

North Hertfordshire District Council
Development and Conservation
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DH

15th April 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
CONSTRUCTION OF ELECTRICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS
EXTRA BALDOCK SERVICES, A1(M), BALDOCK, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG7 5TR
PLANNING PORTAL REFERENCE: PP-13756970**

On behalf of the applicant, GRIDSERVE Sustainable Energy Ltd (GRIDSERVE), please find enclosed an application seeking planning permission for the construction of electrical infrastructure and associated works to support electric vehicle charging facilities at the Extra Baldock Services. In addition to this letter, the application is supported by the following documents:

- Application Form.
- Copy of Landlord Notice
- CIL Form
- Site Location Plan (drawing no.25011.01 Rev D)
- Existing Site/ Block Plan (drawing no. 25011.02)
- Proposed Site/ Block Plan (drawing no. 25011.03 Rev D)
- Existing Site sections (drawing no. 25011.04)
- Proposed Site Sections (drawing no. 25011.05 Rev C)
- Substation Elevations (drawing no. ESPE004a)
- LV Feeder Pillar Elevations (drawing no. EGSV32A12WEVFS-S Rev 1)
- Meter Cabinet Kiosk Data Sheet Reference COP3
- SCADA Elevations Reference D3
- Condition Assessment Sheet
- Biodiversity Gain Plan
- BNG Statutory Metric (Excel & PDF)
- Habitat Baseline Map
- Habitat Post Development Map

Background

GRIDSERVE Sustainable Energy Ltd is a tech-enabled sustainable energy business. GRIDSERVE develop, build, own and operate dependable, low cost, clean energy solutions for critical power infrastructure. To help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible GRIDSERVE deliver net zero carbon solutions for power and transportation which are designed to be more efficient, sustainable and less expensive than legacy solutions. To facilitate this transition to Electric Vehicles, GRIDSERVE in partnership

with Roadchef is implementing and building a network of high-power chargers across the country that will provide UK motorists with fast, easy and low carbon charging solutions.

GRIDSERVE is delivering Electric Hubs at strategic locations across the UK and many are now operational. EV Hubs are typically located at existing destinations such as Motorway Service Areas and other accessible locations with amenity allowing customers to optimise their dwell time whilst accessing dependable electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

In conjunction with the rollout of EV Hubs across the UK, GRIDSERVE has developed the Electric Forecourt® to meet existing and growing infrastructure demands of electric vehicle users, owners and operators. Designed as the new generation of fuel station, the UK's first Electric Forecourt® opened at Braintree, Essex in 2020 followed by sites in Norwich and at Gatwick Airport. GRIDSERVE's most recent Electric Forecourt® opened at Stevenage in October 2024. A further site at Markham Vale is currently under construction, with several further sites having gained planning permission recently.

Site Context

The application site is located within the existing parking area at the Extra Baldock Services. It comprises an area of existing parking and small areas of landscaping. The Services is located off the A1(M). The Services includes an amenity building and Days Inn Hotel to the north of the application site petrol filling station is located to the southeast of the application site.

The site is within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of flooding from any source. There are no heritage assets within or near to the site. There are no statutory or non-statutory ecology or landscape designations affecting the site.

The Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the construction of electrical infrastructure and associated works. The electrical infrastructure comprises 2no. substations, 2no meter cabinets, 2no. low voltage feeder pillars and 2no. SCADA (communications) cabinets which are required to support the operation of electric vehicle charging facilities at Baldock Services. The substations will also be screened by a 2.4m high close boarded fence.

The delivery of 24no. charging bays and 12no. T360 charging upstands will be delivered under permitted development rights in the car parking area to the south of the main amenity building. The electrical infrastructure is proposed to be installed within the car parking area in proximity to the EV Upstands and are required to ensure high powered operation of the charging facilities.

Planning History

An application for an eHGV Hub (planning reference 24/02265/FP was consented in December 2024 and demonstrates in principle that the LPA is supportive of EV Charging Infrastructure.

