

Application No: 24/5075/FUL
Application Type: Full Planning
Location: Land West of Woodford Road, Poynton, Cheshire,
Proposal: Development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure, access, drainage and landscaping
Applicant: c/o agent, Queequeg Renewables Ltd

Expiry Date: 30-May 2025

Summary

The proposal seeks permission for a Battery Energy Storage System in the Green Belt, close to the boundary with Stockport. The site is considered to be grey belt, and it complies with the paragraph 155 exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The proposed BESS will result in some moderate/minor adverse visual impact which is likely to be experienced by only a small number of receptors at some distance from the application site, but with open views across the proposed development. The proposed mitigation planting would further reduce the adverse visual effect of the built elements of the proposal to a level of minor adverse. This visual impact, as with all the impacts associated with the proposed development, would be temporary but still relatively long-term in nature, given the 40-year period permission is sought for.

There would also be a loss of around 3.4ha of the best and most versatile BMV as a result of the proposed development for a 40-year period, and there is no mitigation for the loss of agricultural land.

Balanced against this harm, the applicant has identified a range of economic benefits arising from the construction and operation of the BESS. The proposal will also secure significant biodiversity improvements and landscaping that are likely to endure long after the development has left the site. But of most significance are the need for the proposal, the role of storage in reducing the costs of the electricity system and increase reliability by storing surplus electricity in times of low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher, and the contribution that electricity storage makes to achieving the goal of net zero, as identified the National Policy Statement EN-1. This is considered to attract substantial weight in favour of the proposal.

There is considered to be neutral or acceptable impacts upon matters relating to contaminated land, Green Belt, trees and hedgerows, ecology, heritage, noise, air quality, living conditions, flood risk and drainage, and highways subject to relevant conditions.

Overall, the identified benefits of the proposed development are considered to clearly outweigh the identified harm. The proposal is therefore considered to be sustainable development, and a recommendation of approval is made.

Summary recommendation

Approve subject to conditions

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

- 1.1. The application site exceeds 4ha, and as such is a Large-Scale Major Development, which requires a decision to be made by the Strategic Planning Board, in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. The application site is approximately 5ha and comprises an open agricultural field and access track within open countryside and the Green Belt. Hedgerows and tree coppices largely form the northern and southern boundaries of the Site. Further agricultural fields are located to the east. A woodland falls partly within the Site boundary and is located adjacent to the western boundary which incorporates Priority Habitat, Ancient Woodland and a Local Wildlife Site/Site of Biological Importance. A watercourse runs through this woodland in a north/south direction, in addition to the presence of a number of ponds in the woodland. The Site is within the Council's Ecological Network Restoration Areas.
- 2.2. The Site is located close to the administrative boundary of Stockport Council. It lies approximately 1.5km north-west of Poynton, approximately 1.6km east of Bramhall, and approximately 1.6km south-west of Hazel Grove. The access track that forms part of the application site leads from Woodford Road to the main area of the site, which is set back approximately 400m from Woodford Road.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

- 3.1. This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure, access, drainage and landscaping. The BESS development will have a capacity of 99.9MW allowing for the influx, storage and outflux of energy generated by renewable energy sources such as solar and wind farms to facilitate a more consistent supply of renewable energy. The compound enclosing the battery storage equipment will measure 62m x 143m, and the access track will stretch approximately 420m back from Woodford Road.
- 3.2. The proposal specifically comprises the following components:
- 40no. containerised battery energy storage units sited in pairs (referred to as battery racks on Dwg. No. 00A/00B) measuring approx. 6.1m in length x 2.4m in width x 4.1m in height to be placed on hardstanding;
 - 20no. medium voltage battery cabins measuring 6.1m in length x 2.4m in width and 3.1m in height;
 - 1no. welfare container measuring 12.2m in length x 2.5m in width and 2.8m in height;
 - 1no. 33kV/DNO compound building measuring 25m in length, 6m in width and 6m in height;
 - District Network Operator (DNO) compound/substation to include multiple components and cabling, including a transformer measuring 6.5m in height, poles, isolators, breakers and CT VT measuring 5.9m in height, a cable sealend measuring 4m in height and grounding transformer measuring 3m in height;
 - An external access track surfaced with Eco Grid E50 with a type 1 hardcore;
 - 2no. car parking spaces, an internal access track and gravel surfacing within the BESS compound;
 - Security (palisade) fencing and 2no. sliding gates measuring 2.5m in height;
 - Relevant communications and monitoring equipment including CCTV measuring a maximum height of 4.4m; and
 - 1no. attenuation basin, 1no. gravel trench and 2no. below ground attenuation crates.

3.3 The Planning, Design and access Statement states that the proposed development will involve the temporary change of use of the land over a 40-year period.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1.24/0315S - EIA screening opinion for proposed development of a circa 100MW Battery Energy Storage System – EIA not required 26.03.2024

5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

5.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published by the Government in March 2012 and has since been through several revisions. It sets out the planning policies for England and how these should be applied in the determination of planning applications and the preparation of development plans. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration which should be taken into account for the purposes of decision making.

