

**COMMITTEE REPORT  
ITEM NUMBER:**

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APPLICATION NO. 21/02937/FUL

LOCATION **Penn Croft Farm, Penn Croft, Crondall, Farnham, GU10 5PX**

PROPOSAL Installation of an energy storage facility comprising of battery containers, fencing, switching station, kiosk and associated works

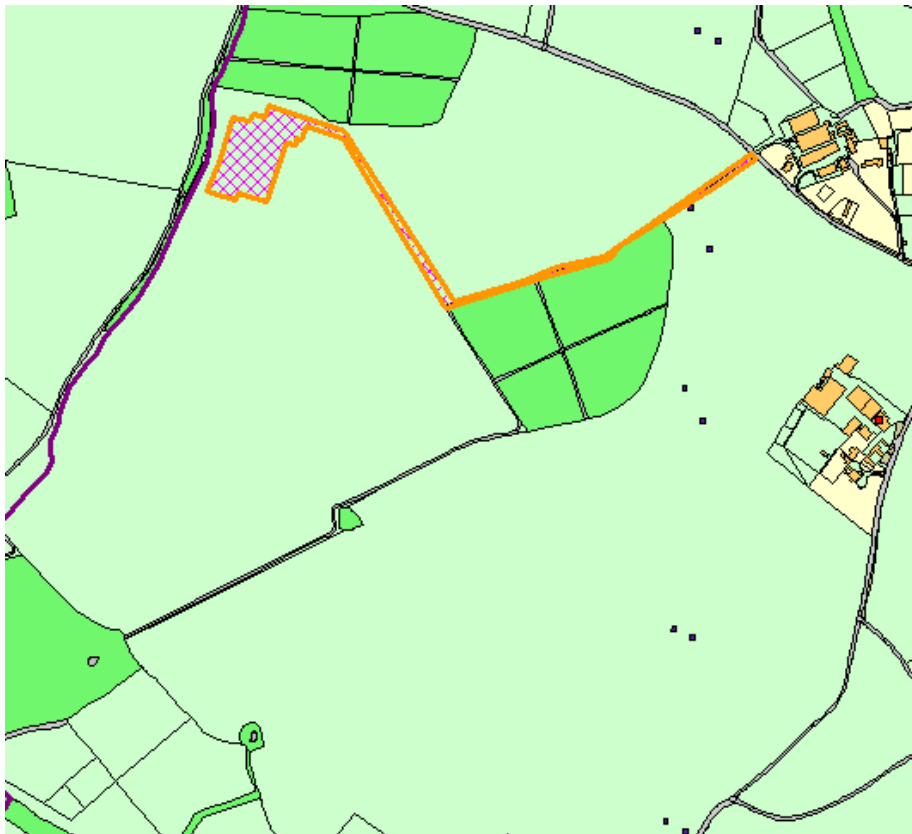
APPLICANT Fleet BESS Limited & SSE Energy Solutions Ltd (Mr Josef Balodis)

CONSULTATIONS EXPIRY 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022

APPLICATION EXPIRY 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022 (extension of time)

WARD Odiham

RECOMMENDATION Refer to Full Council with a recommendation to **GRANT**, subject to conditions



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## **BACKGROUND**

The application has been referred to Planning Committee as the application is a Departure from the Local Plan, as the application is recommended for approval, this is in line with Appendix A, 1c, of the Council's Constitution.

Members are reminded that the determination of planning applications is not delegated to the Planning Committee where the Committee propose a determination that is contrary to the Development Plan (or policy approved by Council). In cases where the Planning Committee resolves to grant any such application then the Committee's recommendations will be placed before Full Council to consider the policy issues that gave rise to the referral.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

The application site includes an existing access track and a roughly rectangular section of a much larger agricultural field, which forms part of Penn Croft Farm. The application site is 2.2 hectares in area and lies approximately 1 kilometre to the west of the village of Crondall.

The application site comprises of land to the south of ancient woodland known as 'New Copse' and to the west of ancient woodland 'Long Copse', both are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

The western boundary of the site is that of a dense field boundary comprising of mature trees and hedgerows. The wider field slopes from the south-east to the north-west, resulting in the application site being within one of the lowest-lying areas of the field.

The field is accessed via Itchel Lane where an existing agricultural track heads south-west into the field. Itchel Lane to the west of the site is identified as a surface water indicative flood problem area (surface water IFPA) and land to the south of the site as a causal flooding area and a groundwater flooding indicative flood problem area (groundwater IFPA). The site is otherwise within Flood Zone 1 as designated by the Environment Agency for flood risk for planning.

There are no designated built heritage assets or conservation areas within close vicinity of the application site. Public Right of Way 51 (PRoW51) runs east/west to the south of the site between Park Corner Farm and Swanthorpe Lane.

Fleet electrical sub-station is around 1.5 kilometres to the north of the site and is a high-voltage substation. The substation acts as a hub for the local power distribution network.

This site is in a countryside location in planning policy terms as it falls outside of any defined settlement in the Hart Local Plan 2032 (HLP32).

## **PROPOSAL**

The application seeks full planning permission for the installation of an energy storage facility comprising of battery containers, fencing, switching station, kiosk, and associated works. This facility would connect to the National Grid and function as an

energy balancing facility. The development would be connected to the aforementioned agricultural track by a newly constructed access track (375m in length) across the agricultural field.

The application proposes battery units that would be stored within sealed metal containers, transformers, a switching room and control room. No substantive lighting is proposed beyond that of very minimal task lighting from sensors. CCTV is proposed. The control 'room' or building is the tallest component in the submitted layout, but it is not substantially taller than the battery containers that form the bulk of the development that are 2.59m in height.

A green fence of 2.4m in height, with a natural fence covering such as willow, would be erected around the perimeter of the compound. The proposals include a landscape buffer between 3 and 7 metres deep around the boundary of the development, and a Landscape Strategy has been submitted.

During the course of the application further information has been provided particularly in respect of drainage, trees and ecology and documentation has been updated for accuracy.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

20/03152/PREAPP

Development of a 100MW battery storage system and associated infrastructure  
Opinion Issued 12.04.2021

Other applications for similar proposals in the district which are considered to be relevant to the determination of this application are:

### Land at Rye Common Lane, Crondall

20/01180/FUL

Proposed energy storage facility to provide energy balancing services to the National Grid.

Refused 11/12/2020. Appeal Allowed 28/09/2021.

### Little Holt, Holt Lane, Hook

16/01789/FUL

Erection of storage containers, support infrastructure and security fence for Battery Energy Storage facility. Refused 11/11/2016. Appeal Allowed 16/05/2017.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004 (as amended) requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The application is considered to be a departure from the Local Plan as there are no policies which allocate such development at this site and no relevant policies for the determination of energy storage proposals. The Council may depart

from development plan policies where material considerations indicate that the plan should not be followed, in line with s38(6) of the PCPA 2004.

