

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

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Planning & Highways Regulations Committee – Departure to the Development Plan.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the installation and operation of a battery energy storage system (BESS) comprising the following elements:-

- 16 No. containerised battery energy storage units
- 8 No. medium voltage stations
- A welfare cabin
- Customer compound with multiple components including a transformer, compound building, under grounding, current transformers, earthing disconnectors, surge arresters, circuit breakers and bus bars
- Communications and monitoring equipment including CCTV

The site would also include acoustic fencing forming part of the external compound fencing measuring 4.0 metres in height and security fencing with 2 No. sliding gates to the vehicular access and a secondary access point.

Since the application was initially submitted, BESS technology has changed and therefore the total amount of equipment has reduced. Equipment which is no longer required has been removed from the proposal, including inverters, low and high voltage switch gear, an auxiliary transformer and an AC cabin. Some elements, including the security fencing, BESS units, circuit breaker, earthing disconnector and surge arrester have increased in height. Notwithstanding this, the maximum height of the development (height of the bus bars) has not increased and would be 8.2 metres.

The 40MW capacity of the proposal remains the same as originally submitted.

The site would include a loop road within the compound. Due to the reduction in site area of the overall compound, additional landscaping is included which would increase Biodiversity Net Gains. A second acoustic fence would be included to the South of the BESS units.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is located to the North of Clapgate, which leads off an area of residential properties. The application site has an area of 1.38 ha. An area of 0.35ha is currently used as a dog exercise field. The main section of 1.03ha is in agricultural use. The field is bound by a secure stock proof fence, with a secure entrance gate. The site benefits from an existing access of Clapgate.

The application site is allocated as Green Belt within the UDP and also as a Landscape Character Area. The site is located within an existing farm holding with a wooded area to the North of the site.

The site would be accessed from Clapgate to the South of the site. Along the Eastern side of the site is a public footpath. Clapgate runs along the southern edge of the site. To the northern edges of the site is an existing woodland area and to the South Western edge sit further fields which form part of the farm.

POLICY BACKGROUND

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Statutory Development Plan for Stockport comprises :-

- Policies set out in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review (saved UDP) adopted on the 31st May 2006 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; and
- Policies set out in the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Core Strategy DPD) adopted on the 17th March 2011.

The application site is allocated within the Green Belt and within a Landscape Character Area (Goyt Valley), as defined on the UDP Proposals Map. The following policies are therefore relevant in consideration of the application :-

Saved UDP policies

- LCR1.1 : LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS
- LCR 1.1A : THE URBAN FRINGE INCLUDING THE RIVER VALLEYS
- GBA1.1 : EXTENT OF GREEN BELT
- GBA1.2 : CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT IN GREEN BELT
- GBA2.1 : PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND
- GBA2.3 : FARM DIVERSIFICATION
- NE1.2 : SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE
- EP1.7 : DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK

Core Strategy DPD policies

- CS1 : OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES : SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGES
- SD-1 : CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

- SD-3 : DELIVERING THE ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES PLAN : NEW DEVELOPMENT
- SD-6 : ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE
- CS8 : SAFEGUARDING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT
- SIE-1 : QUALITY PLACES
- SIE-3 : PROTECTING, SAFEGUARDING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT
- CS9 : TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
- T-1 : TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
- T-2 : PARKING IN DEVELOPMENTS
- T-3 : SAFETY AND CAPACITY ON THE HIGHWAY NETWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF, initially published in March 2012 and subsequently revised and published in December 2023 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

NPPG is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place (launched in March 2014) and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- DC/088751 – Screening opinion for the provision of a Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure. EIA not required – 16/06/2023
- DC/088656 – Change of use of part of an agricultural field to a dog exercise area. Granted 05/09/2023

NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS

The owners/occupiers of surrounding properties were notified in writing of the application and the application was advertised by way of a site notice. The neighbour notification period expired on the 9th July 2024.

Letters of objection have been received to the application from 8 properties, the contents of which are summarised below:-

- Site is close to occupied homes, a school and a Public Right of Way and there is a risk of fire, release of toxic fumes and explosions
- Siting is not in line with best practice for siting of a BESS and fire appliances would need to travel through quiet suburban streets
- Other suitable brownfield locations are available
- BESS are a relatively new technology and long term health and environmental risks are not fully known
- Loss of views as field is currently open
- The development contradicts green belt policy
- Unsatisfactory community involvement and no benefit to residents of Stockport
- Extra traffic along a farm track would cause a hazard

- Proposed screening would have an unsightly visual impact on the area
- Drainage of the site is poor and impacts on public footpath running alongside the field
- Noise nuisance
- Light pollution from security lights
- Fire appliances do not have tools to extinguish lithium ion battery fires
- Technology may be obsolete in the future
- Cost issues relating to restoration of site and maintenance of the installation
- Radiation risk assessment and maintenance schedule are not provided
- Battery pods should have passed British and European safety standards
- The site will be unmanned, therefore risks from vandalism and terrorist action
- The site should be restored once the use is disbanded
- If landscaping is not maintained then any tree roots could damage pods and make them unsafe
- It is debatable how green battery power is

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Planning Policy – Greenbelt

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Para 142 notes that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- Para 152 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- Para 153 finds that, when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Furthermore, ‘very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- Para 156 notes that, when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development, and in such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- Paragraph 001 – Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to: (i) openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects...the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume (iii) the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.

- GBA1.2 Control of Development in Green Belt - Forms of development other than new buildings, including changes in the use of land, will not be permitted unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.
- GBA2.3 Farm Diversification – Proposals for the diversification of farming activity will be permitted provided that: (i) proposed uses are subsidiary to farming activity on the agricultural unit (ii) proposed uses are in some way related to agricultural activity or are appropriate in the countryside; and (iii) proposals would not have an adverse effect on the Landscape Character Areas and are not in fundamental conflict with Green Belt or other UDP policies.
- LCR1.1a The Urban Fringe including the River Valleys - Proposals for development in the urban fringe should protect, conserve and improve the landscape quality and natural history of the locality, and encourage the development of a variety of attractive landscape types. Development should help to create a landscape which is capable of absorbing the pressures associated with urban recreation. Where appropriate, the Council will seek to re-establish a “countryside” character and development proposals should maintain or enhance the predominantly informal recreational role of the Landscape Character Areas covered by this policy.

Evidence

Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (2016)

The site is located within parcel SP28 which is rated as making a ‘Strong’ contribution to Purpose 1a (evidence of existing urban sprawl), Purpose 1b (protection from potential of urban sprawl to occur), Purpose 2 (prevent neighbouring towns merging) and Purpose 3 (safeguarding the countryside from encroachment). Notes from the assessment of relevance include:

- 1a: There are limited urbanising features within the parcel... There is a strong sense of openness within the parcel because of undulating farmland bound by hedgerows, tree lines and occasional areas of woodland.
- 3: There is limited/no sense of encroachment with the parcel being generally free of urbanised built development. The landscape within this parcel remains largely unspoilt by urbanising influences located outside its boundaries. It has an intact and rural in character and displays strong characteristics of the countryside.

Stockport Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Study (2018)

The site lies within the Goyt Valley Landscape Character Area and is within the ‘Urban Fringe Valleys’ Landscape Character Type. Within the guidance and opportunities for future development listed under this LCA profile, the following are of relevance:

- Avoiding siting development in areas where it will be visually prominent including areas on steep slopes and open areas of the valley floor
- Opportunities to plant new hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost or fragmented should be encouraged.
- Ensure that the sparsely settled character of the valley (which have a sense of relative tranquillity) is retained and that any new development is not a dominant feature within the landscape. The sense of separation that the valley provides between distinct settlements should not be compromised.

- Any development should suitably blend in with the existing landscape character either through the use of sympathetic materials or by sensitive planting and screening (or both).

Principle and consideration of issues

Principle

The proposal is for the temporary change of use of land over a 40 year period for a 40 MW capacity battery energy storage facility with containers, car parking, access track and security fence. The site is on greenfield land on the edge of the urban area of Bredbury Green and is currently an agricultural field that is partly used as a dog exercise area.

Policy GBA1.2 of the Saved Unitary Development Plan includes a presumption against the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt unless it is for the listed purposes, none of which apply to the proposal.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that new buildings are inappropriate development in the Green Belt and follows this with a list of exceptions. Again, it is considered that none of the exceptions apply in this case, and the other forms of development under Paragraph 155 are also not relevant as the proposal constitutes more than an engineering operation and includes new buildings and so is not just a material change of use of land.

I would therefore advise that the proposal should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and a case for very special circumstances is required under Paragraph 152. Paragraph 153 gives substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt and notes that a case for very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Paragraph 156 details that renewable energy projects are also likely to be inappropriate development and that their wider environmental benefits from renewable energy sources may form part of the VSC case.

Other harm

The Planning Practice Guidance states that 'openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume'.

With regard to visual impact, the LVIA finds that:

- the visibility of the site from its surroundings in Green Belt beyond the site's immediate context is restricted by rising landform and/or woodland and tree cover.
- views from Public Rights of Way (PRoW) adjacent to and close to the site would be limited by mature woodland which provides screening and undulating landform.
- the proposed development would reduce visibility of the Green Belt beyond the site although the proposed open meadow and amenity area, young woodland screen planting and a backdrop of mature woodland will serve to mitigate this.

Evidence in the LCA recommends that the sense of separation be maintained, that development should not be in a visually prominent location and be away from steep slopes and the valley floor, and that such development blends in using screening or otherwise. In this context, I agree with the LVIA findings that the proposal will not have a significant visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt, located towards

the top of the hill and considering that the proposed mitigation planting will reduce visual effects to receptors over time, either on the PRow or nearby dwellings, and that the development is to be temporary, thereby reducing the duration of harm.

In spatial terms, the Planning Statement notes that the net developable area is 0.74 ha. which is over 50% of the 1.4 hectare site, and therefore any loss of openness is offset by the large proportion of the red edge given over to woodland screening and an area of open land for landscape and biodiversity improvements. This land will also enable public access to the PRow on land that is currently private, thereby enhancing the network of accessible green infrastructure in the local area.

