

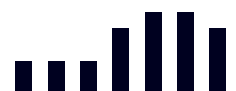


Land at Radwell Bury Farm SCI

Prepared for
Balance Power Projects Ltd
by CalComms

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- 1.1.** This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is submitted on behalf of Balance Power Projects Ltd (the applicant). It relates to proposals for a battery storage facility on Land at Radwell Bury Farm, Letchworth (SG7 5ES).
- 1.2.** This Statement outlines the applicant's approach to pre-application consultation and identifies who has been consulted, a summary of the responses received and how the applicant has addressed the main points and issues raised in preparing proposals for the site.
- 1.3.** In addition to discussions with elected Members and officers through the pre-application process, this SCI summarises the engagement with the local community through extensive canvassing which directed local residents to fill out a feedback form and to learn more about the application via our dedicated website.
- 1.4.** The consultation process undertaken by the applicant is compliant with the requirements of the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) and is intended to supplement the formal process that the Council will undertake further to the submission of the application. Recent reforms proposed to the 2023 NPPF are still under consultation. Despite this, all references to the NPPF in this document are, and would not be, affected by the proposed reforms.
- 1.5.** This Statement details the extent of consultation and community engagement that has been undertaken. It describes the planning policy context, consultation findings, and how the findings have been implemented into the application.
- 1.6.** This Statement has been prepared by CalComms, an independent community and stakeholder consultation company based in London, Wakefield and Coventry. CalComms was instructed by the applicant to undertake the activities as reported in this Statement and to give considered advice.
- 1.7.** CalComms works extensively with applicants across a range of sectors, including residential, mixed use, commercial land and renewable energy. As planning has a quasi-judicial function, CalComms has prepared this Statement to satisfy local, regional and national planning requirements.



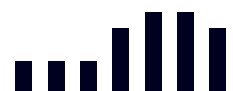
- 2.1.** This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) adheres to the North Hertfordshire District Council Community Consultation Strategy Document (September 2022). This document outlines that 'consultation forms part of the process for delivering on our core priorities' and that varied 'consultation channels' are key parts of a consultation process.
- 2.2.** Government policy and guidance encourage community engagement with the planning system, both in the context of developing Local Plans and informing specific development applications.
- 2.3.** This section provides a brief overview of key policy and guidance and how this has informed the approach to pre-application community engagement for the purpose of developing the planning application.
- 2.4.** Paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF –December 2023) states: 'Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community'. Although this section does give primary guidance to local planning authorities, we consider adhering to this as being best practice as it provides a consistency in approach.
- 2.5.** Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states: 'Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.'
- 2.6.** The Localism Act (2011), strengthens the role of local communities in planning by introducing a requirement for developers to consult with local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments (Section 122). This is intended to give local people a chance to comment when there is still genuine scope to make changes to proposals.
- 2.7.** Section 122 requires that the accompanying SCI submitted with the application identifies the extent of community consultation and stakeholder engagement undertaken to date.

2.8 By delivering this storage facility in North Hertfordshire we are helping the Council meet its own carbon emission reduction targets of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 as per their climate emergency declaration on 21 May 2019. This includes the Climate Emergency Plan which states the following:

- 2.8.1.** 'Support for both businesses and residents to switch to renewable energy, and to adapt to the impacts of planning projects.'
- 2.8.2.** 'The council can play an important role as local planning authority, in reducing carbon emissions and providing further supplementary planning guidance to encourage more sustainable development and work towards carbon neutrality.'

Summary

- 2.9.** Community participation is a key objective of Government policy and its importance is reaffirmed through discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council (via pre-app discussions).
- 2.10.** The following sections of this Statement provide details of the scope of consultation and community engagement undertaken prior to submission of the application and in accordance with the government's requirements for pre-application community involvement on major planning applications.
- 2.11.** This SCI conforms to the requirements as set out in primary legislation (Localism Act 2011) and the national planning framework (NPPF 2023).