5.2. Other Relevant National Policy, Guidance or Legislation includes:

- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1).

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2010 – 2030) was adopted in July 2017. The Site Allocations and Development Policies Documents was adopted in December 2022. The policies of the Development Plan relevant to this application are set out below, including relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies where applicable to the application site.

6.2. Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

MP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
PG1 Overall Development Strategy
PG2 Settlement Boundaries
PG3 Green Belt
PG6 Open Countryside
PG7 Spatial distribution of development
SD1 Sustainable development in Cheshire East
SD2 Sustainable development principles
IN1 Infrastructure
SE1 Design
SE2 Efficient Use of Land
SE3 Biodiversity and geodiversity
SE4 The Landscape
SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
SE8 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
SE9 Energy Efficient Development
SE12 Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability
SE13 Flood risk and Water Management
CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport

6.3 Site Allocations & Development Policies Document (SADPD)

GEN1 Design Principles
GEN5 Aerodrome Safeguarding

ENV1 Ecological network
ENV2 Ecological Implementation
ENV3 Landscape Character
ENV5 Landscaping
ENV6 Trees, hedgerows and woodland implementation
ENV7 Climate change
ENV11 Proposals for battery energy storage systems
ENV12 Air Quality
ENV14 Light pollution
ENV16 Surface water management and flood risk
HER8 Archaeology
RUR5 Best and most versatile agricultural land
HOU12 Amenity
INF3 Highway safety and access
INF9 Utilities
REC3 Open space implementation

6.4 Neighbourhood Plan

Policies of the Poynton Neighbourhood Plan relevant to the consideration of this application are:

EGB1: Surface Water Management
EGB3: Natural and Historic Environment
EGB7: Landscape Enhancement
EGB8: Protection of Rural Landscape Features
EGB9: Nature Conservation
EGB10: Wildlife Corridor

7. **RELEVANT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS OR GUIDANCE**

7.1. Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance do not form part of the Development Plan but may be a material consideration in decision making. The following documents are considered relevant to this application:

SuDS SPD
Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain SPD
Environmental Protection SPD

8. **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

Environmental Protection – No objection subject to conditions relating to contaminated land

Head of Strategic Transport – No objection subject to condition relating to the site access

LLFA – No objections subject to condition relating to implementation of drainage

Cheshire Archaeology – No objection

Cheshire Fire & Rescue – Comments awaited

Stockport MBC – No objection in principle

Poynton Town Council – No objection provided that:

- The Planning Officer agrees the scheme is compatible with the Green Belt; and
- The Environmental Health Officer is satisfied regarding public safety; and
- The Highways Officer reviews the proposed access onto Woodford Road

- Request that the developer is asked to make a s106 contribution to the Lower Park Crescent Play Area.

Cllr Beanland - Supports this application if some provision could be made to enhance the local community's leisure facilities specifically in the Lower Park Crescent.

9. REPRESENTATIONS

9.1. One letter of representation has been received from the Cheshire Wildlife Trust registering a holding objection on the following grounds:

- List of designated sites with 2km provided by the applicant does not include any Local Wildlife Sites in Cheshire – The submission is therefore not thorough or complete
- More information needed to ensure ancient woodland will not be impacted hydrologically or through air pollution.
- 50m buffer to ancient woodland is recommended

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of the development in the Green Belt

10.1. The application site lies within the Green Belt. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, and national and local policies are intended to reflect this. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The two essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence (paragraph 142 NPPF).

10.2. Green Belts serve the following five purposes (paragraph 143 NPPF):

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

10.3. To achieve this, there are restrictions on the types of development which may be carried out. These are listed as exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt within paragraphs 154 and 155 of the Framework and within CELPS policy PG 3. The exceptions listed in policy PG3 are not entirely consistent with those listed in paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF, and therefore this reduces the weight that can be afforded to this CELPS policy.

10.4. None of the exceptions within paragraph 154 (or CELPS policy PG3) apply to the proposed development. Turning to paragraph 155, this states that:

“The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.”*

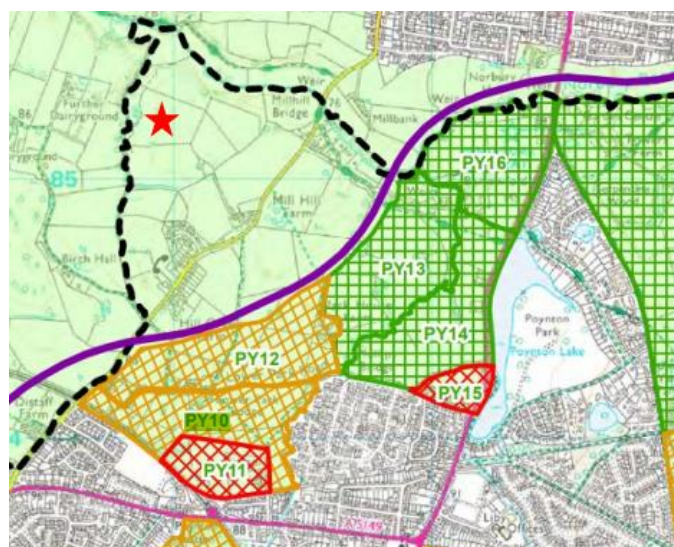
10.5. The glossary to the NPPF defines grey belt as: *“land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land*

where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”

Therefore, in order to determine whether the development qualifies as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt under paragraph 155, it is first necessary to consider whether the land is grey belt.