As a result of the above considerations, I conclude that in relation to 'any other harm' in the balance required by Paragraph 153 there would be a limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt, primarily from the initial view of the proposed structures in the early life of the development before the planting is able to fulfil its eventual function.

The applicant requires a 40 year temporary consent. Given the limited impact of the proposal on openness and the location of the site with buffers to receptors I consider that this timeframe is appropriate. The fact that this permission is temporary forms part of the case for very special circumstances and so a condition should be attached to any permission, not least to ensure this timeframe is not exceeded.

The case for very special circumstances

Whilst neither local nor national policy specify what demonstrating a case for 'very special circumstances' should entail there is considerable case law which suggests that adhering to the following approach is likely to be suitable:

1. Identify (with evidence) an essential objective that the proposal is intended to meet;
2. Demonstrate that that essential objective could not reasonably be met in a less harmful way (i.e. consideration of other sites outside of the Green Belt or alternative sites within the Green Belt but where less harm would be caused or which would amount to a form of development excepted by NPPF paragraph 154)
3. Demonstrate that the proposed development would meet the essential objective and that doing so clearly outweighs the degree of harm caused by the proposal (this should include demonstrating that the essential objective could not be achieved less harmfully by an alternative scheme at the same site).

The applicant has provided a number of considerations, and these are as follows:

- The development will respond to national energy needs and is required to store electricity from the national grid when supply at generating stations exceeds demand and to return it when supply falls below demand. The 40 MW battery energy storage system proposal will assist in meeting the 2050 national target of moving energy supply to net zero, and the Stockport MBC target of 2038 which itself had declared a climate emergency.
- The alternative site assessment has outlined that opportunities for points of connection to the National Grid are limited and that the only three substations in the Borough with sufficient import and export capacity are at Bredbury, Hazel Grove and Adswold. Potential sites need to be at least 1.3 ha. and be within 1.2 km of the substation to be commercially viable and therefore a thorough search of potential sites in search areas around the substations has been carried out, looking at brownfield land and then greenfield land both outside and within the Green Belt. This has concluded that no alternative sites outside the Green Belt exist that meet the criteria and also that no other

Green Belt sites exist that are unconstrained by other policy designations. As such the proposed site within the search area of Bredbury substation is found to be the most suitable site.

- The sustainability benefits include the £18 million investment, £128,000 annual business rates, 20 peak construction jobs, energy security, greater grid flexibility and the biodiversity net gain from the introduction of diverse grassland and wildflower meadows.
- The development is temporary and reversible, with the intention of being decommissioned and removed from the site after 40 years with a plan for restoration of the application site.

In my view, the applicant has fulfilled the criteria advocated by case law, in that the essential objective is to provide a battery storage facility to meet an identified need, and by necessity this must be within a required distance threshold, site size and fulfilling a required energy output in order to be viable. It has been satisfactorily proved in supporting statements that, following detailed consideration of non-Green Belt alternatives in the search areas, that no such alternatives exist and that the application site is the least constrained and most suitable site for the proposal in the Green Belt.

I am of the view that it has been demonstrated the proposed site does fulfil the essential objective and I judge that the in-principle harm by reason of inappropriateness and limited additional harm to openness are clearly outweighed by the economic, social and environmental benefits, and are mitigated by proposed screening and retained land for biodiversity and public access, and minimised with the temporary permission. I am satisfied that no alternative scheme of less harm could have secured the objective.

As such I advise that very special circumstances exist that clearly outweigh the in-principle harm and additional harm and that permission should be granted.

Finally, I advise that conditions be imposed on the 40 year temporary consent and regarding the requirement for restoration of the site following the removal of the on-site structures.

Planning Policy – Energy and Climate Change

The UK has set into law a target to bring all its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. In March 2019, Stockport Council declared a climate emergency, and agreed that Stockport should become carbon neutral by 2038, in advance of the UK 2050 target. The Stockport CAN strategy was developed to underpin this agreement and was approved by full council in October 2020. The strategy sets out to ensure that Stockport achieves carbon neutrality by 2038, in order to support global efforts to prevent global warming going above 1.5°C. The Environmental Law Foundation has suggested that climate emergency declarations should be regarded as material considerations in the determination of planning matters.

The [Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan](#) considers how to reduce CO2 emissions associated with our energy supply. For energy supply, priorities 1 and 3 specifically relate to this proposed development:

- Increasing local renewable energy generation;
- Increasing the diversity and flexibility of our electricity supply.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF places mitigating/adapting to climate change as an overarching objective for the planning system, to ensure sustainable development.

Given the Green Belt location for this proposal, the planning balance will need to be considered. Paragraph 156 (NPPF Dec 2023) deals with renewable energy projects located in the Green belt, and states: *“When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.”*

Paragraph 163 (NPPF Dec 2023) states that: *“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;

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.”

Objective 1 of the Core Strategy relates to climate change, this is supported by a number of policies that seek to deliver this primary objective. **Policy CS1, SD-1 and SD-6** are of particular relevance to this proposal in terms of addressing climate change, and policy CS8 (paras 3.293 and 3.294) relate to Landscape Character Areas.

- CS1 3.11 states: *“It is recognised that a large proportion of the borough's current CO2 emissions are as a result of fossil fuel usage; therefore the Core Strategy will seek to identify and enable opportunities for low and/or zero carbon developments and to ensure that those opportunities are taken full advantage of.”*
- SD-1 states: *“Across the Borough as a whole development which is demonstrated to assist in the creation of Sustainable Communities will be given favourable consideration so long as it is in compliance with other development plan policies.”*
- SD-6 states: *“Development should be designed in such a way as to avoid, mitigate or reduce the impacts of climate change.”*

Stockport's [Landscape Character Area Study 2018](#) defines this location as being with the “Goyt Valley” character area, and provides a landscape evaluation and an assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios. The impact of this development on landscape must be weighed against the longer term benefits of zero carbon infrastructure in this appropriate location contributing to Stockport's efforts to tackle the climate emergency which threatens landscapes in the longer term.

Conclusion

In accordance with Government [advice](#), battery storage is considered to be a form of generating station, and it does not involve the generation of electricity from non-renewable sources. Battery storage enables energy from renewables, like solar and wind, to be stored and then released when customers need power most. Because battery storage does not involve any generation from fossil-fuels, it may be considered to be a form of renewable energy generation for the purposes of planning policies and decision making.

The facility has a capacity of 40 MW, and there is an established need for this type of development in terms of enabling the storage of renewable energy generated for local use at times of high demand. Due to its contributions in helping to decarbonise the grid, which will help to deliver the aims and objectives of the policies detailed above, I am supportive of the proposed development.

Highway Engineer

Further comments – 11/07/2024

I write with reference to the additional / revised drawings and information submitted on the 8th July. These include a vehicle swept-path tracking diagram which demonstrates that a large rigid HGV (which would include the fire appliances that are used locally by GMF&S) would be able to negotiate the site access and access road, subject to a minor amendment being made to the eastern end. The site layout drawings have therefore been updated to show this amendment. The additional area of access drive required to allow large HGVs to manoeuvre at the bend in question is shown to be surfaced in eco grid (for drainage reasons), as per the site access, which I consider acceptable, noting that the applicant has outlined that eco grid can be specified to accommodate heavier vehicles, such as fire appliances. Based on these drawings, I can confirm that I consider that the applicant has now demonstrated that the site access and access roads will be suitable for use by fire appliances, which the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan outlines is required.

I have updated recommended conditions to make reference to the updated drawings, as required.

Updated comments – 24/06/2024

I write with reference to the additional / revised drawings and information submitted on the 14th June. I note that the scheme has been amended to take into account recent changes / improvements in Battery Energy Storage System technology and additional information has been submitted in response to comments made by other consultees.

Reviewing the additional / revised drawings and information in detail concludes that the access arrangements remain unchanged, but amendments have been made to the access road that will serve the site (it is longer than previously proposed as the site compound is smaller) and internal access arrangements (an internal loop road now proposed). In addition, the proposed parking spaces have been relocated. These amendments have no implications for Clapgate or the wider highway network and the updated Construction Traffic Management Plan includes updated vehicle tracking diagrams which demonstrate that vehicles will be able to turn into and out of the site and travel within the site. As such, the proposed amendments do not change my original recommendation of “no objection, subject to conditions”.

Finally, as with the previous CTMP, the updated CTMP does not include vehicle tracking diagrams for fire appliances. I note that the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan refers to the need for site access roads to be suitable for use by fire appliances and for suitable turning areas to be provided, where required. Whilst it appears that the access and access roads will be suitable for use by fire appliances, I would recommend that vehicle swept-path tracking diagrams are requested that demonstrate that fire appliances would be able to access the site.

Recommendation: No objection, subject to conditions.

Initial comments – 31/01/2024

This application seeks permission for the construction of a Battery Energy Storage System with associated infrastructure, access, drainage features and landscaping at land to the north of Clapgate at Bredbury. The facility, which will comprise of battery storage units, transformers, switchgear, a welfare unit and other infrastructure constructed on an area of hardstanding, will be located on existing agricultural land to the east of an existing residential area and will take access from the farm track which takes access from the end of Clapgate which has a public footpath running along it (public footpath 59BR). Parking will be provided within the site for 2 cars and soft landscaping will be provided around the facility. After reviewing the submitted drawings and documents, including a Planning, Design and Access Statement and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), I would make the following comments:

Traffic Impact

The development will take access from a hard surfaced “farm track” which is a currently a public footpath (59BR), is presently also used cyclists and horse riders and is due to be upgraded to a bridleway. It is also a designated ‘Quiet Lane’. Saved policy TD2.2 ‘Quiet Lanes’ of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review outlines that developments and highway improvements that have an impact upon rural roads, which would detract from their character and their value as “Quiet Lanes”, will only be permitted where they can be justified on safety grounds. It also outlines that any development that would result in a significant increase in traffic or conflict between different users of these lanes will not be permitted. The farm track takes access from Clapgate, which is a residential access road, which also provides access to a primary school. Clapgate takes access from the strategic highway network via Bredbury Green, which is a residential distributor road which also serves two high schools.

