

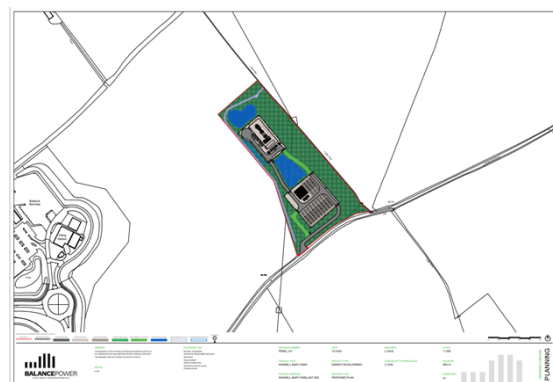
Officer Clare Skeels  
Date 11 February 2025

Our Ref:  
Your Ref: 24/02713/FP

Land at Radwell Bury Farm, Newnham Road,  
Newnham, Hertfordshire

Installation of a Battery Energy Storage System  
(BESS) with associated infrastructure, earthworks,  
landscaping and access.

The site is located about 750m to the southwest of  
Newnham and about 400m to the east of Baldock  
Services. The site (3.56 ha) is part of a larger  
agricultural field.



## North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031

### Policy SP1 : Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP1 supports the principle of sustainable development and states that planning permission will be granted for the necessary infrastructure required to support an increasing population, (Policy SP1 c) iii). The proposal for a battery energy storage system (BESS) would become part of the renewable energy infrastructure. The applicant's supporting statement states that battery storage systems will help to support the expansion of renewable energy generation.

The policy also states that planning permission will be granted that will protect key elements of the District's environment, including biodiversity, important landscapes, heritage assets and green

infrastructure (Policy SP1 c) iv) and that we will secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development, including on climate change, (Policy SP1 c) v).

#### **Policy SP5 : Countryside and Green Belt**

The site is located in the rural area beyond the green belt, where Policy SP5 (d) states that there will be a general policy of restraint through the application of the detailed policies in the Local Plan.

#### **Policy SP9 : Design and Sustainability**

The policy recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to the local context.

#### **Policy SP11: Natural Resources and Sustainability**

The intention of Policy SP11 and the supporting text is to ensure that the Local Plan meets the challenges of climate change and flooding. It states that the Council will support proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development in appropriate locations, Policy SP11 a). Paragraph 4.144 states that proposals for renewable and low carbon energy will be favourably considered subject to the consideration of the impact of the development.

As part of the supporting documentation for the application, the applicant has provided an Alternative Site Assessment which sets out why this location is the most suitable for this battery energy storage system.

#### **Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity**

The policy recognises that the Council will protect a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure. It goes on to state that we will protect, enhance and manage biodiversity networks, including both designated and non-designated sites of ecological value.

The applicant has provided landscaping and visual impact assessments and has stated that the proposal has been designed to protect and enhance the existing hedgerow boundaries.

Detailed comments will be provided by the Council's ecologist.

#### **Policy CGB1 : Rural Area beyond the Green Belt**

The proposed development site is situated in the rural area beyond the green belt. Policy CGB1 states that in that area, planning permission will be granted provided that the development meets a number of criteria, including (e) which states "is a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification.

The proposed development is split between two blocks of development across the site and as set out in the pre-application advice, cannot be considered to be a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification.

#### **Policy D1 : Sustainable Design**

The policy seeks to promote good design for development across the district includes a number of criteria, of which, the most relevant are criteria a, b, and c.

The scale of the proposed development is significant in the rural context, however, as requested in the pre-application advice, the applicant has demonstrated in the Planning, Design and Access Statement that the proposed development will be off set from the existing field boundaries, will retain the existing vegetation and will include drainage design for the scheme.

## **Policy NE2 : Landscape**

The emphasis of this policy is to ensure that the design of a development proposal is sensitive to the local context and ensure that the development makes a positive contribution to the landscape.

Currently, the site is one part of an open agricultural field and there are no formal landscape designations across the site. The proposed development would have an impact on the landscape without any mitigation measures as the site is open. As part of the development, the applicant has stated that the existing landscape to the east of the site will be retained and that additional landscaping will be planted to mitigate the effects on the wider landscape.

## **Policy NE4 : Biodiversity and Geological Sites**

Detailed comments have been provided by the Council's Senior Ecologist.

## **Policy NE12: Renewable and low carbon energy development**

The policy is supportive of proposals for renewable or low carbon energy development which contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, subject to an assessment of the impacts on a number of criteria.

For this proposal, the relevant criterion is: (i) landscape quality, character and visual amenity.

As discussed above, currently, the site is one part of an open agricultural field and the proposed development would have an impact on the landscape without any mitigation measures. However, as part of the development proposals, the applicant has stated that the existing landscape to the east of the site will be retained and that additional landscaping will be planted to mitigate the effects on the wider landscape.

The policy also requires that end of life / redundant plant, buildings, apparatus and infrastructure must be removed and the site restored to its former state, or a condition which is agreed with the Council. The applicant has proposed that a condition could be applied for the decommissioning and restoration of the site.

## **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024**

### **Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change – Paragraphs 161 – 186**

The NPPF states in paragraph 168:

When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should:

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future;
- b) recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;
- c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.

## National Policy Statements (NPS) 2024

The National Policy Statements are a material planning consideration for the delivery of major energy infrastructure.

[Statement \(EN1-1\) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy](#), published in 2024 recognises that electricity storage as a key role in achieving net zero and provides flexibility to the energy system.

## Sustainability Supplementary Planning Documents – 2024

The Sustainability SPD was adopted in September 2024 and provides information regarding the Council's sustainability expectations for development in the District.

The SPD states that proposals for renewable energy developments are supported by Policies SP11 and NE12 in the Local Plan, subject to an assessment of the impact on the landscape, environment, heritage assets, transport, air quality, aviation and amenity. The SPD does not provide any specific details which should be considered in respect of proposals for battery storage facilities.

## Conclusion

The National Policy Statement, Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) recognises that energy storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility in the energy system. The proposed facility is not directly linked to a renewable energy source but will be used to provide a flexible back-up power source for the electricity transmission network.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be some negative impacts from the proposed development, particularly on the landscape, both the NPPF and Local Plan policies are supportive of renewable energy schemes and development proposals which can help to mitigate the effects of climate change where local impacts can be addressed.

On balance, the proposal should be supported, given that the applicant has demonstrated that the site will be surrounded by new landscaping to minimise the effect on the landscape and that the facility will contribute towards the commitment to achieve net zero.