Defining Grey Belt – Purposes a, b and d

- 10.6. As an open and undeveloped agricultural field the application site is not considered to be previously developed land. Even if not defined as previously developed land, the site may still be considered to be grey belt if it does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF (as outlined in 10.2 above). The latest Green Belt review in Cheshire East was carried out in 2015, as evidence for the CELPS, and its findings are set out within the Council's Green Belt Assessment Update 2015 Final Consolidated Report. It should be noted that the Assessment Update was prepared almost 10 years prior to the most recent national policy and national guidance updates, with grey belt now an additional matter in the consideration of Green Belt policy. This document is therefore not up to date with recent policy and guidance, which reduces the weight to be afforded to it. Nonetheless, it is a useful starting point for considering whether the land is grey belt. The application site is located within General Area P3 within the Green Belt Review. Extracts from the Green Belt Review are shown below with the application indicated by the red star:



- 10.7. Purpose (a) relates to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. The application site has the large built-up areas of Bramhall to the west, Hazel Grove to the north and Poynton to the south. The Green Belt Review (2015) notes that parcel P3 makes a

significant contribution to purpose (a) in that it is *“well connected to Poynton to the south, where small-scale development could take place whilst being contained by existing roads. The area could contribute to the restriction of ribbon development.”* However, P3 is a large area and covers land parcels to the north and south of the A555.(shown by the purple line above).

10.8. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out considerations for informing judgements on the contributions areas make to Green Belt purposes a, b and d. For purpose (a) the PPG clarifies that villages should not be considered large built-up areas. The PPG advises that for an area to make a strong contribution to purpose (a) it is likely to be free of existing development and lack physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to be adjacent or near to large built-up areas, and if developed it would result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended finger of development into the Green Belt).

10.9. The application site is quite detached from the main built-up area of Poynton to the south and as such would not add to concerns of the urban sprawl of Poynton. Its relationship with Hazel Grove to the north, although closer, is similarly detached and as such raises no sprawl concerns. However, to the east, development does extend out from Bramhall towards the application site, and viewed aerially, the application proposals would further extend this relatively linear pattern of development westwards. That being said the western boundary of the application site is bordered by Mill Hill Farm Wood, a Local Wildlife Site, which has a depth of approximately 100m at its widest point, which is a feature that would arguably restrict and contain development. Although given that there is already development on the other (east) side of the woodland its value as a containment feature would be compromised. The mature trees and hedgerows long the north and south boundaries are also features that would help to contain the development.

10.10. The PPG advises that an area that contributes moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built-up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land's contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to): having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development; being partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development; contain existing development; or being subject to other urbanising influences. In this case, given the presence of these relatively strong boundary features, using the criteria within the PPG, on balance the site is considered to make a moderate contribution to purpose (a), and not a strong contribution

10.11. Purpose (b) relates to preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another. The PPG advises that areas that contribute strongly to purpose (b) are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: forming a substantial part of a gap between towns and the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns. In this case, whilst the site is free of existing development, it does not form a substantial part of the gap between towns, and it will not result in the loss of visual separation of towns. As such the site does not make a strong contribution to purpose (b).

10.12. Purpose (d) relates to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. The Council's 2015 Green Belt Review states that parcel P3 makes no contribution as the *“general area is not located near any historic towns as Poynton is not considered a historic town for the purpose of the Green Belt Assessment.”* This is still considered to be the case, and as such the site does not make a strong contribution to purpose (d).

Defining Grey Belt – Footnote 7

10.13. Grey belt excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. The assets referred to in footnote 7 include the following:

- Habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast;
- Irreplaceable habitats;
- Designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75);
- Areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

10.14. Only two of these assets or areas identified in footnote 7 are relevant to the application site. The first is “irreplaceable habitats” due to the presence of an ancient woodland to the west of the site which is partly within the site boundary. Further details on the impact of the development upon the woodland are provided below in the ecology section of this report. In summary, the impact on the woodland is acceptable and in compliance with relevant development plan policies and the NPPF and would not provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting the development.

10.15. The second area that is relevant is “areas at risk of flooding”. Again, further details are provided below in the flood risk section of this report, however, in summary whilst there are some small areas at risk of surface water flooding, there is no development proposed within these areas and the proposal accords with relevant local plan policies and the NPPF. As such flood risk does not provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting the development.