The Planning, Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the application outlines that, once constructed, traffic generation will not be significant, with a van visiting the site approx. 15 times per year (approx. every 3-4 weeks) for maintenance purposes. This would not have any material impact on either the farm track / Quiet Lane, Clapgate or the wider highway network and therefore I would conclude that the proposal would not be contrary to highways / transport policy in this respect.

The development will, however, generate significantly more vehicle movements during the construction phase. The CTMP outlines that construction is anticipated to commence in Autumn 2024 and will last for 6-8 months. During this period, it outlines that a range of vehicles will need to access the site, including articulated HGVs, rigid HGVs and vans, generating up to 20 two-way HGV movements per day (10 HGVs travelling to and from the site) and 30 car / van movements (15 operatives travel to / from the site). It also outlines that there will be the need for three AIL (Abnormal Indivisible Loads) vehicles to deliver super grid transformers to the site, with these managed by a specialist haulage contractor. These movements have the potential to affect the farm track, Clapgate and Bredbury Green. The CTMP therefore outlines that various mitigation measures are proposed to be implemented to minimise the impact of this. These include:

- 1) Constructing a dedicated construction phase access.
- 2) Widening the farm track slightly between Clapgate and the site access.

- 3) Providing a pedestrian, cyclist and horse passing place (measuring 3m by 1.5m) on the farm track between Clapgate and the site access
- 4) Providing a suitable construction compound within the site, with room for vehicles to turn and park, including room for 2 HGVs to park / pass.
- 5) Ensuring the site access tracks are suitably surfaced and providing wheel-wash facilities.
- 6) Managing HGV arrival and departure times.
- 7) Scheduling deliveries / HGV movements to take place between 09:30 and 15:00 so as to not coincide with school drop-off / pick up or the AM/PM peak periods.
- 8) Providing signage, including "Works Access" and 10mph signs on the farm track
- 9) Routing vehicles via to / from the major road network via Harrytown / Higher Bents Lane.
- 10) Providing temporary traffic management, as required, for abnormal loads.
- 11) Not permitted contractors, visitors or delivery vehicles to park off-site.
- 12) Using a Banksman, where required.

Subject to these measures being implemented, construction activities being monitored, and the measures adjusted if issues do arise, I would conclude that these measures should be sufficient for ensuring that the construction activities / vehicle movements will be adequately mitigated and the safety of users of the access track is not adversely affected. Whilst it is accepted that the works will result in some disruption and impact on the operation of Clapgate and the farm track / public right of way which the site will be accessed from as well as users of public footpath 60BR which abuts the site, this disruption will be for a limited length of time. As such, I would conclude that an objection on these grounds would be hard to justify.

To ensure that the construction activities take place in a manner that minimises the impact on Clapgate, the wider highway network and local residents, I would recommend that any approval granted is subject to a condition requiring the production, approval and implementation of a construction management plan. In respect to this, whilst the CTMP submitted in support of the application is considered generally acceptable, it is considered that it needs some further development / revision to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose and in order to firm up various matters. This would need to be carried out once a contractor is appointed. Issues that need to be addressed include:

- 1) Contact details of the contractor are required.
- 2) Confirmation of construction start and finish dates.
- 3) A traffic management drawing (with details of signage etc.) needs to be included (including signage for footpath 60BR).
- 4) Full details of arrangements for the management of Abnormal Indivisible Loads, including temporary parking restrictions needs to be included.
- 5) A more detailed construction phase plan is required.
- 6) Details of crane operations is required.
- 7) Details of car parking provision during the construction period are needed.

The development / revision of the CTMP can be dealt with by condition.

The construction activities have the potential to affect the surfacing of the farm track adjacent to the site and which the site is accessed from. In addition, construction works could also affect footpath 60BR, which presently gets muddy and waterlogged, compromising its use. As such, I would recommend that any approval granted is subject to conditions which requires pre and post condition surveys to be

carried out and any damage caused during construction to be repaired and for the footpath abutting the site to be hard surfaced as part of the development.

Access

The development is proposed to be accessed from the farm track that extends from Clapgate via a new access located towards the western end of the site. A drawing contained in the CTMP outlines that it will benefit from an appropriate level of visibility and vehicle tracking has been provided to demonstrate that maintenance vehicles (7.5T vans) will be able to turn into and out of the access. The access track will be surfaced in Ecogrid (a ground reinforcement product which can be gravel or grass filled – the applicant outlines it will be grass filled). I consider these access arrangements generally acceptable.

I do note, however, that access for fire appliances has not been considered and the applicant has not reviewed whether fire appliances would be able to access the site, negotiate the site access tracks or turn within the site, if required. Whilst it appears possible for fire appliances to turn into and out of the site from / to the east, it is not clear if fire appliances could turn into and out of the site from / to the west, if required, or whether they could turn within the site. As such, following a review of the application (and notably the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan), if Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service outline that fire appliances will need to access the site in the event of a fire, I would recommend that vehicle swept-path tracking diagrams are requested that demonstrate that fire appliances would be able to turn into, within and out of the site.

To enable the development to be constructed, a separate construction access is proposed to be constructed. This again will be constructed on Clapgate but will be located further towards the eastern end of the site, closer to the adopted highway. This has been designed for construction vehicles and a drawing contained in the CTMP outlines that it will also benefit from an appropriate level of visibility. In addition, vehicle tracking has been provided to demonstrate that HGVs (articulated lorries) will be able to turn into and out of the access. The CTMP outlines that the first section of the access (including bellmouth) would be hard surfaced with the remainder of the access track surfaced in gravel / hardcore. I also consider this access acceptable, subject to the improvement works being carried out to Clapgate, as discussed above. Following completion of the development, this access will need to be removed and the land where it was situated restored.

Parking

As outlined above, the Planning, Design and Access Statement outlines that once constructed, the facility will be visited approx. once every 3-4 weeks by a maintenance vehicle. As such, parking demand during the operational phase will be minimal. Two parking spaces are proposed to meet demand, which I consider is acceptable. Noting the nature of the development, I do not consider there is need for dedicated parking for cycles or motorcycles, nor an EV charging point.

During construction, parking demand will be much greater, with the applicant outlining that parking demand will be up to 10 vehicles. The CTMP outlines that parking will be provided within the site for contractors and contractors, visitors or delivery vehicles will not be permitted to park off-site. I would consider this acceptable, in principle. Although the CTMP includes construction phase site plan, this does not show the parking area and therefore a slightly more detailed CTMP will

need to be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development which includes a more detailed plan.

Conclusion

The proposed development should not have a material impact on the local highway network once constructed and I consider the access and parking arrangements that are proposed acceptable. Construction of the development will, however, have an impact on the farm track which provides access to the site, Clapgate and the local highway network. Subject to the mitigation measures that have been tabled being implemented, I would conclude that construction activities and vehicle movements will be sufficiently mitigated and the safety of users of the access track will not be materially compromised. As such, I raise no objection to the application, subject to conditions to agree details of both the temporary and permanent works, as well to finalise details relating to the method of construction. Finally, please refer to the comments I have made in respect to access by fire appliances.

Recommendation: No objection, subject to conditions.

Environment Team (Noise)

NOISE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (NIA)

An updated acoustic report has been submitted in support of the amended details:

LF Acoustics, NOISE ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT OF A BATTERY ELECTRICITY STORAGE SYSTEM WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS, DRAINAGE FEATURES AND LANDSCAPING ON LAND NORTH OF CLAPGATE, BREDBURY GREEN, v.2, MAY 2024

NIA BRIEF

- *As a result of the changes in technology, the Applicant is proposing to change the type of battery container units proposed previously, resulting in fewer battery units on the Site.*
- *The revised assessment has also been based upon worst case operating conditions for both day and night-time periods, to address comments raised by local authority officers during consultation.*

SITE DESCRIPTION & PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- *the reduction in the amount of container units required on site has enabled the plant to be located further from the properties to ensure noise levels are minimised.*
- *The BESS would contain a number of battery containers, configured into a number of separate banks, as indicated on Figure 2. The battery containers would each have a liquid cooling system to maintain the batteries at the correct operating conditions, with fans used to provide the necessary cooling. For each bank of two battery containers, there would be a medium voltage station, which would incorporate an inverter and transformer. These would also be fan-cooled.*
- *There would be a DNO substation located at the southern area of the site. This remains in the same location as previously proposed.*
- *The site would be levelled to create a suitable surface to locate the BESS. This would result in the site being slightly beneath the current ground levels along the boundary with the lane to the south.*

- *To effectively mitigate the BESS from the neighbouring residential properties, it is proposed to construct two absorptive acoustic fences 4 metres in height:*
 - i. One would be located along the southern and eastern site boundaries to effectively screen the substation plant.*
 - ii. The second would be located adjacent to the battery containers, positioned along the southern and eastern boundaries as close as possible to the plant, to maximise its effectiveness.*

BS 4142 NOISE ASSESSMENT

The impact of the noise from the proposed development has been assessed in accordance with: BS 4142:2014+A1:2019, 'Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound', to determine the rating level arising from the introduction of the proposed sound source, upon noise sensitive receptors.

BACKGROUND SOUND MEASUREMENT LOCATION

Unattended noise surveys were carried out between 20th to 24th July 2023.

BACKGROUND SOUND MEASUREMENTS

Measurements were taken along the western and eastern site boundaries at positions representative of the surrounding residential properties, as indicated on Figure 1.

Western Monitoring Position (Representative of Goyt Hall and Middle Farm)

Typical background noise levels:

- Daytime (07:00 – 19:00) – 46 dB L_{A90};
- Evening (19:00 – 23:00) - 42 dB L_{A90};
- Night-time (23:00 – 07:00) – 40 dB L_{A90}.

Eastern Monitoring Position (Representative of properties in Romiley)

- Typical background noise levels:
- Daytime (07:00 – 19:00) – 42 dB L_{A90};
- Evening (19:00 – 23:00) - 39 dB L_{A90};
- Night-time (23:00 – 07:00) – 38 dB L_{A90}.