Background

- 3.1.** The applicant is committed to engaging with the community in developing proposals for the site. The applicant understands the value of engaging with the community early in the process and the benefit it has for the development project as well as the benefit to the overall planning process. The applicant has a history and track record of working with key stakeholders and local residents throughout the delivery of their national portfolio of energy projects. Community consultation provides the applicant with a platform for interested parties to be kept informed of the proposals and provides the opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions and give feedback.

Consultation objectives

- 3.2.** The applicant submitted a pre-application advice request on 6th March 2024 as a means of which to help guide them in their community engagement. The LPA responded to this request on 5th August and the applicant noted their feedback, using it in their approach to community engagement. The applicant has also engaged with elected Members to inform the approach taken and to scope the interested groups/individuals affected by the proposal.
- 3.3.** The consultation objectives are as follows:
- 3.3.1.** To understand the community's views on the location for development;
 - 3.3.2.** To allow adequate opportunity for the community to consider, understand and comment on the detail of the proposals;
 - 3.3.3.** To promote understanding of the proposals, as well as constraints and opportunities for the site;
 - 3.3.4.** To allow the early resolution and solutions to any issues or concerns raised; and
 - 3.3.5.** To ensure the community and key stakeholders are kept informed of the progress of proposals for the site where necessary. This has also included opening a dialogue with Hertfordshire Fire Service who provided their response to the proposal on 28th June, resulting in a follow up meeting on 23rd July.

Consultation strategy

- 3.4.** Throughout the pre-application submission process, the applicant has sought to actively engage with a variety of stakeholders and the local community and, where possible, respond positively to the comments and consultation responses received.

- 3.5.** To date, the consultation process has involved:
- 3.5.1.** Meetings with officers from North Hertfordshire District Council (through the pre-application process);
 - 3.5.2.** Engaged with political representatives from North Hertfordshire District Council. This has included engagement with Cllr Tyson (local ward Member), and Members of the Cabinet.
 - 3.5.3.** Meetings with Caldecote & Newnham parish councillors to understand their views on the proposal.
 - 3.5.4.** Communication with Radwell Parish Council prior to submission to inform them of the scheme.
 - 3.5.5.** Undertaking an extensive canvassing operation to engage with local residents, inviting them to provide us with their feedback.
 - 3.5.6.** Creation of a dedicated web page published (<https://balancepower.co.uk/consultation/radwell-bury-farm>) in full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Pre-application discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council

- 3.6.** The applicant submitted a pre-application advice request on 6th March 2024 and received feedback from the LPA on 5th August.
- 3.7.** Refer to the Planning, Design and Access Statement for a more detailed response to the matters raised in the pre-application notes and how the proposed development has been amended in response to the matters raised.

Public canvassing exercise

- 3.8.** To widen the understanding of this application, the applicant has undertaken an extensive canvassing operation, distributing flyers amongst local residents and businesses. These flyers provide stakeholders with information about the proposed site and directs them, via a QR code, to find out more through our dedicated project website.
- 3.9.** This website (<https://balancepower.co.uk/consultation/radwell-bury-farm>) offers greater in-depth information about the application and invites residents to provide feedback on the proposal. A number of screengrabs can be found in **Appendix A**.

3.10. The project team prepared an A5 flyer (see **Appendix B**) to advertise the website and the broader promotion. The over one and a half kilometre distribution area can be found in **Appendix C**. A total of 500 flyers were circulated around the local area across Radwell, Stotfold and Caldecote & Newnham Parish Councils, inviting the community to discuss any thoughts or concerns with the applicant's project team.

3.11. There were nine set questions with an additional opportunity for attendees to record their comments. A dedicated email address set up for residents to contact the project team. The questions were:

- Are you aware of the proposed development site?
- Have you heard of Balance Power?
- How close do you live to the site?
- What have you heard, if anything, about these proposals?
- Would you like to know more about the science and technology of Battery Storage facilities?
- Have you any comments about the design and layout of this application? (for example, would you like to see planting and landscaping)
- We would like you to support our application. If you do not, what could we do to change your mind?
- Having learnt more about the project, how likely are you to support the application?
- What community benefits would you prioritise or like to see from this project in your area? For example:
 - More energy efficient community buildings or street lighting
 - Local environmental and biodiversity enhancements
 - EV charging points.
 - Other.