Defining Grey Belt - conclusions

10.16. The application site is not previously developed land, however, on balance the land does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF. There are also no policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 that would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting the development. Consequently, the application site can be defined as grey belt.

10.17. Returning to paragraph 155 of the NPPF, as noted above, this paragraph identifies another exception to inappropriate development where all the stated criteria apply. Taking each one in turn:

Grey belt and fundamentally undermine purposes of Green Belt

10.18. As noted above, the site can be considered as grey belt, and the land does not contribute strongly to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d). The development would therefore not fundamentally undermine purposes (a), (b) and (d). It therefore remains to consider the impacts upon purposes (c) and (e). Purpose (c) relates to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and the introduction of the development proposed to what is currently an open agricultural field will inevitably result in some encroachment and harm to this purpose. The Green Belt Review (2015) identified Parcel P3 making “a contribution” to this purpose. This is the 2nd lowest level of contribution (of four levels), suggesting the contribution the area makes to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment to be relatively limited. Given this, and the relative scale of the proposal in relation to the size of area P3, the development as proposed is not considered to fundamentally undermine purpose (c).

10.19. Turning to purpose (e), assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land, the Green Belt Review (2015) states area P3 makes a

significant contribution to this purpose due to the brownfield capacity of, and proximity to, Poynton, Hazel Grove and Bramhall.

- 10.20. The opportunities to deliver BESS developments to import and export electricity into the National Grid from renewable sources are scarce, due to there being limited locations where there are points of connection (POC) with capacity to connect BESS developments. A viable grid connection with capacity is therefore essential and instrumental in the siting of a BESS development. The POC for the proposed development is Adswood Substation, located on Rostrevor Road in Adswood, approximately 3.5km to the north of the Site. This has the capacity available for the BESS development to connect into.
- 10.21. Whilst there is no specific policy requirement to demonstrate whether alternative sites have been considered, it is considered to be helpful in this case to demonstrate whether the development would fundamentally undermine purpose (e). The applicant has clarified that a search area of 5.8km from the Adswood substation was used to identify a potential site for the BESS. 66 brownfield sites were identified through a search of the brownfield land registers held by the respective local authority. Of the 66 sites, 59 sites were located in the administrative area of Stockport and 7 sites located in the administrative area of Manchester. No brownfield sites within the radius were located within Cheshire East or Tameside.
- 10.22. The developable area of the proposed BESS is 0.88ha and, therefore, sites of this size up to 5.02ha have been assessed to ensure the site could suitably accommodate the proposal and meet the operational and safety requirements for the proposal. Of the 66 brownfield sites, 16 sites were greater than 0.88ha but no bigger than 5.02ha. These 16 sites were then individually analysed to determine whether they were occupied and available. If a site was not occupied and available, then this location could be a potentially suitable site for the proposed BESS development. Of the 16 sites of an appropriate size, 12 of these sites were occupied and unavailable. The remaining 4 were then investigated further but discounted for various reasons including the suitability of the site, subject to pending planning applications, and recent planning approvals for redevelopment.
- 10.23. A desktop search has also been undertaken to identify any industrial sites for sale or rent within the search area. No suitable sites over 0.88ha or below 5.02ha (to reflect the developable area up to the site size) were identified in the search.
- 10.24. No brownfield sites have therefore been identified by the applicant. One other site known to the case officer is the Council owned site at Earl Road in Handforth. This has not been picked up in the site search but is potentially the right size. However, the site is not currently known to be for sale or rent and therefore can be discounted as unavailable. Therefore, in the absence of these sites, the proposed BESS is not developing Green Belt land before urban land, and therefore does not fundamentally undermine purpose (e).

Unmet Need

- 10.25. National Policy Statements (NPSs) are national policy for energy projects that are defined as Nationally Significant Energy Projects (NSIPs) identified by the Planning Act 2008. One of those NPSs (NPS EN-1 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy) states that this NPS may be a material consideration in decision making on applications that fall under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 10.26. NPS EN-1 explains that electricity storage has a key role to play in achieving net zero and providing flexibility to the energy system, so that high volumes of low carbon power, heat and transport can be integrated. Storage is needed to reduce the costs of the electricity system and increase reliability by storing surplus electricity in times of low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher. Storage can provide various services, locally

and at the national level. These include maximising the usable output from intermittent low carbon generation (e.g. solar and wind), reducing the total amount of generation capacity needed on the system; providing a range of balancing services to the National Energy System Operator (NESO) and Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) to help operate the system; and reducing constraints on the networks, helping to defer or avoid the need for costly network upgrades as demand increases.

- 10.27. NPS EN-1 was published in 2023, and it refers to their being *“currently around 4GW of electricity storage operational in GB...and around 1GW is battery storage”*. An industry report was published in November 2024, by NESO, which predicted that an increase in grid connected battery storage from 5GW to over 22GW will be needed by 2030. This report is not policy, but it does indicate a likely direction of travel for battery storage, particularly when read alongside NPS EN-1, which is national policy and does highlight the importance of energy storage in achieving net zero.
- 10.28. Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states that *“the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050”*. Paragraph 168 also states that LPAs *“should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future.”* This suggests that there is an acknowledgement that the need is accepted. Whilst a BESS does not generate renewable or low carbon energy, it does play an important role in achieving net zero, and based on the information that is available, it is considered a demonstrable unmet need does exist.