For the purpose of the BS 4142 assessment; daytime is considered as the period between 07:00 h and 23:00 h and accordingly night-time is between 23:00 h and 07:00 h.

The night-time background sound level will be the driving factor in assessing noise impact as the measured night-time level is typically lower than the daytime. At night-time the general background sound decreases - there is less road traffic, overhead aircraft and general sound-making activity in the area (plant and equipment) ends or decreases productivity.

RECEPTORS

There are a number of residential properties to the east within Bredbury Green, Romiley, located along Gillwood Drive, Kiln Croft and Catherine Road, which have been considered within this assessment. Middle Farm and Goyt Hall Farm to the west of the proposed facility have also been considered within this assessment.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Calculations have been prepared on the basis of all plant fully operational, which represents the likely worst-case conditions during the peak summer daytime periods.

Calculations for the other periods have taken account of the fact that fans on the battery containers would also operate at full speed to provide worst case conditions.

EXTERNAL PLANT

The BS 4142 assessment is based on the specification of plant described within the report and noise levels have been calculated on the basis of the site layout indicated on Figure 2. If there is a change to the plant or layout, a revised submission would be required for consideration.

ASSESSMENT

- Calculations have been made using SoundPlan, taken account of the topography around the site.

The calculations have included the proposed acoustic noise barriers. These would be located along the southern and eastern site boundaries adjacent to the substation area and adjacent to the main plant, along the southern and eastern boundaries, as indicated on Figure 2. Absorptive noise barriers would be installed to a height of 4 metres above the site level.

BS 8233 advises for steady state external noise sources, such as that associated with the operation of the site, it is desirable that the internal ambient noise level does not exceed a level of 35 dB LAeq,16 hour during the daytime period within living rooms and bedrooms and 30 dB LAeq, 8 hour within bedrooms at night. On the basis of an open window typically providing a sound reduction of between 10 – 15 dB(A), equivalent external levels below 45 dB LAeq, 16 hour daytime and 40 dB LAeq, 8 hour night-time, would ensure an acceptable noise environment was maintained within the surrounding properties and seek to minimise any potential adverse noise impacts.

ACOUSTIC FEATURE CORRECTIONS

The introduced plant and equipment noise is likely to exhibit other sound characteristics compared to the current noise environment, the consultant has considered appropriate to apply a 3 dB other characteristic noise correction within BS 4142 to derive the rating level.

RATING LEVEL OVER BACKGROUND SOUND

Whilst the impact of the introduction of the new plant upon Middle Farm, Goyt Hall Farm, Gillwood Drive (pages 12 &13) have been assessed and determined that the rating level does not exceed the daytime, evening and night-time background sound levels and therefore would result in potential for a low impact, which would not result in adverse noise impacts at these properties, with the rating noise levels not exceeding the prevailing noise levels. The noise levels attributable to the operation of the BESS would remain below the existing noise levels at: Middle Farm, Goyt Hall Farm, Gillwood Drive.

This service is concerned with the impact of the proposed development, upon the closest noise sensitive receptors (NSR) at:

- 33 – 35 Clapgate
- 68 – 74 Catherine Road
- 2 – 4 Kiln Croft

The updated assessment has been based upon worst case operating conditions, with the fans operating at full speed. The consultants BS4142 assessment for Kiln Croft and Catherine Road properties:

	Assessment Period		
	Daytime	Evening	Night-time
Specific Noise Level	38	38	38
Acoustic Feature Correction	3	3	3
Rating Level	41	41	41
Background Noise Level [dB L _{A90}]	42	39	38
Excess of Rating Over Background Level	-1	+2	+3
Likelihood of Impact	Indication of Low Impact	Indication of Low Impact	Indication of Low Impact

Table 5.6 Initial BS 4142 Assessment – Kiln Croft

	Assessment Period		
	Daytime	Evening	Night-time
Specific Noise Level	39	39	39
Acoustic Feature Correction	3	3	3
Rating Level	42	42	42
Background Noise Level [dB L _{A90}]	42	39	38
Excess of Rating Over Background Level	0	+3	+4
Likelihood of Impact	Indication of Low Impact	Indication of Low Impact	Indication of Low Impact

Table 5.7 Initial BS 4142 Assessment – Catherine Road

DAYTIME

During the daytime period (07:00 - 19:00), the rating level does not exceed the background sound level.

The lower the rating level is relative to the measured background sound level, the less likely it is that there will be an adverse impact or significant adverse impact.

EVENING & NIGHT-TIME

HOWEVER, at properties at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road, during the evening (19:00 – 23:00) and night-time (23:00 – 07:00) the sound rating level, is predicted to exceed the background sound level.

CONTEXT

The current edition of BS 4142, recognises the importance of the context in which a sound occurs.

Assessment of the impact (section 11, BS 4142, 2019)

The significance of sound of an industrial and/or commercial nature depends upon both:

1. INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The margin by which the rating level of the specific sound source **EXCEEDS** the background sound level.

Difference between Background sound level and sound source rating level

The greater the difference between the rating level and background sound level, the greater the magnitude of the impact.

- A difference of around +10 dB (TWICE (OR HALF) AS LOUD) or more is likely to be an indication of a significant adverse impact, depending on the context.
- A difference of around +5 dB (AUDIBLE DIFFERENCE/CLEARLY NOTICEABLE) is likely to be an indication of an adverse impact, depending on the context.
- The lower the rating level is relative to the measured background sound level, the less likely it is that the specific sound source will have an adverse impact or a significant adverse impact.
- Where the rating level does not exceed the background sound level, this is an indication of the specific sound source having a low impact, depending on the context.

2. **CONTEXT** in which the sound occurs.

The current edition of BS 4142, recognises the importance of the context in which a sound occurs. An effective assessment cannot be conducted without an understanding of the reason(s) for the assessment and the context in which the sound occurs/will occur. When making an assessment of the impact and arriving at decisions, it is essential to place the sound in context.

At BS 4142-2019, section 11: Where the initial estimate of the impact needs to be modified due to the **context**, take all pertinent factors into consideration, including:

- 1) The absolute level of sound
- 2) The character and level of the residual sound compared to the character and level of the specific sound
 - residual sound is the ambient sound remaining at the assessment location when the specific sound source is suppressed to such a degree that it does not contribute to the ambient sound
 - specific sound source sound source being assessed
 - ambient sound totally encompassing sound in a given situation at a given time, usually composed of sound from many sources near and far NOTE The ambient sound comprises the residual sound and the specific sound when present
- 3) The sensitivity of the receptor and whether dwellings or other premises used for residential purposes will already incorporate design measures that secure good internal and/or outdoor acoustic conditions, such as:
 - (i) *facade insulation treatment;*
 - (ii) *ventilation and/or cooling that will reduce the need to have windows open so as to provide rapid or purge ventilation; and*
 - (iii) *acoustic screening*

EH COMMENT NIGHT-TIME - WHO

Whilst WHO, Guidelines for Community Noise (1999), *At night, sound pressure levels at the outside façades of the living spaces should not exceed 45 dB LAeq, so that people may sleep with bedroom windows open. These values have been obtained by assuming that the noise reduction from outside to inside with the window partly open is 15 dB.*

NIGHT-TIME – BS 4142

During the most sensitive night-time period (23:00 – 07:00) the BS 4142 assessment has determined that the plant sound rating level is predicted to exceed the (external) background sound level by 3dB at Kiln Croft properties and 4dB at Catherine Road properties.

It is commonly accepted that the minimum change in noise level which is perceptible to humans is 3dB, whilst a change of 1dB is not perceptible.

The BS 4142 assessment is intended for the assessment of external noise levels and is not intended to assess the extent of impact at internal locations. The above assessment, details the sound incident upon the external façade at the receptor location. It is the night-time period, that is of concern, as it is when residents are preparing to sleep or are sleeping. Therefore, in order to protect this sensitive time period, the assessment should have been expanded to determine the impact of the sound levels arising from the introduction of the plant upon indoor sound levels at the receptor locations.

NIGHT-TIME – BS 8233

The noise consultant has not detailed or examined the ‘context’ in which the sound will occur. This service has calculated the impact of the new external source sound, upon residential internal sound levels in bedrooms. In accordance with BS8233, for the sensitive night-time period, the internal sound level within bedrooms is 30 dB

$L_{Aeq, 8 \text{ hour}}$

Page 5 - Assuming an open window provides a reduction in noise levels of between 10 – 15 dB(A), during the night-time

Page 11 - On the basis of an open window typically providing a sound reduction of between 10 – 15 dB(A)

BS 8233 advises for steady state external noise sources, such as that associated with the operation of the site, it is desirable that the internal ambient noise level does not exceed a level of 35 dB $L_{Aeq, 16 \text{ hour}}$ during the daytime period within living rooms and bedrooms and 30 dB $L_{Aeq, 8 \text{ hour}}$ within bedrooms at night. On the basis of an open window typically providing a sound reduction of between 10 – 15 dB(A), equivalent external levels below 45 dB $L_{Aeq, 16 \text{ hour}}$ daytime and 40 dB $L_{Aeq, 8 \text{ hour}}$ night-time, would ensure an acceptable noise environment was maintained within the surrounding properties and seek to minimise any potential adverse noise impacts.

The Predicted Night-time Sound Rating Level – EXTERNAL of 41 and 42 dB $L_{Aeq, 8 \text{ hour}}$ at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road respectively, does not exceed the WHO 45 dB L_{Aeq} sound pressure levels at the outside façades of the living spaces.

Assuming an open window provides a reduction in noise levels of between 10 – 15 dB(A), during the night-time, the internal sound levels within bedrooms at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road, are:

- 10dB open window sound reduction external to internal would be 31 and 32 dBA and for a
- 15dB open window sound reduction external to internal would be 26 and 27 dBA respectively.

Potentially an open window providing a sound reduction of 10dB would result in internal sound levels of 31 and 32 at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road respectively. Exceeding BS 8233 indoor noise level of 30dB for night-time in bedrooms.