The relevant Development Plan for the District includes the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 (HLP32), Crondall Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) 2021 and saved policies from the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (HLP06). Adopted and saved policies are up-to-date and consistent with the NPPF. The relevant policies are as follows:

Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 (HLP32):

SD1 Sustainable Development  
SS1 Spatial Strategy and Distribution of Growth  
ED3 The Rural Economy  
NBE1 Development in the Countryside  
NBE2 Landscape  
NBE4 Biodiversity  
NBE5 Managing Flood Risk  
NBE8 Historic Environment  
NBE9 Design  
NBE10 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy  
NBE11 Pollution  
INF1 Infrastructure  
INF2 Green Infrastructure  
INF3 Transport

Saved Policies from the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (updated 01.05.2020) (HLP06):

GEN1 General Policy for Development  
CON23 Development affecting Public Rights of Way

Crondall Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) 2017-2032

Policy 1 – Spatial Growth  
Policy 3 – Good Design  
Policy 6 – The Natural Environment

Relevant Guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021  
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)  
National Policy Statement for Overarching Energy (NPS1)  
Hart District Landscape Assessment (HDLA, 1997)  
Hart Landscape Capacity Study 2016 (HLCS)  
Hart's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2016  
Hart's Climate Change Action Plan

## **CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

### **Crandall Parish Council:**

#### Updated Response:

“Whilst fully supporting the need for facilities such as this, the Parish Council feels that the site chosen needs to be suitable. They do not feel that this one is.

Object on the basis that:

Proposal is located in the countryside, contrary to HLP NBE1

Proposal has adverse effects on:

- Agricultural land (no assessment has been made as to Grade 3a or 3b). Contrary to HLP NBE10;
- Biodiversity: No net gain quantification has been given and harm to the New Copse SINC, Ancient Woodland and Semi-Natural Woodland. Contrary to HLP NBE4 and NBE10;
- Residential amenity: The +9 to +14dB increase in night-time noise is a significant adverse impact resulting in adverse impacts on residential amenity contrary to HLP NBE10;
- Landscape and Visual: Harm to the open countryside contrary to HLP NBE2 and HLP NBE10.”

#### Initial consultation response:

“Object on the basis that:

- Proposal is located in the countryside, contrary to HLP NBE1
- Proposal has adverse effects on:
- Agricultural land (no assessment has been made as to Grade 3a or 3b). Contrary to HLP NBE10
- Biodiversity: No net gain quantification has been given and harm to the New Copse SINC, Ancient Woodland and Semi-Natural Woodland. Contrary to HLP NBE4 and NBE10
- Residential amenity: The +9 to +14dB increase in night time noise is a significant adverse impact resulting in adverse impacts on residential amenity contrary to HLP NBE10
- Landscape and Visual: Harm to the open countryside contrary to HLP NBE2 and HLP NBE10”

### **Councillor Dorn**

- Fire Safety including potential ecological impacts that would arise, including water contamination.
- Testing of industrial systems and accuracy.

- Fire Industry Association guidance.
- Proximity of ancient woodland
- Effect of noise on wildlife
- 4-metre-high CCTV poles
- Clarification on lighting required (would be highly intrusive in rural setting).
- Pre-app response the proposed development was unjustified and intrusive.
- The means/method to link the site to the power grid have not been defined.
- Effect of fire (NBE10) (neighbour highlights as well), risk of fire and how a fire would be fought.
- All battery technologies have a risk of fire due to thermal “runway”.
- Toxic fumes will be driven towards Crondall and Church Crookham.
- Tesla emergency response guide notes refer to such fires requiring specialist techniques, due to the amount of water required to extinguish and deal with gases.
- Application provides little information on the proposed batteries and their safety history.
- Four background documents.
- Discussed fire-pollution issues with Hampshire Water Management Team raising water contamination.
- A bund would be necessary to contain pollutants and manage surface infiltration.

### **Environmental Health (Internal)**

No objection on environmental noise and nuisance grounds.

It is indicated that the absolute level of sound predicted is low and unlikely to be perceptible in neighbouring properties. From the industry standards, where background sound level and rating levels are low, absolute levels might be as, or more, relevant, than the margin by which the rating level exceeds the background. This is especially true at night. No objection to the noise impact assessment findings submitted by the applicant.

### **Tree Officer (Internal)**

No objection subject to the proposals being undertaken in full accordance with details and methods contained in the Arboricultural Survey Addendum Oct 2022 and suggested conditions.

### **Ecology (Internal)**

No objection subject to conditions.

Previous comments related to the requirement of a 15m buffer to protect New Copse SINC, an ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), in line with Natural England’s Standing Advice. Initially no buffer was included, however subsequent submissions have addressed this issue. Further concerns were raised regarding Long Copse SINC, also ASNW, due to the access track directly adjacent to the SINC being

unlikely to be suitable for heavy goods vehicle movements without risking harm to the root systems.

It is noted that the Tree officer is satisfied regarding the suitability of measures to protect the Long Copse SINC. The Addendum to the Arboricultural Impact Assessment details materials and methods to install temporary ground protection, including barrier fencing, to be in place for the duration of the construction phase, at least. This approach is accepted and considered to be satisfactory for the purposes of protecting the biodiversity features of the SINC also.

The Ecological Impact Assessment details sufficient protections and enhancements on site, including native hedgerow planting being proposed, timing works to seasons unlikely to impact on breeding birds, and best practice measures for development.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is proposed to provide a site-specific method statement relating to protection of habitats and protected species, such as vegetation clearance for herptiles and breeding birds, and reducing lightning impact on foraging or commuting bats. This approach is accepted by the Council's Ecologist.

The Council's Ecologist has no objection to the proposals subject to conditions requiring the submission of a CEMP detailing any temporary or permanent measures for the protection of the adjacent SINCS and protected species, and the recommendations for mitigation and enhancement provided the recommendations in the Ecological Management Plan (Section 7) are undertaken in full. The Ecologist recommends a condition requiring development in accordance with the Ecology report and a CEMP.

### **Landscape Manager (Internal)**

The proposals are contrary to HLP2032 NBE2 Landscape a), b) and d), NBE9 Design d).

The proposal will fundamentally remove part of a rural feature from a rural landscape (section of the field) and replace it with highly industrialised features (battery containers/transformers/switch gear etc). This in turn negatively affects the rural features that make up the landscape character around the site. The adverse effects occur from the onset and will impact the visual amenity and scenic quality of the adjacent landscape. The range of the adverse effects will occur in the local environs of the site but beyond that, appear limited.

A scheme of soft landscape mitigation accompanies the proposals but needs refining. A suitable scheme will, once established, reduce the industrialising impact of the proposals to some extent, further reducing the range of the adverse effects.

Subject to a number of conditions and clarification of issues, no objection to the proposals as whilst contrary to policy, the adverse effects could be reduced and thus limited to the adjacent environs of the site resulting in a negligible change to area 15:

Hart Downs of the Hart Landscape Character Assessment and LCA 8c: North East Hampshire Open Downs of the Hampshire County Council Integrated Landscape Assessment.

### **Hampshire County Council – Archaeology (External)**

No objection subject to condition. On the Historic Environment Record (HER) there is an archaeological heritage asset (HER 35744) which is an enclosure recognised from aerial photographs which is directly impacted by the development. The nature of the evidence means that it is undated, but its form suggests it cannot be ruled out that it encloses a prehistoric settlement. It would require some preliminary archaeological evaluation to establish the nature of the archaeology at that location.

### **Cadent Gas**

Application falls outside Cadent's distribution network. Contact National Grid and/or local gas distributor.

### **Natural England (External)**

No objection.

Not assessed for impacts on protected species (see standing advice and LPA Ecologist).