Sustainable Location

- 10.29. With regard to whether the development would be in a sustainable location, the NPPF requires the decision maker to have particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF. Paragraph 110 states significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. But also notes that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 10.30. Paragraph 115 explains that when assessing applications for development it should be ensured that sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements reflects current national guidance; and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.
- 10.31. The site is not particularly accessible by public transport and the narrow width and unlit nature of Woodford Road is likely to deter walking and cycling. However, the submitted design and access statement explains that operational trip generation is anticipated to be largely maintenance visits which are expected to result in approximately 1 light goods vehicle visit per month.
- 10.32. The construction phase, which will last between 13 and 14 months, will attract more significant trip generation. The submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) states that construction activities and associated traffic and deliveries will fluctuate depending on the engineering construction phase. There is anticipated to be a trip generation peak during the enabling works phase of the project. The peak would last up to two months, depending on the delivery schedules of each contractor, which could result in a maximum of 10 HGV deliveries per day equating to 20 two-way trips. It is envisaged that there will be a maximum peak of 30 construction operatives on-site in a single day, however

the site will more typically require an average of 15 operatives per day. The CEMP suggests that a travel plan will promote car sharing or cycling for any local workers, as well as public transport. However, the location of the site does raise questions about the effectiveness of these measures. No information has been provided on the associated trip generation for construction workers, but it can be assumed to be a maximum of 60 two-way trips if all workers were on site and arrived in their own vehicles.

- 10.33. The trip levels during the operational phase are very, very low. The need to travel to the site is limited due to the nature of the development proposed. And for operation purposes for development proposed the site can be considered to be adequately sustainable. The construction traffic will be considerably greater, but this will only be for a short-term temporary period of up to 14 months. As noted in paragraph 110 opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. CEC highways have confirmed that they have no objections to the proposed development, and no access, traffic generation or highway safety concerns are raised. For these reasons the site can be considered to be in a sustainable location for the purposes of the development proposed.

Golden Rules

- 10.34. The development is not a major development involving the provision of housing, and therefore the 'Golden Rules' as set out in paragraphs 156 and 157 are not applicable.

Green Belt conclusions

- 10.35. The application site is considered to be grey belt, which complies with the requirements of paragraph 155 of the NPPF, and as such the proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

- 10.36. CELPS policy SD 2 sets out the Sustainable Development Principles for Cheshire East. It states that, amongst other matters, development will be expected to contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness in terms of:
- Height, scale, form and grouping
 - Choice of materials
 - External design features
 - Massing of development
 - Relationship to neighbouring properties, street scene and the wider neighbourhood

These principles are also reflected within CELPS policy SE1 and GEN1 of the SADPD which deal with design, and Chapter 12 of the Framework.

- 10.37. Policy SE4 of the CELPS notes that the high quality of the built and natural environment is recognised as a significant characteristic of the borough. All development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes. Policy SD2 also includes requirements to respect and, where possible, enhance the landscape character of the area. Policy ENV5 sets out requirements for landscaping schemes on development proposals. Policies EGB3, EGB7 and EGB8 set out similar landscape protection policies within the PNP. The site is not covered by any designation at a national or local level that recognises a specific landscape importance.
- 10.38. The proposed development comprises very functional and utilitarian looking equipment and structures associated with the proposed use. The tallest structure on the site will be the transformer which will be 6.5m high. They are not in keeping with the undeveloped rural area within which the site is located. However, the application seeks permission for the

BESS for a period of 40 years, which whilst it is a significant period of time, is nonetheless a temporary period, which would reduce the duration of any visual intrusion to some degree compared to a permanent permission. Efforts have been made to minimise the visual impact of the proposal, with the use of green paladin fencing and the colour of the proposed battery units and welfare unit being dark green to help blend with the wooded backdrop, its positioning to retain existing boundary planting, the site being large enough to accommodate significant additional planting, and no lighting is proposed.

10.39. The surfacing of the access road will be Type 1 hardcore, which is not uncommon through agricultural fields, with the entrance to Woodford Road being tarmacked, and the compound will be a mix of tarmac and gravel surfacing.

10.40. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted with the application. This has been reviewed by the Council's Landscape Officer and he broadly agrees with its findings. The LVIA concludes that the development seeks to protect and enhance important landscape features (mature woodland to the west and existing tree planting to the north and southern boundaries as well as tree planting along the proposed access track), and the effect on landscape character would be localised and limited to the site itself.