Whilst the internal sound level in bedrooms, with an open window sound reduction of 15dB, calculated to achieve 26dB at Kiln Croft and 27 dBA at Catherine Road, would not exceed BS 8233 indoor noise level of 30dB for night-time in bedrooms.

EH ASSESSMENT – NIA

Whilst the impact of the introduction of the new plant upon Middle Farm, Goyt Hall Farm, Gillwood Drive have determined that the plant sound rating level shall not exceed the daytime, evening and night-time background sound levels. The noise levels attributable to the operation of the BESS are predicted to remain below the existing noise levels at: Middle Farm, Goyt Hall Farm, Gillwood Drive.

For the closest noise sensitive receptors: properties at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road, whilst the sound rating level of the BESS, is predicted not to exceed the background sound level during the daytime period (07:00 - 19:00).

HOWEVER, the BESS sound rating level, is predicted to exceed the background sound level at properties at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road:

- during the evening (19:00 – 23:00) and
- night-time (23:00 – 07:00)

EVENING PERIOD (19:00 – 23:00)

During the evening period (19:00 – 23:00) at Kiln Croft it is predicted that the BESS noise rating level shall exceed the background sound level by 2dB and at Catherine Road properties the BESS noise rating level shall exceed the background sound level by 3dB. It is commonly accepted that the minimum change in noise level which is perceptible to humans is 3dB. Therefore, the sound of the new plant at this location will be noticeable to these residents during the evening period, whilst they are outside their homes.

BS 4142 is intended for the assessment of external noise levels and is not intended to assess the extent of impact at internal locations. No account is made of the acoustic mitigation provided by the building envelope in which receptors are located.

NIGHT-TIME PERIOD (23:00 – 07:00)

- WHO

The Predicted Night-time Sound Rating Level – EXTERNAL of 41 and 42 dB $L_{Aeq, 8 \text{ hour}}$ at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road respectively, does not exceed the WHO 45 dB L_{Aeq} sound pressure levels at the outside façades of the living spaces.

- BS 8233 – Internal Sound Criteria

For the night-time period, this service has attempted to assess the sound-break in from external to internal for bedrooms, to establish the sound level in accordance with BS 8233. Whilst an open window providing a sound reduction of 10dB would result in internal sound levels of 31 and 32 at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road respectively. Exceeding BS 8233 indoor noise level of 30dB for night-time in bedrooms. An open window, providing a sound reduction of 15dB, would achieve 26dB at Kiln Croft and 27 dBA at Catherine Road, which would not exceed BS 8233 indoor noise level of 30dB for night-time in bedrooms.

- BS 4142 – External Impact

During the most sensitive night-time period (23:00 – 07:00) the BS 4142 assessment has determined that the plant sound rating level is predicted to exceed the (external) background sound level by 3dB at Kiln Croft properties and 4dB at Catherine Road properties. It is commonly accepted that the minimum change in noise level which is perceptible to humans is 3dB.

The planning balance determination of the proposal, will need to consider what weight is given to this exceedance during the evening period (19:00 – 23:00) external to properties at Kiln Croft and Catherine Road properties, in respect to impact upon residential amenity, arising from the introduction of the BESS at this location.

Further, whilst the following relates to residential development, its purpose is to show that current government guidance does accept external noise increase, where development is determined necessary:

- BS8233:2014, at section 7.7.2, provides advice on the possible relaxation of the internal target levels by up to 5 dB at Note 7 to Table 4 'Indoor ambient noise levels for dwelling': *Where development is considered necessary or desirable, despite external noise levels above WHO guidelines, the internal target levels may be relaxed by up to 5 dB and reasonable internal conditions still achieved.*
- Whilst Referenced in Planning Practice Guidance– Noise ([Noise - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 30-015-20190722, Revision date: 22 07 2019: The management of the noise associated with particular development types is considered in the following documents: ProPG: Planning & Noise – [Professional Practice Guidance on Planning & Noise- New Residential Development](#) (Association of Noise Consultants, Institute of Acoustics and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, May 2017) – this document:
At section 2.30, LPAs should initially seek to achieve the internal noise level guidelines in noise-sensitive rooms in new residential developments.
However, national planning and noise policy does not require that those levels are always achieved, in particular, if to do so would disproportionately increase the cost of the development.

Consequently, this service accepts the LF Acoustics, NOISE ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT OF A BATTERY ELECTRICITY STORAGE SYSTEM WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS, DRAINAGE FEATURES AND LANDSCAPING ON LAND NORTH OF CLAPGATE, BREDBURY GREEN, v.2, MAY 2024

Environmental Health – Contaminated Land

I have no objection to the proposed new battery storage system development, however the developer will need to need appoint an Environmental Consultant to undertake a Phase 1 desktop study/site walkover to determine if a Phase 2 site investigation and subsequent remediation and validation is required. This is a phased approach and I would recommend the following conditions for the decision notice.

Nature Development Team

The site is located north of Clapgate in Romiley. The application is for development of a Battery Energy Storage System with associated infrastructure, access, drainage features and landscaping.

The site has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise as listed in Stockport's current Local Plan (e.g. Site of Biological Importance, Local Nature Reserve, Green Chain).

It has however been identified as an opportunity area within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) pilot study for Greater Manchester. This is not necessarily a barrier to development and does not confer protection or prevention of land uses but shows that such areas have been prioritised for restoring and linking up habitats. This has been reflected within biodiversity net gain metric calculations for the site, which has assigned high strategic significance (discussed further below).

The application area is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) but this type of development is not listed by Natural England as likely to result in an impact on the SSSI (Compstall Nature Reserve).

Habitats and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Habitats on site have been mapped following UKHAB as part of ecological survey work carried out in July 2023 (Biodiverse Consulting, Ecological Impact Assessment V2.1: report dated June 2024). A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment has been carried out with findings reported in the submitted Biodiversity Assessment Report V2.0 dated June 2024 (Biodiverse Consulting, 2024). The DEFRA Metric V4.0 has been used to assess baseline conditions and inform the BNG assessment (updated in June 2024 following amendments to the proposals). The Statutory metric had not been published at the time that the first BNG assessment was carried out but after checking the figures it does not appear that using the Statutory metric (rather than version 4.0) significantly affects the overall BNG metric calculations. In light of this, and since this current application has been validated prior to mandatory BNG (when use of the statutory metric is a legal requirement), it is considered that the use of version 4.0 of the metric is acceptable in this instance.

Habitats within the application site boundary are dominated by modified grassland, which is in poor condition owing to failing criterion A, relating to species diversity. A road (developed land sealed surface) is also present. The site has been assigned High Strategic Significance, which reflects its identification within the pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester. The baseline habitats score 3 Habitat Units.

As part of the proposed landscaping scheme, habitats to be created include: woodland (poor condition); mixed scrub (poor condition); 9 small trees (moderate condition); green wall (moderate condition) and; a swale (moderate condition). It is proposed that some of the grassland will be retained enhanced to other neutral grassland (moderate condition). The Metric calculations show an overall gain of 1.08 Habitat Units (+36.02%).

The submitted plans indicate that some of the enhanced grassland habitat will be an 'informal amenity area'. The submitted information indicates that this area may be subject to a more intensive management regime than the other area of grassland to be enhanced. As such, it may not be possible for the amenity area to reach moderate condition and it may be more attainable for this area to reach poor condition. Nonetheless, it is considered that the **proposals would still result in an overall BNG of >10%** which is within the acceptable range required by the Environment Act 2021 and by the Greater GMCA BNG Guidelines for Greater Manchester (February 2021).

Woodland borders the application site to the north. This is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat and so will need to be protected from potential impacts by implementing appropriate buffers and precautionary working measures during construction. The creation of mixed scrub habitat along the woodland edge will also help ameliorate potential impacts. The application area

red line boundary is 5m from the woodland edge, whilst the development footprint appears to be over 10m from the woodland edge at its closest point.

Legally Protected Species

The Ecological Impact Assessment included a search for evidence of and potential for protected species to be present and impacted by the proposals. All survey work has been carried out by a suitably experienced ecologist.

Records for badger exist within the local area and habitats on and adjacent to the site are suitable to support this species (grassland and woodland). Badgers and their setts receive legal protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. The ecology report states that the woodland to the north of the red line application boundary was surveyed for badger, as well as the application area itself. A mammal track was observed going into the woodland, but no definitive signs of badger activity (such as setts, footprints, latrines) were recorded.

Precautionary working measures in relation to badger, including update surveys and sensitive working measures to be adopted during construction are advised. In relation to impacts associated with loss of badger foraging habitat, there is considered to be abundant alternative foraging opportunities in the locality. The landscaping scheme for the development could however be further improved to incorporate a greater proportion of berry/fruit producing species (e.g. elder, crab apple etc) to provide a foraging resource for the local badger population.

From review of mapping data, there are at least two ponds located within 500m of the application site, with the nearest pond being approx. 230m away. Ponds and their surrounding terrestrial habitat have the potential to support amphibians, including great crested newt (GCN). GCN are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. The latter implements the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. GCN are included in Schedule 2 of the Regulations as 'European Protected Species of animals' (EPS).

Under the Regulations it is an offence to:

- 1) Deliberately capture or kill a wild EPS
- 2) Deliberately disturb a wild EPS in such a way that significantly affects:
 - a) the ability of a significant group to survive, breed, rear or nurture young.
 - b) the local distribution of that species.
- 3) Damage or destroy a breeding place or resting site of such an animal

The site has been registered under Natural England's District Level Licensing (DLL) scheme for GCN. This involves a financial sum being paid and spent on GCN conservation work in Greater Manchester and no further survey work would be required. The Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment certificate (IACPC) (counter-signed by Natural England) along with plan showing the DLL boundary (referred to as Annex 3) has been submitted to the LPA. Precautionary working measures should be adopted during construction works to prevent harm/injury to amphibians.

Many trees have the potential to support roosting bats. Bats and their roosts receive the same level of legal protection as GCN (outlined above). No tree loss is anticipated to accommodate the proposals and the ecology report states that trees within the woodland bordering the site did not offer potential bat roosting opportunities.