Meetings with interested parties

3.12. The applicant, through their consultant team, CalComms, has kept an open dialogue with the parties to keep them updated as to the progress of the proposals. Where further information on the scheme has been requested by stakeholders, it has been supplied in an easy-to-understand way, which included follow up letters.

3.13. A meeting between the applicant and Caldecote & Newnham Parish Council was set up to understand and address any questions that Parish Councillors may have about the proposal. During this, several questions were raised and subsequently addressed by the applicant. These can be found below:

- Noise Levels – It was clarified that noise from the scheme wouldn't exceed existing noise levels based on background noise data and modelling the proposed development.
- Site Location and Visual Impact – The project team advised that if the site was positioned in the north-west corner, then there could be potential impact on the heritage value of Radwell Grange. The current location is also beneath existing OHL and towers, therefore the visual setting is already interrupted by energy infrastructure
- Fire Risk – The Applicant has engaged with the local fire service and modified the proposed development in response.

3.14. Additionally, the applicant has offered to meet with local residents to discuss details of the site and how, through landscaping, concerns regarding visual impact would be mitigated.

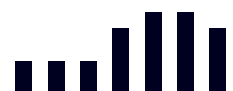
Summary

3.15. The pre-application consultation methodology fully accords with the requirements of the NPPF (2023) and the Localism Act (2011).

3.16. The applicant provided an opportunity for the key stakeholders and elected members to engage in the planning process.

3.17. The applicant provided residents with the opportunity to register their feedback. This was presented in a feedback form on the website. In the nine weeks the website has been live it has generated a significant response from local residents attracting well over 200 individual impressions, and three responses.

3.18. The feedback provided to respondents can be found below in section 4:



4 Responses to feedback form

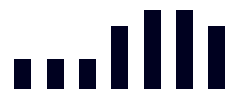
- 4.1. Following the delivery of the flyers, the engagement team received constructive feedback from local residents.
- 4.2. One respondent opposed the scheme over the visual impact of the scheme, while the two remaining respondents sought clarification on elements of the scheme including noise impact on local residents.
- 4.3. The applicant has acknowledged, addressed and factored this feedback into their application. The landscape scheme has been bolstered to ensure visual impact is kept to a minimum, particularly on the northern boundary and at the site access.



- 5.1.** The pre-application consultation strategy has been inclusive and takes account of the different interests in the proposal for the site, whilst taking account of any limitations and scope for change through the process. CalComms is confident that the level of pre-application consultation with the local community as a whole has exceeded the requirements of national and local policy.
- 5.2.** A key aim of the applicant is to continue to involve the community at all stages of the planning and development process. Following the submission of the application, Balance Power Projects Ltd will monitor any responses

which are made to North Hertfordshire District Council during the statutory consultation process and will continue in their efforts to address these where possible.

- 5.3.** In engaging with the public, as well as locally elected representatives, Balance Power Projects Ltd were able to better understand issues and concerns. Balance Power has also included a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section of the microsite which seeks to address any broader questions that residents may have. A full copy of these FAQ's can be found on the website.



Welcome

Welcome to our website. This will provide local residents and stakeholders with information regarding the new planning application for a battery storage facility on the on land at Radwell Bury Farm. We are keen to ensure that local residents and stakeholders are given the opportunity to express support for this energy project. We hope this provides you all the information you need. However, if you require further detail, please do contact our communications consultant CalComms, either through the feedback form or by getting in touch with the team by emailing us [here](#). Additionally, you can call on 0203 813 5559.

[Give us your feedback](#) →

Application summary

The application seeks to develop a battery energy storage system. The project has zero emissions and will be within acceptable noise limits agreed with North Hertfordshire Council. Furthermore, it will provide a landscaping/planting scheme to provide screening and biodiversity enhancement and will be used to assist the UK's transition to zero-carbon energy.

The application site is situated off Newham Road, SG7 5ES. It lies in the eastern corner of the wider land parcel, with the administrative boundary of North Hertfordshire Council. It is situated 1.6km to the east of the settlement to Stotfold, and 2.4 north of Baldock.

