

ITEM 3

Application Reference	DC/090340
Location:	Land North of Clapgate Bredbury Green Stockport SK6 3LH
PROPOSAL:	Development of a Battery Energy Storage System with associated infrastructure, access, drainage features and landscaping.
Type Of Application:	Full Application
Registration Date:	16.11.2023
Expiry Date:	15.08.2024
Case Officer:	Rachel Longden
Applicant:	Queequeg Renewables Ltd
Agent:	Pegasus Group

FORMAL ADDENDUM REPORT

Since the publication of the agenda it has come to the attention of Officers that there is an omission and error in the report to Members. This addendum corrects that omission and error and provides Members with the information they need to determine this application.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site was previously described to Members as comprising a 1.38 ha section of an existing agricultural field. Whilst the application site is, in its entirety 1.38ha and part of that is in agricultural use (1.03ha), the remaining 0.35ha is in use as a dog exercise field (following the grant of application DC/088656 in September 2023).

ANALYSIS

Agricultural land is graded in terms of its quality. Grade 1, 2 and 3a being excellent, very good and good are considered to be the best and most versatile. Grade 3b, 4 and 5 are considered as being moderate, poor and very poor.

Saved UDP Review policy GBA2.1 confirms that development which will involve the permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the value of the land is outweighed by other factors. Furthermore, proposals involving extensive use of land should be capable of easy reversion to agricultural land.

This is reflected in the NPPF at Chapter 15 which confirms that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other

policies in the Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development.

Members were previously advised that the proposed development would be sited on agricultural land and that the land is not designated as best and most versatile. As such it was advised that the proposal is compliant with Saved UDP Review policy GBA2.1. This is not entirely accurate.

The application site accommodates a dog exercise field and agricultural land with the latter being assessed as grade 3a. There is no policy objection to the loss of the dog exercise field however the loss of grade 3a agricultural land (being part of the best and most versatile land) is contrary to policy GBA2.1. The loss of this part of the site therefore needs to be weighed against the other considerations arising from the proposed development.

The area of land which is classed as best and most versatile covers only 1.03ha of this wider 1.38ha site. This is relatively small area of land noting that Natural England defines that significant areas of land are those which are greater than 20 ha. Additionally, further guidance from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment states that losses of less than 5 ha in terms of soil resources are minor. As such it can be concluded that the loss of agricultural land in terms of its size, is substantially less than significant.

The application advises that nationally, the supply of the best and most versatile land (grade 1 to 3a) comprises circa 42% of the overall supply of agricultural land. This equates to circa 3.7 million hectares of land out of a total supply of 8.8 million hectares being the best and most versatile. In this context and noting the definitions of Natural England as outlined above, the loss of 1.03ha of the best and most versatile agricultural land is insignificant in terms of the overall supply.

The application also advises that in terms of food production, the annual yield from that to be lost would be circa 1.5 tonnes (cereal and oilseed production). In the context of a total production in 2023 of almost 23 million tonnes, that lost is again insignificant.

As such, whilst the proposal does result in the loss of an area of best and most versatile agricultural land, this is very small portion of land and its loss when considered in the national context would have very little impact.

The application proposes development that will enable the storage of electricity from renewable sources such as solar and wind which can then be released when customers need power most. The merits in terms of the need for this type of storage and the benefits it brings in terms of decarbonising the grid and use of renewable energy should not be underestimated. In this respect the proposal will help deliver the aims of the Core Strategy and NPPF in terms of reducing carbon emissions and increasing the reliance upon renewable sources of energy.

Noting the limited impacts of the loss of the agricultural land, it is considered that the merits of the proposal weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development. As such

it is considered that the proposal complies with policy GBA2.1 and the NPPF in that the loss of the agricultural land is outweighed by other factors.

Members are therefore advised to consider the above in their assessment of the application. Noting that the application must be referred to Planning & Highways for a decision, the above addendum will be incorporated into the report for their consideration.