The grassland, which dominates the application area, offers suitable habitat for foraging bats and the woodland edge will be a valuable foraging resource and commuting corridor. Information submitted with the application states that no lighting will be required. If lighting is however proposed, a sensitive lighting strategy will be required to minimise potential disturbance impacts. The proposed landscape planting and habitat creation will also enhance foraging opportunities for the local bat population.

Habitats on site offer potential to support nesting and foraging birds. The nests of all wild birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). Precautionary measures will need to be implemented during construction works to avoid disturbance impacts. The proposed landscaping strategy includes scrub, woodland and grassland habitats, which will be of benefit to the local bird population.

Habitats on site (particularly around the woodland edge) offer potential to support hedgehog (a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006). Precautionary Reasonable Avoidance Measures are considered appropriate to minimise potential risks to this species.

Invasive Species

No non-native invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded during the ecological surveys.

Recommendations:

There is sufficient ecological information available to inform determination of the application.

The site has been registered for a GCN Natural England District Level Licence. The countersigned (by Natural England) Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC) along with plan showing the DLL boundary (referred to as Annex 3 on the IACPC) has been submitted to the LPA. Natural England have advised LPAs that they can accept the IACPC as confirmation from Natural England that the development is suitable for DLL and that the conservation payment is sufficient to compensate for the impacts on GCN: the IACPC can be relied upon by the planning authority as confirmation that the impacts of the development on GCN are capable of being fully addressed in a manner which complies with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. Reasonable Avoidance Measures should be adopted during works to minimise potential risk of harm/injury to amphibians during the proposed works (e.g. during site clearance). And these can be detailed within a Construction and Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) – see below.

Measurable gains for biodiversity are expected within development in accordance with national and local planning policy (NPPF and paragraph 3.345 of the LDF). The BNG Assessment and Metric calculations that have been submitted with the application indicate that an overall BNG can be delivered on site. The submitted information calculates an overall gain of 1.08 Habitat Units (+36.02%). This is dependant on all the retained modified grassland to be enhanced to other neutral grassland and reaching moderate condition. Some of this grassland area will be managed as an amenity area and so will be subject to a more intensive management regime. Even if the amenity area was to reach poor condition however, the proposals would still result in an overall BNG of >10% which is within the acceptable range required by the Environment Act 2021

and by the Greater GMCA BNG Guidelines for Greater Manchester (February 2021).

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan has been submitted with the application, which details delivery of BNG and outlines how proposed habitats would reach target condition. The majority of the required information has been provided, but it is requested that additional information is provided relating to potential contingencies should a proposed habitat and/or target condition not be reached (point g below). This can be secured via the following condition:

Notwithstanding the submitted Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, prior to the commencement of the development, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan /biodiversity net gain management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management plan shall detail how the proposals within the submitted BNG Assessment Report (Biodiverse Consulting, November 2023) shall be implemented and at least 10% BNG delivered. The management plan shall include:

- a) Detailed habitat creation proposals, for each habitat proposed on site;
- b) Detailed habitat management and enhancement proposals for retained and improved habitats;
- c) Maintenance measures during the establishment periods;
- d) Maintenance measures beyond establishment until target condition acquired;
- e) Management and maintenance beyond target condition up to a maximum of 30 years;
- f) Monitoring and review procedures with the Local Planning Authority (including regular update monitoring reports to be submitted to the LPA for review to demonstrate delivery of the required BNG (i.e. in years 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30))
- g) Potential contingencies should a proposed habitat and/or target condition be concluded to be unachievable so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme; and
- h) Details of the organisations responsible for implementing, managing and monitoring the works.

The management plan shall also include details of mitigation and enhancement measures for other wildlife and other biodiversity enhancements that can't be reported in the metric, (such as landscape planting to improve badger foraging opportunities). These measures would be particularly welcomed given the designation of the site as an opportunity area within the LNRS for Greater Manchester.

The development shall thereafter be undertaken and maintained in accordance with the approved management plan.

In relation to nesting birds, the following condition should be used (or alternatively it can be incorporated into the Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) below. No tree/hedgerow/vegetation clearance works should take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist (or otherwise suitably qualified person) has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds' nests immediately before (no more than 48 hours before) such works commence and confirmed that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site (e.g. implementation of appropriate buffer zones to prevent disturbance).

The proposed works are considered to be of very low risk to roosting bats. As a precautionary measure an informative should be attached to any planning consent granted so that the applicant is aware that protected species can sometimes be found in unexpected places. It should also state that the granting of planning permission does not negate the need to abide by the legislation in place to protect biodiversity. If at any time during works, evidence of roosting bats, or any other protected species is discovered on site and are likely to be impacted, works must stop and a suitably experienced ecologist be contacted for advice.

A Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted with the application to detail how retained habitats will be protected and potential impacts on habitats and protected/priority species will be avoided, minimised and mitigated for. Whilst the CEMP is comprehensive and mainly includes the required detail, it is advised that it is updated to stipulate that

- the badger pre-works survey encompasses habitat at least 30m from the application site.
- site clearance works should be undertaken in a directional manner (i.e. towards the woodland) to allow any wildlife to disperse
- details of any construction lighting to be provided to prevent potential impacts protected species and on the woodland edge.

The following condition can be used to secure this additional detail.

Notwithstanding the submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), no site clearance, excavation or construction works shall commence until an ecological CEMP has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall include:

- a) risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities
- b) identification of 'biodiversity protection zones'
- c) measures and sensitive working practices to avoid or reduce impacts during construction
- d) location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity
- e) times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works
- f) responsible persons and lines of communication
- g) roles and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk or works (EcOW) where one is required
- h) use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs

and shall include details of measures to:

- i) Avoid impact on nesting birds
- ii) Avoid negative impact on sensitive ecological features during construction, including potential lighting impacts (such as retained woodland and trees,) and protect all retained features of biodiversity interest including the woodland edge via implementation of appropriate buffer zones.
- iii) Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) to be adopted during works to minimise potential impacts to wildlife, including amphibians, badger and hedgehog

- iv) Details of pre-works surveys (e.g. for badger to identify any newly created setts no more than three months in advance of works commencing)

If any lighting is proposed then the following condition can be used: No external illumination shall be provided with the site until a lighting plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include full details of the location, size, design of luminaires and fittings, the type and power output of light sources with illumination levels, the location and design of any associated equipment and the intended hours during which the lighting will be used. Prior to occupation, a 'lighting design strategy for biodiversity' for areas to be lit shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and other wildlife (including badger) and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
- b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Ecological conditions can change over time. If the development hereby approved does not commence (or, having commenced, is suspended for more than 12 months) within 2 years from the submitted ecological surveys and BNG Assessment (i.e. by July 2025), the approved ecological measures secured through the above conditions shall be reviewed and, where necessary, amended and updated. The review shall be informed by further ecological surveys and BNG Assessment commissioned to:

- i) establish if there have been any changes in the ecological baseline; and
- ii) identify any likely new ecological impacts that might arise from any changes.

Where the survey results indicate that changes have occurred that will result in ecological impacts not previously addressed in the approved scheme, the original approved ecological measures and BNG Assessment will be revised and new or amended measures, and a timetable for their implementation, will be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of development. Works will then be carried out in accordance with the proposed new approved ecological measures and timetable.

Arboricultural Officer

The proposed development is not within or affected by a Conservation Area.

There is no legally protected tree within this site or affected by this development.

Recommendations:

The proposed development would have only a minimal potentially negative impact on low amenity trees located in the proposed construction work area site, which has

a low value amenity and biodiversity, so the proposed works will have a minimal negative impact on the low value trees on site. The proposed works potentially require loss of no trees, but there is potential for impact from encroachment/potential damage from machinery working in close proximity of the trees on or adjacent the site. The site has a poor/low value level of vegetation and trees and as such, there cannot be any loss of trees on site as this will have a negative impact on amenity and biodiversity, without the submission of an improved landscaping design to show the replacement and enhancement of the tree cover on site which has been included in the proposed site layout plan.

The only concerns for this site is the potential accidental tree damage during deliveries, storage and construction works to the trees in and around the site, therefore the construction traffic and material storage needs to be directed away from or not located within proximity to the retained trees in the area which will have a negative impact on the trees systems, therefore an advisory on exclusion zone and protective fencing will be required for the protection of the trees to the local area including those in neighbouring properties of the site as the trees are an integral part of the tree scape for the residential estate and therefore cannot be lost.

The trees offer a low level of biodiversity/habitat benefit and as such as many as possible need retaining as the loss would be unacceptable without an increased landscaping design submission or conditioned.

In principle the scheme will not have a negative impact on the trees in the area, but has the potential of accidental damage, but due to the poor value of the existing tree stock it only requires the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme to show the enhancement of the site to comply with policy as well as the submission of an advisory and protective fencing restricting all access to the protected trees in the working area/storage areas of the site.

Conditions are required if the scheme is approved.

Conservation Issues

The site proposed for the storage facility is located approximately 0.4km north-east of Goyt Hall Farm on land within the wider agricultural curtilage of the farm. The farm includes two Grade II listed buildings of special architectural and historic interest and details of the designated heritage assets are available from these links :

<http://interactive.stockport.gov.uk/shed/Search/ViewDetails/291%20StatutoryListed>

<http://interactive.stockport.gov.uk/shed/Search/ViewDetails/290%20StatutoryListed>

The location of the proposed storage facility, taking into account its distance from the listed buildings and the nature of the topography of the Goyt valley, means that the proposal would have no detrimental impact upon the setting or significance of the designated heritage assets.

LLFA

Having reviewed the below documentation for this application.

- *DC_090340-FLOOD_RISK_ASSESSMENT-2198158*

The LLFA recommends that the application is acceptable in principle subject to a detailed design.

The development shall be completed and maintained in full accordance with the approved details.