[Give us your feedback](#) →

What is Battery Storage?

Battery storage is an increasingly vital tool to help the UK combat many environmental, geo-political, and economic challenges we presently face.

The storage facility uses proven technology to determine when to release the stored energy into the Grid. This would typically be at peak times, and when the natural environmental conditions reduce generation by wind, tidal and solar energy.

Battery storage also further reduces the UK's reliance on foreign imported energy to meet any peak demand, such as that from potentially hostile states. This allows the UK to minimise its exposure to potentially less reliable overseas supplies. Crucially, by fully integrating battery storage into the network the National Grid estimates that a potential cost saving of over £40 billion could be made in the medium to long term. This will be an important contribution to delivering lower fuel and domestic energy bills. Find out more from our [frequently asked questions page about battery energy storage systems](#).

In addition, our plans help in the following ways:

- Improving air quality by reducing the reliance on fossil fuel facilities to generate electricity.
- Providing a secure energy supply to the local network during times when renewable energy sources are inconsistent (sun not shining or wind not blowing).

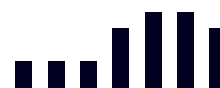
Learn more using the links below:

[National Grid - What is Battery Storage?](#)

[Grid Scale Battery Storage FAQs](#)

[Transitioning to a Net Zero energy system](#)

[Energy security bill factsheets defining electricity storage](#)





Layout when complete

The development site

Application for a new Battery Storage Facility on Land at Radwell Bury Farm

We are Balance Power and we care about delivering high-quality clean energy projects which will help the transition to net-zero by 2050. We are immensely proud of our experience in providing communities with a carbon-free future. This note is to introduce us and our proposed planning application to you.

We are proposing to develop a new battery storage facility, which will include a landscaping scheme, suitable access and drainage requirements. The land at Radwell Bury Farm, a circa 6 acres site in Baldock, has been identified by Balance Power as an ideal location to deliver this project given it's out of the greenbelt and located away from sensitive residential properties.

The application site is situated off Newham Road, SG7 5ES. It lies within the administrative boundary of North Hertfordshire Council. It is situated 1.6km to the east of the settlement to Stotfold, and 2.4km north of Baldock.

Balance Power is a leading independent developer of renewable energy projects within the UK. Our key objective is to work closely with local authorities to help them meet their renewable energy objectives and contribute towards the UK's net zero ambitions by 2050. This site, when completed, will feed stored electricity into the local distribution network at peak and other determined times. **We are also contributing towards achieving the UK's target to fully decarbonise the electricity system by 2035**

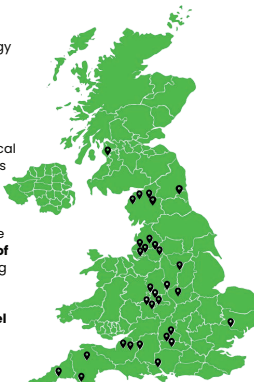
To date, we have been active in over 32 specific energy projects nationwide and our ambitions are to deliver over 1.5GW of new clean and stored energy within the next few years.



Application Summary

Battery storage sites are becoming increasingly important in the fight against climate change, and help to deliver better energy security and contribute towards keeping domestic energy bills down. **By delivering this storage facility in Baldock, we are helping the Council meet its own carbon emission targets and it supports many policies as set out in the North Herts Council Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027.**

- Reduces the UK's reliance on foreign imported energy to meet any peak demand.
- Improving air quality by reducing the reliance on fossil-fuel facilities to generate electricity.
- Provide a secure and stable energy supply to the local network during times when renewable energy sources are inconsistent (sun not shining and wind not blowing).
- Fully integrating battery storage into the network the National Grid estimates that **a potential cost saving of over £40 billion** could be made in the medium to long term.
- Be an important contribution to **delivering lower fuel and domestic energy bills.**

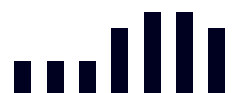


In short, the site can be delivered with minimal (if any) impact on local residents and meets all of the Council's policy objectives regarding renewable energy.