10.41. In terms of visual effects the site is set some distance from any public highway or public right of way, which helps to minimise its visual impact. However, the LVIA identifies that the development would be seen by public and private receptors close to the site including:

- From PRow 247/FP37/2 to the north east of the site (approximately 200m from the site)
- From PRow 43HGB to the north of the site (approximately 280m from the site)
- From Woodford Road to the east and south east of the site (approximately 400m from the site)
- From the northern edge of the cul-de-sac at Lower Park Crescent to the south of the site (approximately 300m from the site)
- From Mill Hill Farm (landowner) south and south east of the site

The LVIA identifies (and agreed by the Landscape officer) that, other than the landowner's property, the greatest level of effect on views would be no greater than moderate/minor adverse and would be experienced by only a small number of receptors with open views across the proposed development. Proposed mitigation planting would further reduce the adverse visual effect of the built elements of the proposed development over time to no greater than minor adverse. A condition is recommended to require the restoration of the site at the end of the 40-year period.

Trees and hedgerows

10.42. Policy SE5 of the CELPS and ENV6 of the SADPD seek to protect trees, hedgerows or woodlands (including veteran trees or ancient semi-natural woodland), that provide a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity, landscape character or historic character of the surrounding area, unless there are clear overriding reasons for allowing the development and there are no suitable alternatives. Where such impacts are unavoidable, development proposals must satisfactorily demonstrate a net environmental gain by appropriate mitigation, compensation or offsetting.

10.43. The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) which has recorded 18 individual trees, 2 groups of trees¹³ hedgerows and one woodland, located within or immediately adjacent to the application site. The woodland located to the west of

the site is recorded as Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) on the DEFRA woodland inventory.

- 10.44. The Assessment states no trees are proposed for removal to accommodate the layout and the proposed Battery Storage System is to be located 45 metres away from the Ancient Woodland. The main access route to the site will use an existing surface track which will avoid the Root Protection Area (RPA) of trees except one mature Oak (T7) where encroachment is minor. It is agreed with the assessment that as the field has been in regular cultivation, the proposed track construction will have no significant detrimental impact on the rooting environment of this tree.
- 10.45. The Assessment advises that a hedgerow (H3) will be required to be cut back and potentially pruning of four Oak trees (T2,T3,T5 and T6) to accommodate access for high sided vehicles. Details of pruning have not been provided; however, it is considered unlikely any proposed works will not have a significantly adverse impact on the wider amenity of the area.
- 10.46. A Tree Protection scheme is included as part of a Tree Retention and Removal Plan and is broadly acceptable and accords with the requirements of BS5837:2012. No significant tree or hedgerow issues are therefore raised. Subject to a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted AIA is recommended, the proposal complies with policies SE5 and ENV6 of the Local Plan

Ecology

- 10.47. Policy SE3 of the CELPS requires areas of high biodiversity and geodiversity value to be protected and enhanced. All development must aim to positively contribute to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity and should not negatively affect these interests. Policy ENV1 sets out requirements within the ecological network. Policy ENV2 sets out ecological requirements for development proposals. The western edge of the site is located within the Poynton Wildlife Corridor, which is an ancient woodland, and is protected by policies EGB9 and EGB10 of the PNP. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment; a Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment; a Statutory Biodiversity Metric; a Construction Ecological Management Plan; and a Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan.
- 10.48. The following ecological matters are relevant to the current application.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 10.49. Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain applies to this application. The submitted metric, which has been revised following comments from the Council's nature conservation officer, predicts a habitat net gain of +78.07% and a hedgerow net gain of 16.80%. The nature conservation officer has advised that the revised metric is acceptable, and the proposals adhere to both the biodiversity gain and mitigation hierarchy. The proposed habitat creation is considered 'significant' and therefore a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be secured by condition.

Local Wildlife Site / Ancient Woodland

- 10.50. The application site is adjacent to Mill Hill Farm Wood, a Local Wildlife Site and ancient woodland (an irreplaceable habitat), which is protected under the National Planning Policy Framework. To ensure that the works will not impact the hydrology of the protected ancient woodland, a hydrological assessment was requested and has been submitted together with a drainage strategy. The nature conservation officer advises that the submitted information is suitable to address any hydrological impacts from the proposed works. Consequently, no concerns are raised regarding the proposed drainage into the ancient woodland.

10.51. With regard to the comments from Cheshire Wildlife Trust, it is acknowledged that the ecology report has not carried out a search for Cheshire East LWS apart from the immediately adjacent LWS. The next nearest LWS in Cheshire East is Poynton Park Lake which is ~1.3km away, and separated by the A555. Considering the distance and barrier it is not anticipated that this LWS will be affected by the development.

Construction Ecological Management Plan

10.52. A Construction Ecological Management Plan (Biodiverse Consulting, 2024) has been submitted which includes proposals to heras fence a 20m buffer zone around the adjacent woodland. A request was made to increase this to a 30m buffer zone. A revised construction management plan was subsequently submitted which includes the extension of the woodland buffer zone to be 30m. An exception to works within the buffer zone will be the creation of the gravel ditch within the 30m buffer zone (but not to enter the 20m buffer zone). This is now considered to be acceptable. The buffer zone (and management plan generally) can be secured by condition.