There is potential to adversely affect woodland classified on the ancient woodland inventory. Natural England refers to standing advice on ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have also published standing advice on ancient woodland and veteran trees.

The site includes an area of Priority Habitat as identified on Section 41 of the Natural Environmental Rural Communities Act.

### **Local Highway Authority (External)**

No objection following the submission of further information.

Due to the nature of the roads leading to the site and the size of the transformers required for this development's construction further information was requested from the Local Highway Authority (LHA). Construction traffic tracking information was reviewed and the LHA was satisfied that the construction traffic for this development can traverse Itchel Lane and that the approach laid out in the transport statement for the transport of wide loads to the site during construction would be acceptable.

The LHA raised no objection to the narrowing of a section of the access track to accommodate the required 15m buffer from the ancient woodland. It was acknowledged that the track would see a low number of vehicle movements. The length of the narrowing means that it only will be a pinch point with the rest of the track still able to allow two-way traffic. The narrowing to 4 metres still provides



adequate carriageway width for the expected maintenance vehicles to this site once in operation.

### **Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) (External)**

No objection subject to condition. During the course of the application an Addendum to Flood Risk and Drainage Design Statement was submitted, this provided additional information and clarification to the initial consultation response. This highlighted the need for infiltration information prior to the determination of the planning application.

The LLFA reviewed the further infiltration information that has been submitted, which has been undertaken to demonstrate whether there are suitable rates. The LLFA highlight that no groundwater monitoring has been completed. It is known that groundwater flooding occurs within the Crondall area, however, given the nature of the site, difference in location and elevation, a condition is acceptable to deal with this element.

### **Hampshire Fire and Rescue (HFR) (External)**

HFR note that the proposal includes the installation of large battery energy storage systems. Due the nature of battery energy storage systems (BESS) HFR may encounter difficulty fully extinguishing a fire involving these systems. It may there be necessary to implement additional measures to prevent fire spread beyond the point of origin. The following items are highlighted to be given due consideration by the applicant and Local Planning Authority to ensure that a fire involving BESS can be safely contained:

- Firefighting Arrangements
- Water Supply
- Separation
- Environmental Impact

There is also reference to compliance with Building Regulations: Access for Firefighting (B5), Hampshire Act 1983 Section 12 – Access for Fire Service, Access for High-reach Appliances, Water Supplies and Fire Protection, Testing of Fire Safety Systems and Firefighting and the Environment.

(Officer note: Building Regulations are not applicable to external areas).

### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (External)**

The proposed development site does not currently lie within the consultation distance (CD) of a major hazard site or major accident hazard pipeline; therefore, at present HSE does not need to be consulted on any developments on this site.

Battery storage facilities are usually not a relevant development in relation to land-use planning in the vicinity of major hazard sites and major accident hazard pipelines. This is because they do not, in themselves, involve the introduction of people into the area. HSE's land use planning advice is mainly concerned with the potential risks posed by major hazard sites and major accident hazard pipelines to

the population at a new development. However, if the proposed development is located within a safeguarding zone for a HSE licensed explosives site then please contact HSE's Explosives Inspectorate.

The HSE Land Use Planning Web App can be used to find out if a site is within an explosives site zone (as well as in zones for major hazard sites and major accident hazard pipelines), HSE has provided planning authorities with access to the HSE Planning Advice Web App - <https://pa.hsl.gov.uk/> - for them to use to consult HSE and obtain HSE's advice.

(Officer Note: The site is not located within a safeguarding zone for a HSE licensed explosives site).

If the development is over a major accident hazard pipeline or in the easement around a major accident hazard pipeline, please consult the pipeline operator.

If the development involves a new substation or the storage of electrical energy such as in a large battery storage unit and the development is proposed adjacent to a COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) establishment then please consult the operator of the COMAH establishment. If the development involves a substation or the storage of electrical energy such as in a large battery storage unit and is proposed in the vicinity of a nuclear site, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) does wish to be consulted over such proposals.

(Officer Note: There are no COMAH sites within 3 miles of the postcode for the application and it is not in the vicinity of a nuclear site).

## **PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

At the time of writing this report there have been four public objections and two neutral neighbour representations made, summarised as follows:

- Contrary to policy.
- Negative impact due to appearance and size.
- Concern the development will spread and cover a wider area in the future. Development could be built underground.
- The proposal would not generate renewable energy, nor has it been demonstrated that it would be a form of low carbon energy as referred to in the NPPF and HLP32. (Officer Note: See principle of development section of report).
- Distance to mains water supply.
- Proximity to domestic electrical cables and phone lines.
- Pollution (fumes, potential leakage and contamination).
- This area is in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Area) (source: Environment Agency).
- Impact of new track to be considered, including pollution and waste.

- Impact on trees including 'Ancient Woodland' and 'semi-rural woodland'.
- Acknowledge need for proposed use.
- Unsuitable location, particularly due to type and size.
- Consideration of alternative locations.
- Visual impact (from residential properties and public footpaths).
- Area within a LAPWING (bird) habitat.
- Potential noise (including to animals) and light impact.
- Health impacts (humans and animals).
- Impact on RAF Odiham and Farnborough Airport.
- Impact on heritage assets (Officer Note: The Pit, Itchel Lane, Crondall (Grade II listed) separated to the north by Itchel Lane, to the east two grade II list buildings at Home Farm (Farmhouse and Farm building west of house) and The Oast House, Hillside to the south).
- Highway safety impact.
- Impact on natural environment including crops and ecology.
- Impact on trees.
- Fire risk and safety hazards.
- Impact on telecommunications.
- Permanence.
- Similar applications in the locality.
- Impact on residential amenity.
- Pollution (ground water supply).
- Biodiversity impacts.
- Agreements by Penn Croft.
- Benefits of energy generation.
- Impact on countryside location.
- Distance to point of connection.
- Emergency service access.
- Additional screening requested.
- Condition requiring reverting to agricultural.
- Need and justification of harm versus benefit.
- Insufficient details.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### Principle of Development

The application site is located within the countryside as designated within the Hart Local Plan 2032 (HLP32) proposals map.

HLP32 Policy SS1 (Spatial Strategy and Distribution of Growth) states that development will be focused within defined settlements, on previously developed land in sustainable locations and on allocated sites. The application site does not fall within the above categories.

Policy NBE1 Development in the Countryside criterion a-n identify forms of development that are potentially acceptable in the countryside. The proposed energy storage facility does not fall within any of these categories.

The principle of the proposed development is therefore contrary to the above spatial strategy and countryside development plan policies.

However, policy NBE1 seeks to only permit development when it is demonstrated that a countryside location is both necessary and justified. The nature and scale of the proposed development would make it difficult to deliver within settlement boundaries.

HLP32 Policy NBE10 supports proposals for the generation of energy from renewable resources, or low carbon energy development provided that any adverse impacts are satisfactorily addressed including individual and cumulative landscape and visual impacts. The criteria at NBE10 (a-f) are relevant. Such applications will also be subject to the following considerations (criteria a-f); the local highway network, ecology, heritage assets, residential amenity; and any wider benefits.

The provision of a battery storage that functions as an energy balancing facility is considered to assist socially by maintaining uniform energy provision to households, economically by safeguarding energy supplies and environmentally through improving infrastructure for renewable energy production but is not considered to explicitly fall within the remit of Policy NBE10.

Supporting text (paragraph 307) of the HLP32 states that the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy schemes will contribute towards the mitigation of climate change.