Understanding your interest.
If you have time to do so, **please scan the QR code** with your smart phone to visit our website to get more information, and to fill in our survey. It should only take five minutes but will be invaluable in helping us make a good case for the Council.



Scan this QR code with your phone to take our survey, here you can view the rest of the site to get more information. You can find out more about our work via our main website www.balancepower.co.uk



FAQ:

What is Battery Storage and Why is it needed?

Battery storage facilities are developments that store electricity, at times of high generation and low demand, and release this energy back onto the grid system in times of high demand. As heavily polluting but reliable and controllable coal and gas are removed from the grid and replaced by renewable sources (e.g: wind and solar) it is critical we maintain a resilient energy network. Battery storage is vitally important to the grid system because they are able to provide power to homes and businesses when renewable energy supply is inconsistent: wind not blowing and the sun not shining, therefore stabilising the grid system reducing blackouts and aiming at keeping electricity prices low.

The UK Government has set a target to be Net-Zero by 2050, alongside a strategic objective that all electricity should come from clean energy sources by 2035. In order for these targets to be achieved, there must be an increase in the number of solar and wind farms. This means that more battery facilities are required to support the transition. This will allow existing fossil-fuel facilities to be decommissioned over time and still maintain security of supply.

Where and how do you source the materials used in battery storage?

The sourcing of lithium and cobalt has been the subject of concern regarding some environmental and social impacts of mining and shipping. Despite these materials being widely used in all smart phones as well as, increasingly, in electric vehicles, we recognise such concerns exist and that people want to ensure high standards of such sourcing.

It is important to note that Balance Power do not manufacture our own batteries for use in developments such as this. Instead we procure our materials from reputable suppliers. These suppliers are internationally recognised as being leading supporters of many new organisations and groups established to ensure materials are sourced ethically and responsibly. Balance Power is absolutely committed to increased ethical sourcing of lithium and cobalt.

What will it take to run a Net Zero energy system?

Electricity is one of the most reliable aspects of modern life. We have come to trust it so much that when we flick a switch we expect the lights come on or your phone to start charging. If you plug your phone in and it doesn't start charging you're more likely to check the connection rather than worry the power simply isn't there. The level of sophistication to achieve this is far from simple but it was built on the reliability of burning fossil fuels. More in, equalled more out so supply and demand could be met accurately with little waste.

Most people are not aware that electricity is consumed in real time,

there is no electricity waiting around to be used later (but we're working on that!) The market for electricity is real time pricing based on every half hour. Simply put the more energy available in a particular half hour the cheaper the price. Businesses and homeowners generally pay an average of all of these half hours. There are some very expensive ones and some very cheap ones.

Battery storage facilities aim to charge through the night when power is cheap, there is little demand as people are in bed and wind turbines are still spinning and some other power generating facilities such as nuclear do not shut down as it is not cost effective to do so.

Electrify.....Everything!

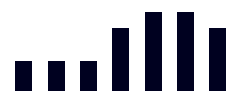
The availability of electricity and our ability to clean up production means homes are switching to electric boilers and heat pumps, cars from petrol to electric so now we need more electricity than ever to meet our needs. People choosing this switch will only happen if the cost of electricity is low when compared to other fuels and people can continue to trust that the electricity for their car will be there when they need it. The mere mention of a petrol shortage causes chaos with people's perception of ready access to the fuel they need for their cars. We want to avoid at all costs a situation where electricity is rationed because there isn't enough surplus to ensure cars can be charged between 4 and 8pm!

How will these proposals benefit me?

Energy bills are continuing to rise. The repercussions on homeowners and businesses are widely reported and the UK is facing a cost of living crisis. The UK is currently too reliant on international gas pricing. Even though less than 5% of UK gas comes from Russia, international events such as the war in Ukraine impact on energy security and fossil-fuel prices across the globe. There is an undisputed need to increase the amount of renewable energy and increasing pressure to make the switch to renewable energy, to ensure a cheap and secure supply of energy to meet current and future demand.

What other benefits do batteries provide?

