planning committee meeting held in June 2016 members requested additional information including further details relating to vibration from the operation of the engines.

In order to address the comments, RSK prepared a technical note on vibration and noise clarifications.

Vibration had not previously been raised as a concern during scoping with the council, and hence had not been assessed as part of the application (in line with the approach taken for previous projects at similar sites).

To address concerns, vibration monitoring was undertaken at a site with the same engine as that proposed. A video of the monitoring exercise was also recorded to provide a visual representation of the vibration expected to be generated.

The application was approved (with conditions) following a second committee meeting.

**Lessons learnt cont.** -

By having a member of RSK’s noise and vibration team present at the first committee meeting, a plan of action to respond to the request was quickly devised and agreed with the client. The vibration assessment was produced and submitted within a week and allowed for the application to be heard at the next committee meeting, thus reducing project delays as much as possible.

After the development was approved, the client and RSK met with councillors and planning officers to present a general overview of these types of development and answer any questions. This was done to allay concerns and address misconceptions regarding noise and vibration impacts in anticipation of future proposals within the council area.

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