C.RO Ports Sutton Bridge Limited

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Design and Access Statement
Installation of a Pontoon and Stationing of Portakabins and Associated Containers

Port Sutton Bridge, West Bank, Sutton Bridge

Ref:473 10/DAS/LMS

April 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Full Planning permission is sought for the construction of a pontoon for mooring, loading of specialised boats for use in connection with offshore wind turbines together with the use of land for the stationing of portakabin office accommodation and associated storage containers.

1.2. A previous permission (H18-0104-11) granted consent for a similar pontoon development and portakabin arrangement for Centrica, who were also involved in offshore wind turbine maintenance. Both the portakabins and pontoons were removed after Centrica had finished work.

1.3. Dong Energy is presently constructing wind farms in the North Sea and Port Sutton Bridge is being used as one base for maintenance personnel.

1.4. A suite of portakabin offices will provide the base for the personnel involved in the operation together with storage facilities in associated containers. There is no intention to provide any living accommodation in connection with the use.

1.5. Dong Energy is the largest UK offshore wind turbine provider in the UK with around 700 employees nationally. There is a significant economic benefit to the area from the location of the Dong Energy operation at the Port, especially in the face of stiff competition from the Port of Grimsby for example.

2. USE AND AMOUNT

2.1. The pontoon will be used for the loading and unloading of maintenance equipment and personnel, and will be used solely by Dong Energy.

2.2. Specially constructed craft provided by Turbine Transfers Ltd will occupy the moorings next to the existing crane on the quayside that will be used to load maintenance equipment stored within the port.

2.3. Up to 10 portakabins and two storage containers will be placed within the storage area of the port, together with a parking area for Dong Energy personnel. The area is currently used for port related activities such as the parking of plant equipment and vehicles etc and has also most recently been used by Centrica for the same use as is now proposed.

2.4. Photographs of the relevant areas can be seen below.



Figure 1. Proposed portakabin storage area.



Figure 2. Proposed Centrica parking area.

2.5. The proposals have to be placed within the port area. The location of the pontoon is self-evident and the location of the office accommodation needs to be next to the quay where the loading and unloading takes place. The operation and maintenance of the vessels is carried out by a separate towage company, whose personnel will also occupy the portakabin accommodation.

2.6. The maintenance will be carried out in shifts, with all vessels going out to sea for a particular shift then returning to the port. The vessels moored on the single quayside mooring will be loaded first with provisions and personnel and then leave to go out to the offshore turbine fields.

2.7. The portakabin accommodation will be located within the bunded storage area of the port, where the main storage function operates. Personnel will drive into the port along West Bank and park in a designated and secure area identified on the submitted drawings.

2.8. It is essential that the entire operation is located within the port and, as such, the proposed use is compliant with policy EC3 of the South Holland Local Plan in that the proposal is located within an existing area of employment and will not have an unacceptable impact in terms of traffic movement and intrusion into the open countryside.

3. ACCESS

3.1. The entire operation will be accessed via the existing road into the port from West Bank. This road also accommodates all the traffic that enters and leaves the port area.

3.2. It is anticipated that up to 80 personnel will be stationed at the port for the duration of Dong Energy's contract and these personnel will operate in shifts. This workforce will be staying locally in bed and breakfast accommodation and will share transport to and from their base at the port. The traffic generation will, therefore, be negligible when compared with the significant volumes that enter and leave the port throughout the day and night.

3.3. The port will be used to station maintenance personnel and equipment and not for the construction of the wind turbines. There will, therefore, be little in the way of HGV traffic, save for the initial start-up operation of bringing the pontoons and portakabins to the port.

3.4. Fuel and provisions etc will be delivered to the port as they are at present as part of the existing port operation.

3.5. The personnel will be transported within the port from their office accommodation to the quayside pontoon and the waiting vessels by minibus. Due to health and safety requirements, the personnel are not permitted to wander around the port on foot or park private vehicles anywhere other than in the designated area.

4. APPEARANCE

4.1. The proposed 49m pontoon is designed to rise and fall with the tide in order that it can be operational during any part of the tide and will effectively remain level with the water. Other than for the rails that will be fixed to the quayside wall that enables it to move up and down, the pantoon itself will hardly be visible and then only when viewed from the river bank when it will merge into the other port structures.

