

Consultation on National Policy Statements

Fossil Fuel Power Stations



What is Planning Aid?

Planning Aid offers people the opportunity to get involved in the development of their local areas. We provide free and independent professional planning advice to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. We work with communities to help them understand and play a role in the planning process. We are an independent source of advice and information on planning issues, not part of central or local government.

The new planning process for nationally significant infrastructure

The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new planning system for applications to build nationally significant infrastructure facilities in England and Wales. The new system covers applications for major energy generation, railways, ports, major roads, airports and water and waste infrastructure. Under the new system, national policy on infrastructure will be set out in a series of new National Policy Statements (NPS) which can be reviewed by the Secretary of State if there is a change in circumstances. A new independent body, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), will examine and decide applications for new infrastructure development, using the criteria on national need, benefits and impacts set out in the NPS, and consideration of evidence put forward on potential local effects.

Why should I get involved in the debate on National Policy Statements?

In autumn 2009 the Government published the set of draft National Policy Statements (NPS) for public consultation. It is important to make your views known because once finalised the NPS will provide the framework for future decisions by the IPC on individual applications. Issues relating to the need for a specific type of infrastructure will not be debated again. Each NPS will be accompanied by an Appraisal of Sustainability on which comments are also invited. Except for the NPS on nuclear power stations and airports, specific locations for infrastructure are not identified although criteria may guide developers to appropriate types of area.

Fossil Fuel Power Stations

This NPS covers the provision of large coal, gas and oil fired generating infrastructure over 50 megawatts in capacity.

To build these large power stations, there needs to be suitably sized land within the vicinity of transport routes and a way of connecting to the electricity grid network. As some types of power stations have a high demand for water, it is likely that such sites will be located on the coast, alongside rivers or estuaries.

The Overarching Energy Infrastructure Policy NPS (see separate leaflet) sets out the national need for the different types of energy infrastructure required over the next 10 – 15 years if the nation is to be able to reduce emissions, ensure security of energy supply, expand grid capacity, keep costs down and contribute to sustainable development. New fossil fuel generating capacity with carbon capture and storage will be needed to provide additional and flexible supply. The Government expect up to four coal power carbon capture and storage demonstration projects to be operational by 2020. It also sets out five key principles which will guide the IPC when deciding applications, these are:

- If the development contributes to meeting the need and is in accordance with the NPS, then consent should be given;
- Regard should be had to local impact reports (produced by local authorities) and other matters considered relevant and important;
- National, regional and local benefits (environmental, social and economic) should be taken into account;
- Adverse impacts should be considered, longer term and cumulative impacts and proposed mitigation; and
- If the IPC considers that the adverse impacts (after mitigation) outweigh the benefits, then consent should be refused.

In the event of a conflict with existing planning policy, the NPS will be followed. The Overarching Energy Policy NPS must be read together with this technology specific NPS.

The NPS sets out a number of criteria which should be met before the IPC will grant consent for a new fossil fuel power station. These include:

- Combined heat and power – this should be considered as an option for incorporation.
- Climate Change Adaptation – the impact of coastal change and storm surge, higher temperatures and risk of drought need to be considered.
- Air Emissions – the IPC will need to be satisfied that the environmental impacts of emissions have been taken into account.
- Landscape and Visual – power stations are large and mitigation through design, landscaping and operational systems (eg steam plumes) is required to reduce their impact.
- Noise and vibration – mitigation will need to be considered.
- Dust – the IPC will need to liaise with the Environment Agency.



- Waste Management – applicants will need to set out their arrangements.
- Water Quality and Resources – mitigation of impacts, including the effect of discharges to receiving waters, should be considered.

Because the Planning Act 2008 aims to create an integrated planning approach it is anticipated that where possible, related applications (such as for a power station and grid connections) will be submitted together.

Further information on the consultation process, the questions on which comments are sought, related events, the draft NPS and the supporting documentation is available on the Department for Energy and Climate Change website www.energy-nps-consultation.decc.gov.uk. Welsh language, Braille and large print copies are available on request. Responses can be submitted online, by letter, fax or email. The consultation will close on 22 February 2010.



Contact Details

You can call the Planning Aid NPS advice line for independent advice. Initially advice will be given to all. If your enquiry is more complex and meets our eligibility criteria, you will be assisted by a qualified planning advisor or volunteer. If you can afford to pay, you will be referred to a planning consultant.

Planning Aid on 0121 214 2915 or www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Planning Aid for London on 020 7247 4900 or www.planningaidforlondon.org.uk

Planning Aid for Wales on 02920 485765 or www.planningaidwales.org.uk

Planning Aid is part of the Royal Town Planning Institute, a charity registered in England 262865 and Scotland SC 037841. Head office: Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL.

Planning Aid Wales is the independent charity providing Planning Aid services in Wales, with core funding from the Welsh Assembly Government.