The proposed development would not generate energy but does contribute to reducing emissions by balancing energy supply.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines low carbon technologies as those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels). It is considered that the proposed development is a contributing form of infrastructure that assists in the transformation to a zero-carbon economy.

Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states that the planning system should support renewable and carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

The NPPF (paragraph 158) states that, when determining planning applications for low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

*" When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:*

*a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*

*b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas."*

Given the in-principle conflict with the spatial strategy, robust justification for the site selection with reference to alternative sites and any locational requirements is required. Alternative sites and locational requirements are set out within the submitted Design and Access Statement, wherein it is shown that the site is in close proximity to a 'Point of Connection' to an electricity pylon which in turn connects to a 'strategic substation' with adequate demand capacity to facilitate the proposal's impact. The applicant also expresses that the site location is discrete, is enclosed by existing mature vegetation and therefore well screened and at a low risk of flooding. The location is contrary to the development plan, but the justification for the proposed development as a departure from the development plan is robust and credible.

Submitted visual evidence and a site visit have confirmed the relatively discrete nature of the site in the context of the wider landscape. The Landscape Officer has confirmed that adverse effects will occur in the local environs of the site but would be limited. Accordingly, with adequate mitigation, the adverse effects of the proposal could be addressed to minimise the harm to the existing landscape. This is explored further in the relevant section of this report.

Accordingly, it is considered that subject to compliance with other Policies of the Development Plan that the principle of development, that of a renewable energy supporting infrastructure type, is acceptable at this location if its impacts can be made acceptable.

#### Design and impact on the character of the area

The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

Policy NBE2 of the HLP32 seeks to achieve development proposals that respect and wherever possible enhance the special characteristics, value, or visual amenity of the district's landscapes. This policy contains five criteria to assess development proposals in relation to landscape impacts. It also states that, where appropriate, proposals will be required to include a comprehensive landscaping scheme to

ensure that development would successfully integrate with the landscape and surroundings.

Each criterion from Policy NBE2 of the HLP32 is dealt with in turn below.

- a) *impacts to landscape qualities identified in landscape character assessments.*
- b) *the visual amenity and scenic quality of the landscape.*

The site is within the Hart Downs Landscape Character Area as identified in the Hart District Landscape Character Assessment which states (page 91)

"Overall, the open, rolling chalk scenery of the Hart Downs is of high visual quality and presents a striking contrast with the more muted lowland landscapes further north. Of particular scenic value are those areas which have retained a predominantly pastoral character and a stronger structure of hedgerows and woodland blocks, which provide shelter, visual containment and add diversity to the landscape. However, other areas have a denuded, exposed character as a result of conversion to arable farmland which has led to field enlargement, loss of hedgerows and trees and greater intrusion of power lines and development."

The HDLCA also identifies the main enhancement priorities for the Landscape Character Area.

There is also the Hampshire Integrated Character Assessment (2010), the site in Landscape Character Area (LCA) 8c: North East Hampshire Open Downs. The LVIA also considered the intervisibility with LCA1b: North east Hampshire Plantations and Heaths.

The key characteristics of the LCA: 8c North East Hampshire Open Downs

- Rolling chalk landform with broad sweeping hills and ridges and dry valleys.
- Northern areas slope northwards towards the lower lying heaths while southern areas form a gently undulating plateau.
- Extensive tracts of intensive arable cultivation defined by well-trimmed hedgerows.
- Patches of improved and semi-improved grassland and wetlands add biodiversity value.
- Scattered blocks of woodland habitats and stronger hedgerow structure in southern parts of the area.
- Springs occur along the northern fringe of this landscape where the chalk meets the clay.
- Remote and quiet landscape which is lightly populated with dispersed nucleated villages (including spring line villages at the foot of the chalk) and occasional farmsteads.
- Sense of openness, space and expansiveness.
- Generally, formal enclosures in the north and informal enclosures in the south.
- Nucleated settlement pattern of springline villages along the northern boundary, and small hamlets and villages in dry valleys to the south on higher ground.

There is also the Hart Landscape Capacity Study (HLCS, 2016). The HLCS identifies the site to be in the west of Crondall local character area (CR-01) which has a low overall landscape capacity.

The LVIA concludes that the site and study area are of medium landscape value, owing to its good landscape condition and medium scenic quality and presence of positive perceptual aspects, balanced with the lack of conservation and recreational interests.

The direct effects are recorded for the landscape character of the site. These are appraised as being of major adverse importance at construction owing to the introduction of incongruous elements in the form of construction activity into the site. At years 1 and 15, this effect would reduce to substantial adverse as the scale of the effect is reduced slightly by the inclusion and maturation of landscape buffers around the site boundaries, which better assimilate the proposed development into the site. This is further reduced following decommissioning to minor neutral as the infrastructure of the proposed development is removed, with the landscape mitigation planting remaining in situ. This includes seven viewpoints of which four appraised, the remainder are scoped out.

Whilst the LVIA finds that the proposed development within the site would have an adverse effect on the landscape character of the site, as well as a lesser effect on the Landscape Character Appraisals (North East Hampshire Open Downs and Hart Downs) in the surrounding context. A lack of intervisibility with the wider landscape is identified, the effects are considered to be limited. The LVIA considers the Hart Landscape Character Assessment, setting out that the effect would be negligible / neutral once planting has matured. The LVIA notes that the lack of intervisibility with the wider landscape means that the effect on Character Areas is limited in extent. The landscape mitigation would, in time, reinforce and add to the large woodland blocks recorded in the baseline character assessment for the area. Views to the site are particularly limited as a result of intervening vegetation and the majority of views contained to a 1km radius.

Saved Policy CON23 of the HLP06 states that development will not be permitted which would seriously distract from the amenity and consequent recreational value of well-used footpaths and other public rights of way in the countryside close to main settlements by reducing their rural character or detracting from significant views.

The majority of views of the site from residential properties will be screened by a combination of intervening topography, vegetation and built form. However, there is the potential for residents at Park Corner Farm to experience views of the proposed development. Due to the raised topography at Redlands (near Ewshot) and at Montgomery's Farm / Swanthorpe House to the east of Well, there is also the potential for residents in these areas to also experience views of the proposed development. For many of these properties, the view would be filtered or entirely screened by intervening topography, vegetation or built form.

The key Public Right of Way (PRoW) from which views of the proposed development are likely to be obtained is from Crondall Footpath 503, near Park Corner Farm and

Cron dall Bridle way 501 near Montgomery's Farm. The LVIA assesses that from Bridle way 501 the availability of views is limited by intervening vegetation. The nearest footpath is Cron dall footpath 51 and views are unlikely from here due to the topography of the land.

The main road where the from which highway users are potentially likely to obtain views is the road to the west. In addition, roads around 2-4km to the south and west are shown as likely to experience views of the proposed development on the site; these include Dora's Green Lane and Heath Lane at Redlands, as well as the unnamed road passing Montgomery's Farm. However, from on-site survey, the actual availability of these views tends to be highly limited by intervening topography and / or vegetation.