4.2. The structure is constructed in galvanised metal with non-slip decking and it will have a cantilevered gantry to enable access to the level pontoon, irrespective of the state of the tide, from the quayside.

4.3. The appearance of the pontoon is predominantly grey in colour and it will be largely unobtrusive when set against the backdrop of the main port operation.

4.4. An example of the appearance of the pontoon can be seen below.



Figure 3. An example of the appearance of the pontoon

4.5. The proposed portakabins are of standard construction and appearance and an example of that likely to be used can be seen below.



Figure 4. An example of a portakabin likely to be used

4.6. At present it is not known exactly how many portakabins will be required by Dong Energy, but it is anticipated that there will be no more than 10 and most likely 8. In addition, there will be 2 shipping freight containers for general storage.

4.7. It is also not known at this stage whether or not the portakabins will be one or two high.

4.8. Accordingly, an area has been identified on the submitted plan within which a maximum of 10 portakabins will be sited either 1 or 2 high.

4.9. A cross section of the existing earth bund has been provided which demonstrates that in the event the portakabins are stacked 2 high, they will not be visible from outside the bunded storage area.

4.10. The parking area will not be visible from the same area as the proposal and it has been shown on the site plan for completeness, as the area is already used for parking and storage.

5. LANDSCAPING

5.1. The existing storage area of the port is set below the line of the quayside and has the benefit of a substantial earth bund around three of the four sides together with mature trees and shrub planting. These existing features are well established and were put in place to shield from view the much larger port development consisting of large warehouses and external storage areas.

5.2. No additional planting is considered necessary having regard to the existing landscaping etc.

6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Flood Risk

6.1. The application site lies within Flood Zone 3a as defined on the Environment Agency's indicative Flood Zone Maps. Port related development is appropriate development in Flood Zone 3a, subject to the development being safe and not contributing to flooding elsewhere.

6.2. A Flood Risk Assessment has been produced and is submitted as part of this application.

6.3. The floor levels of the portakabins will be raised 450mm above the existing ground level to avoid the ingress of flood water in the event of a tidal flooding.

6.4. The development cannot be located outside the port area due to the inextricable link with the vessels berthed at the quayside.

Ecology

6.5. There will be no ecological impact arising from the development. The construction of the wind turbines has already been approved and, accordingly, the ongoing maintenance is an obvious repercussion of the construction process.

6.6. The 49m pontoon will rise and fall with the tide and is fixed to the quayside wall only. No vegetation will be removed or features of any ecological importance and the proposal will have no impact on the river whatsoever.

6.7. The purpose made vessels that will use the pontoons are already being used for maintaining the turbines and already travel in and out of the Wash. Having regard to the size and draft of the purpose made vessels, there will be no impact on the Wash's shoreline. Notwithstanding this, the vessels are perfectly entitled to enter and leave the port area irrespective of the presence of the pontoons.

Economic Impact

6.8. Dong Energy is a large company involved in large offshore wind turbine farms and its presence at Port Sutton Bridge will have a significant and much welcomed economic benefit.

6.9. Although many of the anticipated personnel involved in the maintenance will already be with the company, there will be opportunities for local employment.

6.10. The portakabins will be rented locally and much of the day-to-day provisions will be purchased in Sutton Bridge.

6.11. The majority of the personnel will stay in local bed and breakfast accommodation, purchase provisions locally, fuel and service private vehicles locally and frequent the local social venues.

6.12. It is anticipated that the positive impact on the local economy will be significant.

6.13. The presence of a national company within the port area is, therefore, of significant importance to C.RO Ports Sutton Bridge Ltd, which has to compete with the likes of Hull and Grimsby.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. The proposed location of the new pontoon and associated portakabin accommodation will go largely unnoticed as it is set within the overall port operation.

7.2. Traffic and visual impacts will be negligible and a Flood Risk Assessment has shown that the proposal will be safe, albeit that it is essential within the port area. The proposal is, therefore, compliant with policies EC3, SG1 and SG9 of the South Holland Local Plan.

7.3. There is a positive economic impact associated with the development both locally and for the port itself with the introduction of Dong Energy to the port.

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