Badgers

10.53. No evidence of badgers was recorded onsite; however, badgers are known to be present in the broad locality of the application site. Furthermore, it was determined that the existing site provides foraging opportunities for badgers, and the immediately adjacent woodland has the potential to support badger setts. Badgers are a mobile species and the status of badgers on site can change over time. It is therefore recommended that if planning consent is granted an updated badger survey condition is included which requires the submission of an update survey, if works have not commenced by the 15th July 2025, i.e., 12 months from the original site survey.

Birds

10.54. A breeding birds survey was undertaken on the 15th July 2024 which concluded that the site supports an assemblage of birds including species which are material consideration under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Although a single site visit does not meet best practice standards, the nature conservation advises that additional bird surveys are not required at this stage and the development unlikely to have an impact on nesting birds, provided that the Construction Ecological Management Plan is adhered to.

Bats

10.55. Several existing trees were determined to offer bat roosting potential; however, these trees are proposed to be retained and subsequently the works will not have a direct impact on roosting bats. The site and adjacent habitats have the potential to support foraging and commuting bats and subsequently a sensitive lighting condition is therefore recommended, if any external lighting is proposed.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

10.56. There is suitable habitat onsite for terrestrial newts with ponds present both onsite and locally. Therefore, the proposed works may have an adverse impact upon Great Crested Newts which may occur onsite or in adjacent water bodies. It should be noted that since a European Protected Species is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development the Local Planning Authority must demonstrate how they have fully considered the three tests set out in Regulation 55 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) and state the evidence for conclusions drawn on each test as to whether the test can be met. The three tests set out within Regulation 55 are as follows:

- (i) The action will be undertaken for the purpose of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a

social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment (Regulation 55(2)(e))

(ii) That there is no satisfactory alternative (Regulation 55(9)(a)); and

(iii) That the action will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at favourable conservation status in their natural range (Regulation 55(9)(b))

10.57. Addressing each of these in turn the overriding public interests is the contribution the battery storage makes to achieving net zero. As noted above, there are no known alternative sites for the proposed development. And finally, the applicant's ecological consultant has indicated the intention to enter the development into Natural England's District Level Licensing scheme, which would be sufficient to maintain the favourable conservation status of the species. The applicant must however submit a copy of the countersigned Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate as evidence that the development has been accepted onto the scheme in principle.

Hedgehog

10.58. Hedgehogs are a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species and hence a material consideration. The existing site has the potential to support hedgehogs, and the submitted Construction Ecological Management Plan provides details on how hedgehogs will be safeguarded on site.

Toad

10.59. Toad is a priority species listed under the Biodiversity Action Plan and is therefore a material consideration. The submitted Construction Ecological Management Plan provides details on how Toads will be safeguarded on site.

Ecological Enhancements

10.60. The proposed works fall within Cheshire East Council's ecological network restoration areas, as identified in the SADPD. An enhancement plan condition is therefore recommended, in line with local policy ENV 1. These recommendations are separate to the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain.

10.61. Subject to the recommended conditions the proposal is considered to comply with policies SE3, ENV1 and ENV2 of the Cheshire East Local Plan, and EGB9 and EGB10 of the PNP.

Archaeology and heritage

10.62. Policy SE7 of the CELPS states that all new development should seek to avoid harm to heritage assets and sets out requirements for development proposals that affect designated and non-designated heritage assets. HER1 of the SADPD requires proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings to be accompanied by proportionate information that assesses and describes their impact on the asset's significance. Policy HER5 expects development proposals affecting a Registered Historic Park and Garden to preserve the heritage asset, its setting and any features of special interest that contribute to its significance. When considering the direct or indirect effects of a development proposal on a non-designated heritage asset (including locally listed buildings), policy HER7 requires a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the significance of the heritage asset and the scale of any loss or harm. HER8 relates to archaeology and scheduled monuments.

10.63. The application is accompanied by a Heritage Desk-based Assessment, which provides information relating to the significance of the historic environment and the potential impact of the proposed development upon it. The application site does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets and does not form part of any setting that contributes

positively to their heritage significance. As such the proposals will have no detrimental impact on any designated or non-designated heritage asset via change to setting.

10.64. In terms of archaeology, the Council's archaeologist has confirmed having reviewed the supporting documentation along with the information held on the Cheshire Historic Environment Records, the Heritage Desk-Based Assessment sufficiently outlines the potential archaeological deposits which may be disturbed by this proposed development. In section 8.2 the document indicates that the evidence base shows that the proposed development is unlikely to disturb significant below ground archaeological deposits. The Councils' archaeologist supports this conclusion and therefore there are no further archaeological recommendations for this current application.