Consent was also granted for an application to increase parking provision and alter the existing parking layout (ref. 17/02337/1). It is understood the consent has been part implemented in relation to the car parking area.

Planning Policy

Under Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all development decisions should be made in accordance with the relevant development plan policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy

The current national planning policy guidance for making decisions in England is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024 with 2025 footnote updates).

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Paragraph 8 outlines the overarching objectives which contribute to sustainable development. These are:

- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 11 further confirms that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Section 9 promotes sustainable transport, and paragraph 115 outlines that development proposals should be assessed as to whether appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes have been taken up; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and any significant impacts on the transport network, or on highway safety, can be mitigated to an acceptable degree.

Paragraph 116 states that development should only be 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. Paragraph 117 states that development should be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

Section 14 concerns meeting the challenge of climate change. Paragraph 161 states that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and it should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Local Planning Policy

The application site is located within the administrative boundary of North Hertfordshire Council. The relevant documents of the Local Development Plan comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted in November 2022. The Council also has a draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document.

The policies of most relevance to this application are:

- Policy SP1 – Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP5 – Countryside and Green Belt
- Policy SP6 – Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability
- Policy SP11 – Natural resources and sustainability
- Policy SP12 – Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity
- Policy CGB1 – Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt
- Policy T1 – Assessment of Transport Matters
- Policy T2 – Parking
- Policy D1 – Sustainable Design
- Policy D4 – Air Quality
- Policy NE2 – Landscape
- Policy NE4 – Biodiversity and Geological Sites
- Policy NE12 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

Climate Change

Local Planning Authorities have a significant role to play in addressing climate change. The RTPI/ TCPA in its latest Climate Crisis Guide (January 2023) confirmed that decision-makers should recognise that energy technologies are rapidly improving and should be prepared to deal positively with the implications of new transport and energy technologies. This includes infrastructure for electric vehicles and the guidance encourages authorities to consider proposals positively.

The Council passed a climate emergency motion in May 2019 and has since published its Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027. The Council aims to be net zero in its operations by 2030 and for North Hertfordshire to be net zero by 2040. The Council's Climate Change Strategy identifies actions to meet its climate change goals. This includes a commitment to work to develop and support policies that encourage electric vehicle use and other 'cleaner air' initiatives including working with public and private entities to improve provision of EV charging.

Planning Considerations

The following sections assess the key material considerations for the site and these are discussed in turn.

Principle of Development

This application seeks planning permission for the construction of electrical infrastructure which is proposed to be installed to support the operation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging facilities on site. This development will assist in meeting the charging needs of motorists using the A1(M). The electrical infrastructure will be located within the confines of the existing Motorway Service Station. In addition, the provision of the EV Hub will help to further address climate change and meet local and national objectives.

The development meets with the policy aims of the NPPF set out in paragraphs 115 and 161 and it also accords with Policies SP1 (Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire), SP5 (Countryside and Green Belt), SP6 (Sustainable Transport) and CGB1 (Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan by providing transport infrastructure in a highly accessible location, on previously developed land that helps to facilitate sustainable transport and in turn, reduce carbon emissions to help reduce the impacts of climate change.

Location

The electrical infrastructure will be installed within the car park area to the south of the main amenity building where the charging facilities will be located. This will ensure efficient and high-powered operation of the chargers.

The installation of equipment in this area will have minimal impact on the landscaping around the car park as the infrastructure is mainly located on hardstanding. Impacts on landscaping are discussed later in this letter.

The positioning of the substation and cabinets will allow for easy access by maintenance teams without impacting upon the wider car park. The development is in accordance with the relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

By virtue of the location and nature of the development at a busy motorway service station, the development does not adversely affect the amenity of guests staying at the nearby Days Inn Hotel within the service station. As such the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) of the Local Plan.