Public Rights of Way

I have no objections to this proposal, but would comment:

1. use of Clapgate is likely to be higher during school holiday times than during the survey period, and this should be recognised.
2. the proposed PRoW user "holding area" needs to be surfaced appropriately - the area is flat and can be very wet
3. the Traffic Management plan pays scant attention to footpath 60 BR (to the east of the site). This exits directly onto Clapgate and visibility may be obscured. Speed limits to be strictly enforced.
4. it would be helpful if the proposed SUDs area was configured in such a way as to assist the drainage of footpath 60 BR, which suffers in the rain.
5. it would be nice if we could get a contribution toward resurfacing footpath 60 BR where it adjoins the site.

GMAAS

GMAAS has been approached for comment on this scheme by Jamie Henderson of Pegasus Group following a geophysical survey that was undertaken at this site earlier this year (SUMO GeoSurveys, Report 14098, 16 November 2023).

The survey has identified a number of features of indeterminate origin across the site that may be of archaeological interest. The nature of these features is unknown, but without archaeological evaluation and recording they would be lost to the cut and fill groundworks of this development.

The Historic Environment Record for this area indicates an enhanced potential for prehistoric archaeology due to the topographical and geological position of a free-draining gravel terrace on the eastern edge of the River Goyt.

GMAAS acknowledges that any remains within the application site will be in the order of at least local, and at best, regional significance, and that they could be appropriately investigated by a scheme of archaeological field evaluation in advance of the onset of development groundworks.

If the evaluation identifies areas of significance that cannot be appropriately investigated by the evaluation, then a further phase of targeted and more detailed excavation may be required.

A program of archaeological work should be secured through a condition of planning consent.

The work should be undertaken by a suitably experienced and qualified archaeological contractor, funded by the applicant, and in accordance with guidance provided by GMAAS who would also monitor the implementation of the works on behalf of Stockport MBC.

Electricity North West

After considering the plans submitted with application DC/090340, we find there to be no assets belonging to ENWL that are adjacent to or affected within the proposed boundary and therefore we have no comments to make on the proposed development.

Natural England

NO OBJECTION - Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.

Coal Authority

The application site falls within the defined Development High Risk Area.

The Coal Authority considers that the content and conclusions of the Coal Mining Risk Assessment are sufficient for the purposes of the planning system in demonstrating that the application site is safe and stable for the proposed development. The Coal Authority therefore has no objection to the proposed development.

United Utilities

Following our review of the submitted Drainage Strategy, we can confirm the proposals are acceptable in principle to United Utilities and therefore should planning permission be granted we request a condition is attached to any subsequent Decision Notice.

HSE

Do not advise against

ANALYSIS

Policy Principle

The site is allocated within the Green Belt, as defined on the UDP Proposals Map. As such, assessment of the proposal against the provisions of the NPPF and saved UDP policy GBA1.2 is required. Additionally, the site lies within the Goyt Valley Landscape Character Area and is within the 'Urban Fringe Valleys' Landscape Character Type.

The proposal represents a departure to local and national Green Belt policy that precludes the construction of such buildings and structures as that proposed.

Policy GBA1.2 of the Saved Unitary Development Plan includes a presumption against the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt unless it is for specific listed purposes, none of which apply to the proposal.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that new buildings are inappropriate development in the Green Belt and follows this with a list of exceptions. Again it is considered that none of the exceptions apply in this case, and the other forms of development under Paragraph 155 are also not relevant as the proposal constitutes more than an engineering operation and includes new buildings and so is not just a material change of use of land.

The proposal is therefore regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and a case for very special circumstances is required under Paragraph 152.

Paragraph 153 gives substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt and notes that a case for very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Paragraph 156 details that renewable energy projects are also likely to be inappropriate development and that their wider environmental benefits from renewable energy sources may form part of the VSC case.

The applicant has provided a number of considerations, which are as follows:

- The development will respond to national energy needs and is required to store electricity from the national grid when supply at generating stations exceeds demand and to return it when supply falls below demand. The 40 MW battery energy storage system proposal will assist in meeting the 2050 national target of moving energy supply to net zero, and the Stockport MBC target of 2038 which itself had declared a climate emergency.
- The alternative site assessment has outlined that opportunities for points of connection to the National Grid are limited and that the only three substations in the Borough with sufficient import and export capacity are at Bredbury, Hazel Grove and Adswold. Potential sites need to be at least 1.3 ha. and be within 1.2 km of the substation to be commercially viable and therefore a thorough search of potential sites in search areas around the substations has been carried out, looking at brownfield land and then greenfield land both outside and within the Green Belt. This has concluded that no alternative sites outside the Green Belt exist that meet the criteria and also that no other Green Belt sites exist that are unconstrained by other policy designations. As such the proposed site within the search area of Bredbury substation is found to be the most suitable site.
- The sustainability benefits include the £18 million investment, £128,000 annual business rates, 20 peak construction jobs, energy security, greater grid flexibility and the biodiversity net gain from the introduction of diverse grassland and wildflower meadows.
- The development is temporary and reversible, with the intention of being decommissioned and removed from the site after 40 years with a plan for restoration of the application site.

It is considered that the applicant has fulfilled the criteria advocated by case law, in that the essential objective is to provide a battery storage facility to meet an identified need, and by necessity this must be within a required distance threshold, site size and fulfilling a required energy output in order to be viable. It has been satisfactorily proved in supporting statements that, following detailed consideration of non-Green Belt alternatives in the search areas, that no such alternatives exist and that the application site is the least constrained and most suitable site for the proposal in the Green Belt.

As such, it has been demonstrated the proposed site does fulfil the essential objective and therefore that the in-principle harm by reason of inappropriateness and limited additional harm to openness are clearly outweighed by the economic, social and environmental benefits, and are mitigated by proposed screening and retained land for biodiversity and public access, and minimised with the temporary permission. Officers are satisfied that no alternative scheme of less harm could have secured the objective.

In considering the current proposal, Officers believe that on balance, based on the detailed case put forward in support of the application and in the absence of any

objections from Planning Policy Officers, very special circumstances are considered to exist.

In order to ensure that the case for very special circumstances is maintained, should planning permission be granted this should be subject to appropriate conditions. These should include, but not be limited to conditions ensuring any permission be for a time limited period of 40 years (as applied for) and requiring an agreed site restoration scheme to be implemented once any such consent has lapsed.

On balance after having regard to all of the above, including the case put forward in support of the proposal, it is considered that very special circumstances are present in this particular case which are sufficient to outweigh the harm the proposal would cause to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness, in accordance with paragraphs 143 and 144 of the NPPF.

Visual Amenity and Impact on Landscape Character Area

The site lies within the Goyt Valley Landscape Character Area and is within the 'Urban Fringe Valleys' Landscape Character Type. Within the guidance and opportunities for future development listed under this Landscape Character Area profile, the following are of relevance:

- Avoiding siting development in areas where it will be visually prominent including areas on steep slopes and open areas of the valley floor
- Opportunities to plant new hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost or fragmented should be encouraged.
- Ensure that the sparsely settled character of the valley (which have a sense of relative tranquillity) is retained and that any new development is not a dominant feature within the landscape. The sense of separation that the valley provides between distinct settlements should not be compromised.
- Any development should suitably blend in with the existing landscape character either through the use of sympathetic materials or by sensitive planting and screening (or both).

In this context, officers agree with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment findings that the proposal will not have a significant visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed development will be located towards the top of the hill and would also include acoustic fencing with a height of 4.0 metres. However, the acoustic fencing, would be limited to South and eastern elements adjacent to the battery units and also adjacent to the area containing the transformer, compound building and other equipment. This element would be set well within the site boundary and a significant area of landscaping would be included to the South East of the main compound area, within the site boundary. As a result, the proposed development would be screened from the North by the existing woodland and to the South and West by the proposed planting which would mitigate the visual impact of the proposal. The proposed landscaping would, over time, further screen the development. Additionally, as the development is to be temporary, this thereby reduces the duration of harm.

On this basis, it is considered that the proposed development would result in some visual impact, but this would be mitigated by landscaping and the temporary nature of the development. It is considered that this limited harm would be outweighed by the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposal. Therefore, on balance, the impact of the proposed development on the Goyt Valley Landscape

Character Area within which the site is located or the visual amenity of the area is outweighed by the benefits and therefore is in accordance with saved UDP policies LCR1.1 and LCR1.1A and Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-1.

Impact on Residential Amenity

The detailed comments received to the application from the Council Environment Team, assessing the proposal on the grounds of noise, are contained within the Consultee Responses section above.

An updated Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted, taking into account the amended proposal and potential noise impacts at night time as well as in the day time. Acoustic screening would be provided to the East and South of the operational elements of the development, which would provide screening to the nearest residential properties in order to minimise the impact of any noise generated by the development. The Noise Impact Assessment has taken this acoustic screening into account. The Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the Noise Impact Assessment and has accepted the findings of this assessment.

During the daytime (07.00 – 19.00) there are no potential noise issues either outside or inside any of the nearest noise sensitive receptors (residential properties). During the evening (19.00 – 23.00), for the nearest properties at Kiln Croft a noise rating over 2dB above background levels and on Catherine Road a noise rating of 3dB above background levels could be experienced for occupiers when they are outside of their properties, but not inside. The minimum change in noise level which is perceptible to humans is generally 2dB. Therefore, no increase in noise levels is likely to be experienced by residents of Kiln Close and for residents of Catherine Road is unlikely to be harmful, should it be detected at all. During the night time (23.00 – 07.00) when inside of properties, and with all windows closed, there would be no adverse impact in terms of noise on any of the nearest receptors. During the night time and with an open window, depending on the exact reduction in noise the specific window gives, noise levels could either be below the recommended level of 30dB for bedrooms, and at worst 1dB to 2dB higher than the recommended level. Residents of properties are likely to only have windows open at night during the warmer summer months, so for much of the year, no harm at all would be experienced. During the summer months, noise levels could be below the recommended level, or at worst only 1dB or 2dB higher. It should be noted that the Noise Assessments are based on the worst case possible, with the development working at full capacity, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The battery energy storage system is likely to operate in full operational mode when it discharges energy (a maximum of 2 hours per cycle, 2 cycles per day) during peak load hours when demand for electricity is higher. Peak load discharge is unlikely to be during night time hours. Furthermore, the noise assessment is based on the cooling fans operating at full speed. The fans would only be required to operate at full speed when ambient temperatures are above 50°C. Night time temperatures in the UK are generally significantly below 30°C, including summer months, and it is stated within the BESS technical note submitted to support the application, that maximum operating speeds would remain below 70% of the maximum during the night time hours. As such, based upon the likely operational speeds and times, noise generation would be lower than predicted within the Noise Impact Assessment. In view of the above, any noise impact is likely to be much less than that stated within the Noise Impact Assessment and therefore is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on noise sensitive receptors. As such, it cannot be demonstrated that there would be an unacceptable increase in noise which would be harmful to occupiers of nearby

residential properties and therefore a refusal of the development on the grounds of noise impact would be unsustainable.