The Council's Landscape Architect has observed that the proposal would result in the removal of part of a rural feature from a rural landscape, being that of a section of the field, and replace it with highly industrialised features. The batteries themselves, which occupy the majority of the proposed site, would be partially visible from behind the proposed fence and the transformers and control room would be considerably more visible. However, the visibility of these components would be, by virtue of the site location and substantial mature trees and hedgerows, limited to the immediate environment of the field. Whilst the development, as proposed, would be out of keeping with the existing rural character of the field, it is not considered that its impact would extend beyond this environment and would have little to no impact on the wider landscape character identified within the Hart Landscape Character Assessment.

The Council's Landscape Architect has also advised that a suitable scheme of planting will, over time, reduce the industrialising impacts of the proposals on the rural character of the area. This will be progressively effective over an appropriate period of time. Critically, in order to do this, it will need to be properly managed otherwise it would fail to achieve the levels of mitigation required. To achieve this, a condition requiring a detailed hard and soft landscaping plan as well as a condition requiring an ecological management plan would be recommended to ensure it is appropriate and sustainable for the long term.

Therefore, the impact that would be caused to the landscape quality of the immediate surroundings, whilst material would be limited to the immediate environment of the field and would have little or no impact on the wider landscape character.

*c) impacts to historic landscapes, parks, gardens and features.*

The main heritage aspects are considered below as part of the main assessment under planning consideration 'Heritage Assets'.

There is one Registered Park and Garden within the study area at Dogmersfield Park.

There are twelve conservation areas within the study area.



- d) important local, natural and historic features such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, water features e.g., rivers and other landscape features and their function as ecological networks.*

The application is accompanied by information in respect of trees including ancient woodland, this is considered below as part of the main assessment under planning consideration 'Biodiversity'.

- e) It does not lead to the physical or visual coalescence of settlements, or damage their separate identity, either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development.*

The proposal would not lead to any physical or visual coalescence between settlements.

### Heritage Impacts

Policy NBE8 of the HLP32 states that development proposals should conserve or enhance heritage assets and their settings, taking account of their significance.

Paragraphs 195, 199, 200, 202 and 203 of the NPPF are of relevance for determining the significance of Heritage Asset (HA), assessing the impact of the significance and the need to weigh heritage harm.

- Surrounding Listed Buildings

There are listed buildings in the wider area, the nearest being a Grade II listed cottage (The Pit) which is approximately 475 metres from the site, there is a Grade II listed cottage and farmhouse at Itchell Home Farm, there is a Grade II listed cottage at Park Corner and another farmhouse.

- Archaeology

The Historic Environment Record (HER) identifies that there is an archaeological heritage asset (HER 35744) which is an enclosure recognised from aerial photographs which is directly impacted by the development. The nature of the evidence means that it is undated, but its form suggests it cannot be ruled out that it encloses a prehistoric settlement. It would require some preliminary archaeological evaluation to establish the nature of the archaeology at that location.

The application submission does not specify what ground preparations are planned in order to install the compound, but it is noted that a permeable stone surface is planned. The County's Archaeologist has assumed that the site will be prepared by topsoil stripping and on that basis, it is assumed that the proposal will impact elements of the enclosure recorded on the HER. Accordingly, a condition is recommended securing a preliminary archaeological investigation to establish the nature of the archaeology associated with the enclosure, and if the enclosure does represent a site of archaeological significance and should secure an appropriate level of archaeological mitigation commensurate with the nature of the impact of the scheme.

Overall, the proposed development is likely to cause some harm at the less than substantial scale of harm to the significance and ability to appreciate the significance of the listed buildings referred to above.

Due to the less than substantial harm to heritage assets generated at the lower level of the spectrum, the proposal would generate conflict with policies NBE8 and NBE9 of the HLP32 or Policy GEN1 of the HLP06 in this respect.

The NPPF sets out that heritage harm can in some instances be outweighed by public benefits within the balancing exercise and this assessment is undertaken later in this report in the Planning Balance Section below.

### Impacts on Amenity

HLP32 Policy NBE11 requires that development does not give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution; and that it is satisfactorily demonstrated that any adverse impacts of pollution will be adequately mitigated or otherwise minimised to an acceptable level.

In terms of amenity, HLP06 Saved Policy GEN1 (criteria ii and iii) requires that development avoids a material loss of amenity to residents in respect of noise, disturbance, noxious fumes, dust, pollution, traffic generation, loss of privacy, overlooking or the creation of shared facilities.

The NPPF (paragraph 130) seeks a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Paragraph 185 of the NPPF requires planning decisions take into account likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wide impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so take account of noise, identify and protect tranquil area and limit the impact of light pollution.

The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment, self-screening is not taken into account in the assessment. The assessment concludes that the proposed battery storage compound will not result in a significant noise impact and hence it is not anticipated that the proposals would result in any significant harm to the amenity of occupants of the nearest residential properties by way of noise. No special noise mitigation measures are therefore considered necessary.

In respect of noise impacts and other impacts from the proposed development, the Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has not raised any objection in respect of environmental noise and nuisance grounds.

Views of the proposed development from residential properties would be minimal and would not justify a reason for refusal in respect of residential amenity.

No concerns or objections in relation to dust, fumes or fire risk have been raised by the EHO in respect of this application. This has been raised in the consultation responses.

## Fire Risk

Fire risk is a material consideration to this planning application. Fire risk is a determining factor in prior approval submissions within the General Permitted Development Order and planning appeals have also confirmed that access for fire safety vehicles is material to the assessment of planning applications. As a result, fire risk is material to this application and Building Regulations would not be applicable to the development as it does not relate to a building.

Hampshire Fire & Rescue have been consulted on the application and have raised some issues. The applicant has submitted a Technical Note on Fire Safety in response. The document considers access to the site, water supplies, access for high reach appliances, fire protection, testing of fire safety systems and the environment. There would remain the requirement to comply with any non-planning legislation in these respects.

Furthermore, as part of the discussions on highways access for the construction of the proposed development it has been established that vehicular access for a 2.5 metre vehicle can be made down Itchel Lane.

The Applicant has confirmed that SSE's focus is on prevention and there has been investment in a 'reduced risk by design' approach, which ensures that the battery is designed from the outset in a manner that minimises any potential safety risk.

The proposed energy storage facility is stated as being remotely monitored 24 hours a day, and inspected monthly, to allow operations to be automatically restricted, should that be needed. Temperature is also constantly monitored, and containers are fitted with a heat trigger which switches them off if temperatures were to unexpectedly rise. The supply chain includes 100% factory acceptance testing and certification on the batteries to minimise any risk of manufacturing fault.

A detailed mitigation strategy has been developed in the event that a fire occurs, a 'multi layered' approach is used to identify and arrest fire before it breaks out and, in the unlikely event these fail, to extinguish. These systems are designed to be a fast acting (no need for manual intervention) and self-monitoring (should the system become unhealthy or fail, it will send alarms to our control centre and restrict / stop the system from operating).

In addition, the batteries have an aerosol system that smothers and stops the fire without the use of water. The containers themselves are self-bunded by design, thus removing any broader negative impact of the mitigation actions. Each container is therefore a 'closed loop system' and designed to be simply removed and replaced should an incident arise and the plant can continue to provide its valuable contribution to the local energy network.

The site has been designed so that a potential fire remains limited to a single container, space is left between containers so that fire can't propagate. Due to all the above, fumes resulting from a potential fire would be very limited and restricted by volume to levels that will be dispersed quickly even with very low winds.

A condition has been included to require details of mechanisms for the maintenance of electrical elements together with an overarching fire safety precaution statement for the development.

