

Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee

11 May 2021

Grid Capacity: Scoping Report

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr D Walsh, Planning

Local Councillor(s): All wards

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

Report Author: Hilary Jordan
Title: Service Manager for Spatial Planning
Tel: 01305 252303
Email: hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

- (i) That the response to the Local Area Network Plan consultation be noted;
- (ii) That members consider whether additional consultancy work on grid capacity should be commissioned;
- (iii) That members consider any further local grid capacity issues that they are aware of so that these can be fed into the study and notified to the provider.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure that the matter of grid capacity is fully considered as part of the preparation of the local plan, and that the council is fully informed on the matter so as to be able to lobby and work with providers to make the necessary improvements.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Members of this committee, and of the 'Reset and Recovery' Executive Advisory Panel, have previously raised the issue of whether there is currently sufficient electricity grid capacity in the Dorset Council area to

meet existing and future demand, particularly in the light of the development being considered in the emerging local plan, and the increased demands that will arise from the implementation of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (including greater use of heat pumps, electric vehicle use, and renewable energy installations).

- 1.2 Energy supply is the statutory responsibility of the energy providers, which are required to meet the energy demands generated by new development. Developers pay for grid connection directly to the supplier: this is not part of the planning process and is not funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy or section 106 agreements.
- 1.3 We consult the energy providers during the preparation of local plans so that they can comment on whether there are likely to be any problems with energy supply to the developments being proposed, and so that they can build in the proposed future scale and pattern of development to their development plans. In the past we have not always received consultation responses from the electricity provider, and have therefore made greater efforts this time to engage with them.
- 1.4 The electricity providers are currently preparing Local Area Network Plans to guide their future development and investment. Dorset Council has been engaging in this process and has submitted a consultation response, setting out the council's aims and ambitions as set out in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Economic Growth Strategy, and the development proposals set out in the first consultation document on the Local Plan. This consultation response is included as an Appendix to this report.
- 1.5 This consultation response has also flagged up a series of known local grid capacity problems, which are currently being explored by the provider (SSEN). These are at:
 - Bridport (St Michael's and Dreadnought industrial estates)
 - Gillingham – Brickfields
 - Sturminster Newton – North Dorset Business Park and supply to town
 - Weymouth/Chickerell – Granby Industrial Estate
 - Dorchester – Grove Industrial Estate
 - Portland Port
 - Winfrith/Wool – Dorset Innovation Park
 - Holton Heath Trading Park
- 1.6 Members may be aware of other areas where there is anecdotal evidence of supply problems, and these can also be raised with the provider.

- 1.7 While we are taking a proactive approach to engaging with the electricity supplier, both in the preparation of our local plan and responding to their consultation, there may still be existing or potential problem areas across Dorset that could constrain our ambitions for growth and for responding to the climate and ecological emergency.
- 1.8 Members may therefore consider that additional work is appropriate, to examine the existing grid capacity across the area and where there are gaps or shortfalls, and to consider where there may be particular problems in meeting our future development ambitions. While the information on capacity is only available from the providers, specialist consultants with knowledge of this area of work would potentially be able to examine this data in greater detail and provide independent conclusions about the grid capacity issues facing Dorset. Officers suggest therefore that this work be commissioned from the highway and engineering consultants with which the council has an existing framework agreement in place, and that the results of this work be reported back to this committee.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The consultancy work will be an additional cost that had not previously been budgeted for. There are reserves in place to fund all the costs associated with the local plan preparation but this will put additional pressure on them.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

- 3.1 No specific wellbeing and health implications have been identified, though having adequate energy supply is part of general and economic wellbeing.

4. Climate implications

- 4.1 Having adequate electricity grid capacity across the area is essential if we are to meet the aims of the climate and ecological emergency strategy, including greater use of heat pumps, electric vehicles and renewable energy installations.

5. Other Implications

- 5.1 As above, there are sustainability implications, as grid capacity is necessary to enable more sustainable alternatives.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

7.1 No impacts on groups with protected characteristics have been identified.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix: Dorset Council response to SSEN engagement on Local Area Network Plans

9. Background Papers

Consultation document on Dorset Council Local Plan, January 2021

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.