



Dr Andrea Mageean
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Our reference:
Your reference:

29 October 2021

Dear Dr Mageean

Re: Electricity Distribution System at 55 Vastern Road, Reading

Further to the attached letter from Mr Richard Gough dated 16th July 2021 regarding the planning application (local authority ref: 200188 and appeal ref 3276463) which is the subject of an inquiry now taking place before you, we understand that evidence has been presented to the inquiry on our representations on the Reading Borough Council (RBC) Local Plan in 2017 and 2018 as evidence of SSE's future intentions regarding the substations and transformers adjacent to the appeal site and we wish to set out our position.

SSE's position remains that the land remains in the ownership of Southern Electric Power Distribution (SEPD) which forms part of SEN and provides critical infrastructure for Reading and the surrounding areas. The strategic requirement for the substations and transformers located on Vastern Road is highly unlikely to change in the short or long-term.

In June 2017 and January 2018, SSE made representations to the RBC Local Plan in relation to Policy CR10: Tall Buildings, the 10m offset from the River Thames as well as the wider requirements of Policy CR11g.

As we noted in our submissions to RBC dated 13 June 2017, SSE could only secure the viable relocation of the substations and transformers if there was "sufficient value in the scheme". Following the submission of the Draft Local Plan to the Inspector in March 2018, which unfortunately did not include any of our proposed amendments, we concluded that moving the substations and transformers within the site or to another location was financially unviable for the requestor, SSE Services PLC, and the cost of such works couldn't be met by SEPD's customers.

As a result, a decision was made to sell the vacant part of the site no longer required for operations following the submission of the Local Plan in March 2018. Berkeley thereafter

acquired the site in September 2018. The submitted Local Plan policy did not require the allocated site to be brought forward in a single planning application (neither does policy CR11g in its adopted form) therefore a sale to Berkeley was considered the best option.

It was not, and has never been, SSE's intention to fully vacate the site. The on-site substations, transformers and associated equipment as well as the below ground constraints means that moving operations outside or within the site is financially unviable to SSE due to the significant costs which would be incurred, and therefore cannot be justified in the interests of SEPD's customers.

The site at Vastern Road provides critical elements of the electricity infrastructure for Reading, supplying power to thousands of homes and business. With the anticipated future increase in demand across the grid, the strategic requirement for the site is highly unlikely to change in the short or long-term. We therefore have no plans to relocate the substations or their transformers, within the wider site or elsewhere. However, we can say that the Berkeley proposals before the inquiry do not prejudice any development which we might wish to carry out in future. Mr Gough's letter of 16th July 2021 noted that Berkeley's plans have been designed to enable comprehensive development of the whole allocated site. That remains our view.

I trust this information is useful.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Fraser || Property Manager – South

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cc. J. Markwell – Principal Planning Officer, Reading Borough Council
R. Gough – Director of System Operations SSEN
C. McHardy – Land Director, Berkeley Homes