Design and Appearance

The electrical infrastructure is required to support the type and power of charger provided on site. They have been designed to be functional but unobtrusive and are seen in the context of the existing car park and motorway service station. The development is appropriate in terms of scale and is practical for its intended use and is therefore in accordance with Policies SP6 (Sustainable Transport), SP9 (Design and Sustainability), T2 (Parking) and D1 (Sustainable Design) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

Landscaping, Biodiversity and Ecology

The infrastructure associated with the EV Hub is located on an area that is predominantly hardstanding with a small portion of the site being introduced shrub and modified grassland. Under Section 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, developments must compensate for habitat loss and deliver a gain of at least 10% in biodiversity units. Accordingly, this application is supported by a BNG Statutory Metric, condition assessments, baseline habitat map, draft BNG plan and a post-development habitat map.

It is proposed that an area of existing modified grassland in the south of the wider services site will be enhanced with the planting of small four urban trees which will result in an overall net gain in biodiversity by 11.48%. Overall, the supporting plans demonstrate that the proposed development is in accordance with the requirements of Policy SP12 (Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity),

Policy NE2 (Landscape), Policy NE4 (Biodiversity and Geological Sites) and Policy NE12 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development of the Local Plan. By providing a biodiversity net gain, the development proposals comply with the relevant legislation.

Air Quality

The provision of electrical infrastructure that will support the delivery of an EV Hub at the existing service station will provide vital infrastructure that will give drivers who already use the A1(M) the confidence to switch to EVs from those with internal combustion engines. It is acknowledged that transport accounts for a substantial percentage of emissions. Therefore, providing infrastructure that will remove combustion engines from the road network which will directly improve air quality and have a positive impact on public health. As such the development is considered to be in accordance with Policy D4 (Air Quality) of the Local Plan.

Transport

The proposed electrical infrastructure is proposed to support charging facilities for those travelling along the A1(M) in a convenient location alongside the other amenities at the motorway service station. The development will not generate significant additional trips but provide the infrastructure to support and promote the transition to and use of a sustainable mode of transport for those already on the road. The proposed electrical infrastructure is located within the existing car park and do not alter the circulation of the car park or the existing access arrangements at the motorway service area.

The proposed electrical infrastructure is proposed to be located on existing car parking bays to the south of the amenity building. The proposed infrastructure will reduce the number of parking spaces within the car park by three spaces. This is a small number which does not materially impact upon the operation of car park which has been designed with excess capacity built-in. As noted within the application the upstands area being delivered under permitted development and do not form part of the application.

Consequently, the proposed infrastructure will not have an unacceptable impact on highway or pedestrian safety and it will not result in unacceptable impacts on the wider highway network in line with paragraph 116 of the NPPF. As such the proposed electrical infrastructure is considered to be in accordance with Policy SP6 (Sustainable Transport), Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability), Policy T1 (Assessment of Transport Matters) and Policy T2 (Parking) of the Local Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and has low probability of flooding from any source. The development would utilise existing drainage infrastructure at the Motorway Service Station to ensure the development is appropriately drained and will not increase flood risk elsewhere. As such the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policies SP9 (Design and Sustainability) and Policy SP11 (Natural resources and sustainability) of the Local Plan.

Conclusions

The application seeks planning permission to install electrical infrastructure at Baldock Services to support EV charging facilities on site.

The development supports local and national objectives of facilitating sustainable modes of transport, while making a significant contribution to GRIDSERVE's mission to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and address climate change. The development is fully in conformance with national and local planning policy and accordingly the application should be granted planning permission without delay.

The application (including relevant form, this cover letter and accompanying documentation) has been submitted electronically via the Planning Portal. We look forward to receiving confirmation of the name of the case officer, the planning application reference number and determination timescales shortly. Should any subsequent clarifications or information be required, please do let us know as soon as possible so it can be provided in a timely manner.

Yours faithfully,



Emma Harding
Head of Permits
GRIDSERVE Sustainable Energy Ltd