### Highway Safety, Access and Parking

Policy INF3 of the HLP32 states that development should promote the use of sustainable transport modes prioritising walking and cycling, improving accessibility to services and support the transition to a low carbon future.

Saved policy GEN1 of the HLP06 supports developments that do not give rise to traffic flows on the surrounding road networks which would cause material detriment to the amenities of nearby properties and settlements or to highway safety.

Paragraph 111 of the NPPF advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement, including an access and route for construction traffic. Access to the site would be from Itchel Lane, obliquely opposite an access to Itchel Home Farm. Access would be via an existing gated access and along an existing track adjacent to a field. There would be a requirement for an additional track, 375 metres long, to be formed to provide access to the land where the compound is proposed. The existing gate would need to be set back and junction widened during construction to allow larger vehicles to be reinstated.

There would be no staff based on site during operational activities as the site would be remotely monitored, reducing the need for activity at the site. Therefore, there would be a few traffic movements per month from a four-wheel drive vehicle.

The construction period is anticipated to be three months. Foundation and ground works would be undertaken using a JCB excavator. Material deliveries would be via four axle tippers with deliveries requiring various size vehicles. A mobile crane would be used to lift equipment and deliveries to site. The auxiliary transformers are factory assembled and installed on site, these are 3.1 metres x 3.2 metres, so would be a wide load as they are over 2.9 metres. The 19 transformers could be delivered in twos on a low loader. The route for construction traffic has been considered, Itchel Lane is noted to have low traffic numbers so unlikely to meet other vehicles. The narrow passing points have been considered. Generally, Hyde Lane has a width of between 3.0 metres and 3.9 metres excluding passing spaces. Itchel Lane has a width of 2.6 metres to 2.9 metres. Construction vehicles would be connected via radios.

In terms of impacts arising from the development to the operation of the highway network the Local Highway Authority (LHA) has assessed the proposal and has raised no objection.

The LHA have reviewed the submitted information in relation to the proposed access, vehicular movements and mitigation measures and raise no objection. In doing so, the LHA have advised that they are satisfied that the proposed

development would not result in a severe detrimental impact on the operation or safety of the local highway network.

During the application, further information, including construction traffic tracking was provided. This has been reviewed by the LHA who are satisfied that the construction traffic for the proposed development can traverse Itchel Lane. Furthermore, the steps laid out in the Transport Statement for the transport of wide loads during construction are acceptable and raise no objection. The submitted Transport Statement recommends a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to minimise impacts on the highway, accordingly this is recommended.

The LHA considered the narrowing of a section of the access track, adjacent to the ancient woodland to accommodate a buffer zone. No objection was raised, the track will see a low number of vehicle movement. The length of the narrowing means that it only will be a pinch point with the rest of the track still able to allow two-way traffic movements. The narrowing to 4 metres would still provide adequate carriageway width for the expected maintenance vehicles to access this site once in operation.

The NPPF is clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. No such adverse impacts have been identified. The proposal therefore complies with HLP32 Policy INF3, HLP06 Saved Policy GEN1 and the NPPF in relation to transport and highways.

### Flood Risk and Drainage

Policy NBE5 of the HLP32 sets out five criteria when development would be permitted, in this case the applicable criteria are:

- Over its lifetime it would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and will be safe from flooding;
- If located within an area at risk from any source of flooding, now and in the future, it is supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment and complies fully with national policy including the sequential and exceptions tests where necessary;
- Within Causal Areas (as defined in the SFRA) all development takes opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding.

Environment Agency flood mapping indicates that the site is located within Flood Zone 1, including that where the battery storage facility is proposed. The submission provided a flood risk assessment (FRA), as the site area is over one hectare. The application has been reviewed by the LLFA.

The site slopes predominantly from east to west but also from the south towards the low ground located in the northwest corner of the site. The impermeable areas comprise concrete bases to support the proposed equipment. The access track would be free draining stone.

The land where the proposed development site is proposed to be located is not shown to be at risk from surface water. There is a medium to high risk of surface

water flooding along the western edge of Itchel Lane, opposite the proposed development. The topographic survey shows the site drains towards Itchel Lane. The FRA concludes that flooding from sewers is low risk.

The levels are proposed to be adjusted to provide a shallower platform for the battery storage. Levels of finished site still provide a slope from east to west to provide drainage onto Itchel Lane, to ensure that surface water does not pool on site and also does not enter the site from Itchel Lane via an overland flow route.

The FRA recommended that the finished floor levels of any infrastructure and / or storage units are set above the existing levels and at least 150mm above the proposed surrounding external levels.

Wherever possible, the external ground profile in the development will ensure that surface water is directed away from the proposed development.

The application includes a Drainage Strategy. Filter drains with perforated pipes and permeable paving are proposed to intercept runoff and infiltrate to the ground. Along with access roads permeable and free draining. Surface water runoff not captured by the filter drains, or the permeable paving shall follow the proposed contours on site and infiltrate into the permeable ground.

During the course of the application, infiltration testing has been undertaken to demonstrate suitable rates of infiltration. The application submission identifies that the SFRA shows risk of groundwater flooding as limited and highlights that all development is proposed to be above ground level. However, no groundwater monitoring has been completed. The LLFA have raised that it is known that groundwater flooding occurs within the Crondall area, however, given the nature of the site, difference in location and elevation, the LLFA recommend a condition on this element. Accordingly, such a condition is recommended.

Accordingly, the proposed development would not increase the risk of flooding as required by HLP32 Policy NBE5 and the NPPF (para. 163).

### Ecology and Trees

With regards to biodiversity, policy NBE4 of the HLP32 states that: 'In order to conserve and enhance biodiversity, new development will be permitted provided:

- a) It will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of an international, national, or locally designated sites.
- b) It does not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss;
- c) opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity and contribute to wildlife and habitat connectivity are taken where possible, including the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. All development proposals will be expected

to avoid negative impacts on existing biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible'.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that the site has local value on a regional scale. The habitats described within the appraisal have the potential to support protected and / or notable species. For breeding birds, works should be sympathetic to this group of species, with vegetation clearance undertaken following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS). The optimal for site clearance would be between October - March outside of breeding bird season. There is foraging and commuting bats on the woodland edge, a sensitive lighting strategy within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is recommended to be secured via condition. For Habitats a suitable buffer erected around woodland during construction – secured as a planning condition. For Herptiles: work should be sympathetic to this group of species with vegetation clearance following Reasonable Avoidance Measures following a site-specific CEMP and for Badgers work should be sympathetic during construction, detailed within a CEMP.

An Ecology Addendum has been submitted to address the proximity of Long Copse (Ancient and Semi- Natural Ancient Woodland), this recognises the need to protect the ground where the access passes. Access to the site is via an existing track, approximately 400 metres of which passes adjacent to Long Copse. Subsequently, an addendum to the Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been provided to consider Long Copse.

In terms of trees, saved policy CON8 of the HLP06 states that where development is proposed which would affect trees, woodlands or hedgerows of significant landscape or amenity value planning permission will only be granted if these features are shown to be capable of being retained in the longer term or if removal is necessary new planting is undertaken to maintain the value of these features. Planning conditions may be imposed to require the planting of new trees or hedgerows to replace those lost.

