

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Economic Development Committee

## Agenda Item 25

**Subject:** Consultation on Application to Expand Rampion Windfarm

**Date of meeting:** 14 September 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director Economy, Environment and Culture

**Contact Officer:** Name: Jane Moseley  
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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**For general release**

### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report seeks delegated authority from the Committee for planning officers to respond to consultation on an application to expand the existing Rampion offshore windfarm. This is necessary to meet strict deadlines set by the Planning Inspectorate.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Committee agrees to give delegated authority, to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Culture, in consultation with the Chair of the Culture, Heritage, Sport Tourism and Economic Development Committee, to submit representations in response to consultation on the Rampion Development Consent Order (DCO) application. This may include officers needing to appear for the Council at the Examination.

2.2 That Committee notes that the Council's response will be made publicly available and the additional opportunities for representations as set out at paragraph 3.10-3.11 of the report.

### 3. Context and background information

3.1 An application for a Development Consent Order (a DCO) has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by Rampion. Full details are not yet available but it will seek the following:

Existing (Rampion 1)	Proposed (Rampion 2)
116 turbines	Up to 90 new turbines
140m height (from lowest tide to tip of blade)	Up to 325m height (1.5 – 2.3 times existing height).
78km <sup>2</sup> area covered	160km <sup>2</sup> area covered.

One offshore substation	Up to three offshore substations
400MW installed capacity.	Up to 1200WM installed capacity – to power equivalent of 1 million homes, save 1.8m tonnes of CO2 emissions/year.
13 – 25km from coast	13 - 26km from coast.

- 3.2 In addition to the offshore works, a cable will extend from the windfarm to a landing point on Climping Beach (in Arun District), from where it will be taken via a 39km cable route to a point near Cowfold, west of the A23.
- 3.3 Because its capacity is greater than 100MW, Rampion 2 is considered a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). These are schemes the government considers so big and nationally-important that permission must be given at the national level. Such applications are made directly to the Planning Inspectorate which carries out an Examination before making a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State. In this case the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will make the decision.
- 3.4 To date, the Planning Inspectorate has sought views on the adequacy of consultation undertaken by Rampion prior to submission. Officers provided a response on 24 August raising concerns over the extent of engagement over visual impact, particularly noting the sensitive heritage features along the city’s coastline.
- 3.5 The Planning Inspectorate will take responses to the consultation into account to determine whether to accept the DCO for Examination. If they do, there will be a three month Pre-examination stage, followed by a public Examination, expected to start in January 2024. Then the Planning Inspectorate has six months to examine the application, and three months to make its recommendation to the Secretary of State.
- 3.6 During the current Pre-examination stage, consultees, including BHCC, are asked to provide feedback on the proposals through a Local Impact Report (setting out officers’ technical views on potential impacts), and Relevant Representation (setting out the Council’s view on the application). The deadline for these comments has not yet been set but is expected to be in early November
- 3.7 Given this short timescale, delegated authority is sought for the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Culture, in consultation with the Chair of the Culture, Heritage, Sport Tourism and Economic Development Committee, to submit a Local Impact Report (setting out officers’ technical views on potential impacts), and Relevant Representation (setting out the Council’s view on the application) by the deadline (when provided) and to appear for the Council at Examination.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the response will be supportive of the principle of the development and the benefit to climate change of additional renewable energy production. It will, however make a strong case to secure benefits and mitigation for the city, to recognise the main visual impact of the

expansion will be upon Brighton & Hove's seafront, including its heritage features.

- 3.9 Input will be sought from the County Landscape Architect as well as officers from the Culture and Tourism and Skills and Employment teams.
- 3.10 The response will be made publicly available on the Council's website, as well as on the Planning Inspectorate's website relating to the application.
- 3.11 If councillors (or political parties, members of the public etc.) wish to make their own representation on the application, they can also do so directly to the Planning Inspectorate during this Pre-examination period, and anyone can ask to be heard as an interested party at the Examination. Details will be provided to councillors once the consultation period has opened.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 Providing a response to the consultation on the expansion of the Rampion windfarm will ensure the Council's views on the scheme and its potential positive and negative impacts on the City are taken into account when the Secretary of State determines the application.
- 4.2 A more lengthy, detailed response could be provided. However, given the benefits of the scheme to renewable energy, and its location so far offshore, this is not considered necessary, particularly given the resource implications for planning officers to do so. A detailed response will be provided by those authorities affected by the onshore works relating to the cable corridor (West Sussex County, Arun District, Mid Sussex and Horsham District Councils, as well as the South Downs National Park Authority). In addition, the Marine Management Organisation will provide a detailed response in relation to works below offshore (below mean high water springs), and organisations such as the Environment Agency and Natural England will provide responses in relation to impacts on the water environment and designated sites respectively.
- 4.3 Alternatively, a response could not be provided. However, this would mean that BHCC's views would not be taken into account at all in determining the application.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The developer (Rampion Expansion Development Limited) is responsible for carrying out extensive formal consultation prior to submitting a DCO application, which they have done. If the Planning Inspectorate is not satisfied with the extent of consultation undertaken they can refuse to accept the application.
- 5.2 Rampion carried out an initial public consultation between January and February 2021, followed by a more extensive consultation from July to September 2021, and again between February and April 2022. Targeted consultations have been undertaken regarding alternatives for the onshore cable corridor since that date, and issue-specific meetings with representatives of local authorities and other agencies have been undertaken throughout.

- 5.3 Consultation has been extensive, with leaflets sent directly to 18,588 addresses in July 2021, documents deposited in libraries across the City, a pop-up information event undertaken outside the Rampion Visitor Centre in August 2021, posters displayed, notices have been published in newspapers and press releases issued, social media has been used, and a dedicated website and phonenumber created.
- 5.4 Further publicity will be undertaken by Rampion now that the application has been submitted.
- 5.5 Because of the requirement that the developer publicises the scheme, none of the local authorities are required carry out their own consultation or community engagement.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 An application has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate to expand the existing Rampion offshore windfarm. Delegated authority is sought for the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Culture, in consultation with the Chair of the Culture, Heritage, Sport Tourism and Economic Development Committee, to make representations in response to this and if necessary, to appear at the Examination. The timescales for responding to the consultation are short, so this would enable the Council's views to be taken into account when the application is determined.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The cost of officer time and document production associated with the recommendation in this report are contained within existing service budgets. Any significant variations to budget will be reported as part of the council's monthly budget monitoring process.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack    Date consulted: 22/08/2023

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. The Council does not have a duty to respond to the consultation but if it does not, its views will not be taken into account.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam    Date consulted: 21/08/23

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The developer will need to ensure the windfarm expansion and the consultation on it meets the requirements of the Equality Act. There are no implications for the Council in relation to equalities.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 Sustainable development is at the heart of the planning system, so will have to form a key consideration when the government determines whether the

expansion of the windfarm is acceptable, with the benefit of renewable energy weighing heavily in favour of its approval.