The proposed development would be sited over 70 metres from the nearest residential property and would therefore not result in any undue loss of outlook or overbearing impact.

Should permission be granted, a condition would be imposed on the decision notice requiring details of all lighting to be submitted, to ensure that any lighting would not unduly impact on wildlife and protected species in the area. This would also ensure that any impacts in terms of light pollution on residential amenity are minimised.

On balance, having regard to all of the above, and having regard to the absence of any objections from the environmental health officer and subject to conditional control, it is considered that the proposed development could be accommodated on site without causing an unacceptable level of harm to the amenity of residential properties by reason of noise and disturbance. As such, the proposal is considered to comply with Coe Strategy DPD policies CS8, SIE-1 and SIE-3 and the advice contained within the NPPF.

Highways Considerations

The comments of the Highway Engineer are provided in full above. The proposed access arrangements, parking and traffic generation have been assessed by officers.

Access is taken from Clapgate which is a hard surfaced farm track. This is currently a public footpath but is used by cyclists and horse riders and is due to be upgraded to a bridleway. It is also designated as a bridleway. During construction the proposal will generate significantly more vehicle movements than the current situation including HGV's and vans. Mitigation measures are proposed to minimise the impact of this. These are considered sufficient and will be secured by condition. Once the development is in use, traffic generated will not be significant. As such, the proposal is considered to comply with relevant transport and highways policies in this regard.

With regard to access, vehicle tracking has been undertaken, including swept path analysis for large rigid HGV's, including fire appliances that are used locally by the fire service. A slight amendment to the loop road within the site has been undertaken to include an area surfaced in eco grid (so as not to adversely impact on drainage) and as a result it has been demonstrated that the site access and access roads will be suitable for use by fire appliances, which the safety management plan outlines is required. In addition to the main site access, a construction access will be constructed further to the East on Clapgate which benefits from an appropriate level of visibility. Once construction is complete, this access will need to be removed and the land restored. This can be secured by an appropriately worded condition.

Two parking spaces are proposed to meet demand during the operational phase of the development, which is considered acceptable. During the construction phase, additional parking would be provided to ensure that contractors, visitors or delivery vehicles will not be permitted to park off site. This will minimise the potential impact on the wider Clapgate area.

In view of the above, it is considered that the proposed development should not have a material impact on the local highway network once constructed and the access and

parking arrangements are acceptable. The mitigation measures outlined are considered acceptable to mitigate construction activity and the safety of users of the access track will not be materially compromised. In the absence of any objections from the highway engineer and subject to appropriately worded conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable from an access, traffic generation and parking perspective, in accordance with Core Strategy DPD policies SIE-1, CS9, T-1, T-2 and T-3.

Impact on Ecology

The Nature Development Officer has stated that the proposed is of low risk to protected species. A Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to support the application and details how retained habitats will be protected and any potential impacts on habitats and protected species will be avoided, minimised and mitigated for. The CEMP contains the majority of the required details, which is considered acceptable. However, further details are required in relation to a badger pre-works survey, directional site clearance and details of construction lighting. These matters can be secured by condition.

A proposed landscaping scheme has been submitted in support of the proposal. The landscaping would be sited outside of the main compound containing the battery units, due to fire safety regulations, but would be sited within the wider site area.

Further information submitted to support the proposal identifies Biodiversity Net Gains to be delivered on site. This has been assessed by the Nature Development Officer and is considered to be within the acceptable range required.

In view of the above, in the absence of objections from the Nature Development Officer and subject to conditional control and mitigation measures, it is considered that the proposal would not result in harm to protected species, biodiversity or the ecological interest of the site. As such, the proposal complies with Core Strategy DPD policies CS8 and SIE-3.

Impact on Trees

It is noted that there would not be any loss of trees on the site as confirmed by the Arboricultural Officer. The scheme of landscaping submitted in support of the proposal includes additional tree planting. The existing area of woodland to the North of the application site is sited far enough away from the proposal to not result in any damage to trees and so it is considered that recommended conditions relating to tree protection measures are not required.

In the absence of any fundamental objections from the Arboricultural Officer and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to its impact on trees, in accordance with Core Strategy DPD policies SIE-1 and SIE-3.

Heritage

The site proposed for the storage facility is located approximately 0.4km north-east of Goyt Hall Farm on land within the wider agricultural curtilage of the farm. The farm includes two Grade II listed buildings of special architectural and historic interest.

The location of the proposed storage facility, taking into account its distance from the listed buildings and the nature of the topography of the Goyt valley, means that the

proposal would have no detrimental impact upon the setting or significance of the designated heritage assets.

There are a number of features of indeterminate origin across the site that may be of archaeological interest. The Historic Environment Record for this area indicates an enhanced potential for prehistoric archaeology. GMMAS has stated that this could be appropriately investigated by a scheme of archaeological field evaluation in advance of the onset of development groundworks. A programme of archaeological work can be secured through an appropriately worded condition.

Overall, in the absence of any objections from heritage consultees and subject to appropriate conditional control, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-3.

Agricultural Land

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.

It should also be noted that in granting planning permission for the dog exercise field which forms part of the application site, the loss of grade 3a agricultural land was accepted and justified on the increasing need for diversification in the agricultural industry. The acceptance of this loss in the determination of that application also weighs in favour of that arising from this current application.

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.

Other Matters

A fire safety strategy has been submitted. This outlines the fire safety measures which are to be included within the proposed development. It is stated that the level of risk of fire is low. Additionally, as part of the development of the site, emergency response plans will be developed in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue service.

No objections are raised to the application from the Council's Environment Team, therefore the proposal is not considered to be at risk from land contamination, in accordance with Core Strategy DPD policy SIE-3.

In terms of the Council's carbon reduction targets, the Council's Planning Policy (Energy & Sustainability Officer) has assessed the application and for the reasons previously set out in the consultee section is fully supportive of the proposal in terms of the principles of Core Strategy DPD policy SD-3.

Matters relating to reinstating the land once the temporary permission has expired can be secured by a suitably worded condition. The cost relating to this, and any further costs issues relating to technology becoming obsolete over time are not a material planning consideration and would be the responsibility of the developer.

A drainage strategy has been submitted to support the proposal, which has been assessed by the LLFA and has been considered acceptable. A condition will be

imposed to ensure that surface water drainage is provided in accordance with the submitted and approved scheme.

SUMMARY

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF establishes three dimensions to sustainable development – economic, social and environmental and indicates that these should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

The scheme before members has been reduced in scale following advances in technology which means that fewer battery units can provide the same level of energy storage.

It is considered that the proposed development would not result in unacceptable to harm to heritage assets.

In the absence of objections from relevant consultees and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity; highway safety; impact on trees, impact on Public Rights of Way, impact on protected species and ecology.

The site is located within the Green Belt and it is acknowledged that the proposed renewable energy project comprises inappropriate development, as defined by Paragraph 156 of the NPPF and would be contrary to saved UDP policy GBA1.2. However, it is considered that 'Very Special Circumstances' exist in the form of the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources, reduction on the reliance on fossil fuels to generate domestic energy and associated CO2 reductions and the positive contribution the proposal would make to help deliver the national and local objectives and policies in respect of climate change. As such, the requirements of Paragraphs 152 and 156 of the NPPF are considered to be met and the proposal is considered to be justified within the Green Belt in this particular case as a departure from the Development Plan and the NPPF on the grounds of 'Very Special Circumstances'.

In view of the above, the proposal is considered to comply with relevant saved UDP and Core Strategy DPD policies. In considering the planning merits of the proposal against the requirements of the NPPF, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development. On this basis, notwithstanding the objections raised to the proposal, in accordance with the requirements of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant.

WERNETH AREA COMMITTEE (29th JULY 2024)

The webcast of the meeting can be viewed using the following link –

http://stockport.public-tv.site/mg_bounce.php?mg_a_id=86373&mg_m_id=29529&language=en_GB

The Planning Officer introduced the application and highlighted the pertinent issues of the proposal.

Members sought clarification on a number of matters, including clarifying amendments from the originally submitted scheme and how the current proposal differs, and whether other similar applications have had conditions imposed regarding the temporary period of time. The Planning Officer provided clarification on the matters raised by Members.

A member of the public spoke against the proposal and the agent spoke in support of the application.

Members debated the proposal. Clarification was sought with regard to time periods of connection to the grid and where this connection would connect to the grid. The agent confirmed that adequate timescales are in place until 2025. It was confirmed that Bredbury Power Station is the point of connection to the proposed development. The method of connection to the power station is not outlined as it does not form part of the current proposal. The development would be connected via a cable route which would be carried out by statutory undertakers who have their own powers to deal with the connection which would fall under permitted development. Members noted the nature of the rural road which serves the site and to ensure that an appropriate management plan would be in place. Officer confirmed that a Construction Traffic Management Plan which includes deliveries avoiding school pick up and drop off times, has been submitted and assessed and would be secured by condition. Issues with regard to fire risk were raised. It was explained that the proposal is of low risk to fires but explained how such a fire will be dealt with should it occur.

Following the debate, Members resolved to refer the application to the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee with a recommendation to grant, with recommendations for the applicant to consult with GMSRF and for the Traffic Management Plan to be robust and to be secured by condition and for landscaping plan to be imposed.