To the north of the site New Copse, a Category A ancient woodland, forms a boundary along the site edge. To the south of the existing access track is Long Copse, a Category A ancient woodland, part of the woodland is within / runs alongside the track.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission's Standing Advice provides a recommended buffer of at least 15m+ between ancient woodland and a development. Adjacent to New Copse and where the battery storage facility would be located, the red line is within 15m of the ancient woodland. However, the first line of foundations is located 17m from the edge of the ancient woodland, with the majority of this buffer composed of ploughed agricultural field. The development adjacent to New Copse ancient woodland has been altered, specifically the access track, to sit outside the 15m buffer. The existing compacted agricultural track currently lies within 15m of the ancient woodland to the south, known as Long Copse. The track is proposed to be used for use by construction traffic (heavy vehicles) and thereafter lighter maintenance vehicles. The access track is an established agricultural track currently used by tractors and combine vehicles.

Ground compaction is identified as a potential risk from heavy vehicles and machinery accessing the construction area and a risk to damage to stems of trees and low branches. The addendum to the Arboricultural Impact Assessment states that non-evasive construction will need to be considered, the area fenced, and construction limited to dry periods. The use of a cellular confinement system and the final surfacing to be permeable is recommended. The information submitted is not site specific, therefore a pre-commencement condition requiring site specific information would be sought.

Some minor lifting and/or cutting back of trees over the current and southern end of the new access is likely to be needed. It has been assumed that any underground utilities required would be located within the access road. It is not proposed to carry out any major increase / decrease in level changes in RPAs, and small changes may be tolerated.

Where the existing track joins the new track, there is a section of uncompacted ground within the footprint of the new access road and RPA of the woodland. Some regrading of the existing section of the track, adjacent to the northern boundary of Long Copse, would need to be graded to allow for the installation of ground protection. The machinery to be used is discussed. The amount of excavation will be determined individually and limited to 150mm.

Whilst objections have been made that the red line is within the 15m buffer of Ancient Woodland. The access track to the south of New Copse has been realigned so that no development within 15m of the ancient woodland would occur. The field is a worked agricultural field, and it is unlikely that any significant root systems exist in the red line area here. There would not be any reason (or permission given) to undertake excavation within the 15m buffer based on the submission. Protective fencing during construction is already proposed.

No tree removal is required to facilitate the development. It has been recommended that an Arboricultural Method Statement be submitted via condition, based on the above information it is recommended that this is included.

A plan of service routes is not yet available. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies that these are expected to be located outside buffer zones and plotted root protection areas; alternatively precautionary approaches to install could be agreed with the local planning authority if unavoidable ingress into these areas is deemed justified. The service cables would comprise a power cable. Whilst the location is not confirmed at this time, it is very likely to run under the track. This would be fitted by the power company which would either exercise Permitted Development rights afforded to them, or they would have to make another application.

There has been discussion regarding the ecological impacts associated with the removal of a portion of Hedgerow H1 to facilitate temporary access including potential impact on dormice. The matter has been discussed with the Council's Ecologist and the scale of hedgerow to be removed isn't considered to be significant and a CEMP condition is proposed to adequately address.



In addition, details of replanting would need to be provided to ensure there is adequate compensation for loss of what is likely to be priority hedgerow habitat. A condition requiring development in accordance with the Ecology Report is recommended.

As such, there is no objection to the proposal in ecology or tree terms and subject to planning conditions it would comply with Policy NBE2 of the HLP32, saved policy CON8 of the HLP06, Policies and the aims of the NPPF in this regard.

### Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA)

The site lies within 5km of the TBH SPA, given the nature of the proposed development the proposal is not considered to have any adverse impact on the TBH SPA.

### Climate Change

On 29th April 2021 Hart District Council agreed a motion which declared a Climate Emergency in the District. Policy NBE9 of the HLP32 requires proposals to demonstrate that they would:

- i) reduce energy consumption through sustainable approaches to building design and layout, such as through the use of low-impact materials and high energy efficiency; and
- j) incorporate renewable or low carbon energy technologies, where appropriate.

The submitted application proposes an energy storage facility which will provide capacity for energy to be stored during periods of generation surplus, where it would be released during generation shortages. This energy would be stored on site and would ultimately be exported to the National Grid.

The proposal therefore meets the requirements of Policy NBE9 of the HLP32, and the aims of the NPPF in terms of sustainability/renewable or low-carbon energy technologies to address climate change.

### Equality

The Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not under the Equalities Act. The application raises no concerns about equality matters.

### OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Loss of agricultural land

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF requires, among other requirements, that planning decisions should contribute to enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and

other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

According to the Council's mapping the land where the battery storage compound would be located is in grade 3 agricultural land. The PDAS states that the agricultural land is Grade 3 good to moderate. In this respect the site does not contain soil in the top 2 grades of agricultural land. The land is not actively farmed for use in crop production or the keeping of animals. The limited conflict with the NPPF in this regard would be regarded immaterial in this respect.

### PLANNING BALANCE

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("TCPA 1990") provides that the decision-maker shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposal is intended to provide storage to balance out the climatic variations in peaks from energy produced from renewable sources; This would ensure that energy production and supply can be balanced out, thereby helping provision. Also, by being efficient in having energy available when needed; it would provide a significant energy saving.

It is important to note the public benefits which would arise from this proposal, and these are as follows:

- Social benefits would arise the proposed energy storage facility would support the electricity network by providing extra generating capacity to cover shortfalls that may occur at given times. The proposal would assist in maintaining uniform energy provision. This would enable some reduction in the energy burden in line with the government's aims and the NPPF (paras. 8c and 152) for a low carbon economy, as also supported by HLP32 Policy NBE10.
- Economic benefits attracted by the proposal would be employment and local expenditure during the construction of the development and, to a limited extent, during the operational stage. The proposal would assist in safeguarding energy supplies, provide additional grid capacity and the ability to provide energy in periods of high demand.
- Environmental benefits arising from the proposal would include improving the infrastructure for renewable energy production.

The dis-benefits and harm identified above are:

- The impact caused to the landscape quality of the immediate surroundings, whilst material would be limited to the immediate environment of the field and would have little or no impact on the wider landscape character.
- The proposal would result in the loss of some agricultural land.

The proposal is therefore contrary to Development Plan policies SS1, NBE1, NBE2, NBE9 and saved policy GEN1 as well as the Crondall Neighbourhood Plan.

On balance, considering the benefits stated above against the harm identified the proposal would deliver public benefits on a scale to outweigh the limited harm identified.

## **CONCLUSION**

The application has been assessed against the development plan and relevant material considerations and as identified in this report, the proposed development is contrary to spatial planning Policies SS1, NBE1 and Policies NBE2 and NBE9 of the HLP32 and saved policy GEN1 of the HLP06. It would alter the characteristics, value or visual amenity of the District's landscape but can be adequately mitigated for, with its negative impacts being limited in range through careful conditioning. The conflict needs to be balanced with the potential benefits. On balance, the benefits identified and supported by the NPPF outweigh the conflict with the development plan, of which the impacts can be adequately mitigated.