Other benefits that battery storage facilities provide include the element of decarbonising and decentralising the power network. The more storage capacity that exists means fewer fossil-fuelled plants will be in operation which improves air quality, both locally and nationally, and consequential improvements in people's health and quality of life. Decentralising the power network means that by having battery storage operating in the network, less power is wasted because travel transmission distances are reduced, which in turn means that local communities and businesses can benefit from a reliable supply of energy.



Battery storage provides several environmental benefits. They are carbon zero in their operation and commonly include a rich landscaping scheme included as part of the development, which contributes towards a biodiversity net gain. Battery storage facilities also have a high energy: density ratio, this means that for the amount of energy that the batteries can generate compared to the amount of space which is taken, is low. This is especially relevant in comparison to say solar farms, which require a much greater amount of land take for an equivalent amount of power provided.

Will this create traffic congestion?

A Traffic Management Plan will be submitted as part of the planning application. This will determine the most efficient routes and access points for the site. It will set out a strategy that addresses road noise, safety, congestion and manages the amount of vehicles accessing the site at different times of the day/week.

Are there any pollution risks?

Batteries are a clean form of technology; no air pollution is associated with the development and measures are taken to completely avoid any risk of leakage into the environment.

What do batteries look like?

Battery storage facilities are similar in appearance to shipping containers. The design and siting of battery developments are tailored to minimise visual impact by reducing height and locating them adjacent to existing infrastructure (e.g.: substations, electricity pylons). By doing this the development is able to blend into the existing environment, whilst reducing adverse visual amenities.

Are batteries noisy?

There is a low level of noise emitted from batteries, however we make sure that this level is no louder than existing level of background noise. During hotter temperatures noise will mainly come from the air conditioning systems which keep the batteries at their required temperature. However even during these hotter periods, the development is designed to make sure that the noise disturbance will not disturb local amenities. An acoustic study will be submitted with the planning application and the standards of noise will be kept to British Standard 4142:2014+A1:2019. This will have to be demonstrated before the battery storage facility becomes operational.

Why are you not developing on brownfield land?

Battery Storage facilities are required to be close to suitable grid connections. Once a grid connection point is obtained, brownfield sites will be sought if available and these are prioritised over greenfield land. However, where a suitable brownfield site is unavailable, we carry out an alternative site assessment to choose the next best site.

How long will the battery be in operation and what will happen to the land afterwards?

The site will be decommissioned at the end of its life, potentially up to 40 years, with all equipment removed and the land returned to how it was before development started.

The area I live in is very dark at night, will batteries increase light pollution?

If the proposed development is situated in one of these areas, a full lighting strategy will be provided and submitted as part of the planning application. This will minimise disturbance from light spill.

The area around the site floods a lot, won't batteries increase this impact?

All battery sites will as part of the planning application process have a detailed drainage strategy in place and where required, a flood risk assessment to remove any risk of flooding.

Do batteries cause increases in electromagnetic radiation?

Batteries do not cause electromagnetic radiation. There are elements of the proposed installation such as transformers and overhead cables that will produce some electromagnetic radiation. These elements are part and parcel of all electrical substations across the UK. They are designed in accordance with stringent directives and codes (such as the EMC (electromagnetic compatibility) directive and the IEC (International Electrical Commission) codes which ensure that any electromagnetic emissions are kept to safe levels.

What will I be able to see once the site is completed?

Our proposals incorporate a substantial area for planting around the perimeter of the site. This helps to screen the equipment and creates new habitats.

A full landscape strategy/planting scheme will be submitted as part of the planning application, alongside a landscape visual impact assessment.

Why have you chosen this particular site?

These developments have to be close to a point of connection to the grid with sufficient capacity to charge the batteries and then exporting power back to the grid. The site chosen is considered to be the optimal location to meet these requirements.

How can you be sure the batteries are storing renewable energy?

We can't be sure but one day they will be.

Battery storage will store the excess amount of energy that is being generated on the grid no matter where that comes from. If more of the energy on the grid comes from solar and wind, then batteries will store these forms of renewable energy. Therefore, over time as more renewable energy becomes operational, there will be a greater store of 'clean' energy. Equally, as more solar and wind farms are developed, there will be a greater surplus of renewable power in the network and therefore more batteries will be required to store the additional power.