As such this application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

**RECOMMENDATION** – Refer to Full Council with a recommendation to **GRANT** subject to planning conditions.

## **CONDITIONS**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: In pursuance of section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) by section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be fully implemented in accordance with the following submitted application plans and drawings numbered (including any mitigation / enhancement recommended therein):

Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Hepworth Acoustics P21-026-R01v3  
October 2021

Transport Statement prepared by Banners Gate Transportation Ltd Version 2  
dated October 2021

Tree data (unnumbered)

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Brindle and Green dated  
October 2021 Ref: BG21.167.2

Topographic Survey (S219 1212)

407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00008 P02.00 Inverter Detailed Plan and Elevations

407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00007 P02.00 Auxiliary Transformer Detailed Plan and  
Elevations

407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00003 P04.00 Elevations

407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00004-Rev03 - Battery Container Elevations (BESS  
Detailed Plan and Elevations)

407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00005 P02.00 DNP Kiosk Details Plan and Elevations  
407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00006-Rev002 – 11KV DNO Kiosk Detailed Plan and Elevations (received 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021)  
407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00012 P04.00 Elevational View of Switch Yard  
407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00002 P05.00 General Arrangement of Security Fencing  
407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00001 P4.00 General Arrangement of BESS Vehicular Access for Construction Traffic on Itchel lane (P1563/12) (received 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022)  
Ecology Buffer Plan 407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-000014 Rev A  
Technical Note – Fire Safety  
Ecology Addendum R02 dated March 2022 (received 18th March 2022)

Soakage Test prepared by The Geo-Environmental Service Provider (as1) ref: 128-22-675.2715 letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022

Infiltration information (5 pages Micro Drainage)

Trail Pit Photos prepared by The Geo-Environmental Service Provider (as1) 128-22-675 TP1 and TP2

Landscape Strategy Plan (21005254\_PLN\_LS\_1.1) (received 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022)

Planning, Design and Access Statement prepared by RCA regeneration dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated April 2021 prepared by Brindle and Green BG21.167

Arboricultural Impact Assessment Survey and Report Rev 2 Report Reference: BG21.167.1 prepared by Brindle and Green.

Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Link Engineering NC-LE-GEN-XX-RP-CE-FRA01-P1-Flood Risk Assessment dated March 2022

Addendum to Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Link Engineering NCC-LE-GEN-XX-TN-CE-TN01 dated March 2022 (received 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022)

Arboricultural Survey Addendum dated October 2022 (received 18th October 2022)

Site Location Plan 407544-BVL-ZZ-00-DR-T-00010A P03 (received 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022)

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. The requirements and recommendations outlined in Section 7 in the ecology report must be implemented in full.  
REASON: to ensure there is no negative impact on protected species as a result of the proposals.
4. No development shall commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) detailing the site-specific measures to be undertaken to mitigate impact on protected habitats and species on site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include details for:
  - Breeding birds: vegetation clearance should be undertaken using Reasonable Avoidance Measures, during site clearance.

- Foraging and commuting bats: woodland edge subject to a sensitive lighting strategy.
- Habitats: suitable buffer erected around woodland during construction.
- Herptiles: work should be sympathetic to this group of species with vegetation clearance following Reasonable Avoidance Measures which is site-specific.
- Badgers: work should be sympathetic during construction.

The works shall take place in accordance with the approved CEMP.

REASON: To prevent negative impact on protected habitats and species in accordance with policy NBE4 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032, saved Local Plan policy GEN1 of the Hart District Local Plan 1996-2006 and the aims of the NPPF 2021.

5. No development shall begin until groundwater monitoring has been undertaken during the winter period to demonstrate a minimum of 1m unsaturated zone between the base of any proposed infiltration feature and highest recorded groundwater level.

REASON: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off in accordance with Policy NBE5 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 and Section 14 of the NPPF 2021.

6. No development shall take place until details of both hard and soft landscaping works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

These details shall include:

- earthworks showing proposed finished levels and retaining structures, including foundations
- surface treatments, surface materials including subbase construction details where necessary
- means of enclosure including foundation details
- proposed lighting and site security equipment
- a programme for implementation

Soft landscape works shall include:

- Full planting plans
- written specifications including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment
- schedules of plants noting species, plant supply sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate
- an implementation programme (including phasing of work where relevant).

All planting and seeding comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the completion of the

development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: In the interests of the landscape scenic quality of the area in accordance with Policy NBE2 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 saved Local Plan policy GEN1 of the Hart District Local Plan 1996-2006 and the aims of the NPPF 2021.

7. No development shall take place until a landscape management plan, including management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscaped areas for the period of this consent, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Once approved, the development shall be fully carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure adequate provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved in accordance with Policies NBE1, NBE2 and NBE4 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032.

8. No development shall take place until an arboricultural method statement (AMS), in accordance with BS5837:2012, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Specifically, the AMS shall include:

- a specification for tree protection measures.
- a programme of arboricultural supervision commencing with a prestart meeting and with regular site visits as deemed appropriate to meet criteria of BS5837:2012.
- timing of installation and dismantling of such tree protection measures, which must in any case be installed prior to commencement of any site clearance or ground works and be retained and maintained for the full duration of works until onset of final landscape work or as otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
- a plan at 1:500 or lower scale, detailing the location of such tree protection measures, including annotation that such measures shall remain in this position for the full duration of works or unless by prior written agreement with the Local Planning Authority.
- demonstration that all proposed new services and utilities can be provided outside the plotted RPAs of retained trees.
- demonstration that all site works, mixing areas, storage compounds, site buildings and associated contractor parking areas remain wholly outside any tree protection zones and at a suitable separation to prevent damage to retained trees.

REASON: To secure tree protection throughout the lifetime of the development being carried out with trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to ensure the necessary measures are in place before development commences in accordance with Policy NBE2 of the

Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 and Policy CON8 of the Hart District Local Plan 1996- 2006.

9. No development shall commence, including use of the existing access, until a Construction Method Statement (CMS) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved statement shall be implemented and adhered to throughout the construction period. The statement shall provide for:

- the recommendations, actions and mitigation set out on the ecology report, the AIA and approved AMS and drainage scheme
- the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
- loading and unloading of plant and materials
- storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
- the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate
- wheel washing facilities
- measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during demolition and construction
- a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste spoil resulting from slope levelling, subbase excavations and construction works.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and convenience of highway users, in ecological and arboricultural respects in line with Policies NBE4 and INF3 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 and Policy CON8 of the Hart District Local Plan 1996-2006.

10. No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work detailed within a Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Once approved, the development shall take place in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: The site is identified as being of archaeological potential. Investigation is required to allow preservation and recording of any archaeological features before disturbance by the development in line with Policy NBE8 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

11. Notwithstanding the details provided within the Addendum Arboricultural Survey, prior to the commencement of development, further details on the measures for addressing compaction on the existing access track are required.

REASON: To secure the protection throughout the lifetime of the development is being carried out with trees within or adjacent to the site and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence in accordance with Policy CON8 of the Hart District Local Plan 1996-2006 and the aims of the NPPF 2021.

12. Notwithstanding the details submitted with the application, prior to the first export date, the applicant shall submit details of mechanisms for the maintenance of electrical elements together with an overarching fire safety precaution statement for the development.

REASON: Insufficient details were submitted with the application and are required in order to understand the potential fire safety implications.

## **INFORMATIVE**

1. The Council works positively and proactively on development proposals to deliver sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF. In this instance, the applicant was advised of the necessary information needed to process the application and revisions were accepted to address concerns raised, once received, further engagement with the applicant was required and the application was subsequently made acceptable.