10.65. The proposal is considered to comply with the heritage based policies listed above.

Agriculture and soils

10.66. Best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) is defined in Annex 2 to the Framework as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). Policy SD1 of the CELPS 'Sustainable development in Cheshire East' requires development to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land where possible. Policy SD2 expects all development to avoid the permanent loss of such land unless the strategic need overrides these issues; Policy RUR5 of the SADPD expands on this principle, explaining that where proposals involve the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land to development, it must be demonstrated that the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impacts of the loss of the economic and other benefits of the land; and every effort has been made to mitigate the overall impact of the development on best and most versatile agricultural land. Similarly, paragraph 187 b) of the Framework requires consideration of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

10.67. An Agricultural Land Classification and Considerations Report has been submitted as part of the planning application. The report outlines that the Site is predominantly Subgrade 3a agricultural land (64% - 3.4ha) with areas of Subgrade 3b (24% - 1.2ha) and non-agricultural land (12% - 0.6ha). 64% of the application site is therefore made up of land identified as best and most versatile agricultural land.

10.68. There are no effective measures to mitigate for the loss of agricultural land. The temporary, but relatively long-term, loss weighs moderately against the proposal.

Land contamination, ground conditions and pollution

10.69. Policy SE12 of the CELPS explains that all development should be located and designed so as not to result in a harmful or cumulative impact upon air quality, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, soil contamination, light pollution or any other pollution which would unacceptably affect the natural and built environment, or detrimentally affect amenity or cause harm. Developers will be expected to minimise and mitigate the effects of possible pollution arising from the development itself, or as a result of the development (including additional traffic) during both the construction and the life of the development. Policy ENV17 of the SADPD supplements this policy and makes explicit the protection of groundwater and surface water in terms of their flow and quality.

10.70. The Council's contaminated land team raises no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions relating to imported soil being tested for contamination, and required actions in the event of any contamination not previously identified being found.

- 10.71. In support of the application, the applicant has submitted an acoustic report which assesses the impact of the noise from construction of and use of the proposed development in accordance with:
- BS8233:2014 Guidance on Sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings
 - BS4142:2014 Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound.
- 10.72. Environmental Protection Officers have confirmed that this is an agreed methodology for the assessment of the noise source. The report recommends no noise mitigation measures are required to achieve BS8233: 2014 and WHO guidelines; to ensure that occupants of nearby properties are not adversely affected by noise from the proposed development. The reports methodology, conclusion and recommendations are accepted.
- 10.73. No significant air quality, or other, pollution issues are anticipated from the proposed development.
- 10.74. Subject to the conditions referred to above, the proposed development is considered to comply with policies SE12 and ENV17 of the local plan.

Living conditions

- 10.75. CELPS Policy SE1 states that development should ensure an appropriate level of privacy for new and existing residential properties. Policy HOU12 of the SADPD states development proposals must not cause unacceptable harm to the amenities of adjoining or nearby occupiers of residential properties, sensitive users or future occupiers of the proposed development due to:
1. loss of privacy;
 2. loss of sunlight and daylight;
 3. the overbearing and dominating effect of new buildings;
 4. environmental disturbance or pollution; or
 5. traffic generation, access and parking.
- 10.76. Having regard to the details above relating to pollution, and by virtue of separation distance to the nearest residential properties, there will be no significant impact upon the living conditions of these neighbours.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 10.77. Policy SE13 of the CELPS requires developments to integrate measures for sustainable water management to reduce flood risk, avoid an adverse impact on water quality and quantity within the borough and provide opportunities to enhance biodiversity, health and recreation, in line with national guidance. Policy ENV16 of the SADPD requires development proposals to demonstrate how surface water runoff can be managed, including with the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Policy EGB1 of the PNP highlights the risk of flooding in Poynton and seeks a local flood risk mitigation plan by relevant authorities.
- 10.78. The application site is located entirely in Flood Zone 1 and is predominantly at very low risk of flooding from surface water sources according to Environment Agency mapping. However, there are some areas of the site that are at risk of some surface water flooding. But these are areas where no development is proposed.
- 10.79. The drainage strategy proposes to collect surface water runoff from the proposed BESS with a series of perforated pipes within the gravel subbase of the proposed BESS. The perforated pipes will drain towards a solid walled pipe through the site. Surface water runoff will be stored in a proposed attenuation basin to the south of the BESS, which will outfall

into the Ordinary Watercourse to the west of the site via a gravel trench just on the edge of the Ancient Woodland buffer. Surface water will slowly overtop the gravel trench and follow local topography and flow through the Ancient Woodland into the Ordinary Watercourse

10.80. The LLFA has commented on the application and raised no objection to the proposal subject to a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted drainage layout. However, comments from the Council's ecologist regarding the hydrology within the ancient woodland has resulted in some minor amendments to the drainage proposals, and updated comments are awaited from the LLFA. However, no objections are anticipated, and it is expected that no significant flood risk concerns will be raised, and the proposal will comply with policies SE13 and ENV16 of the local plan.

Highways

10.81. Policy CO1 of the CELPS sets out the Council's expectations for development to deliver the Council objectives of delivering a safe, sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system that encourages a modal shift away from car travel to public transport, cycling and walking; supportive of the needs of residents and businesses and preparing for carbon free modes of transport. Policy CO2 includes a range of criteria to enable business growth through transport infrastructure, including supporting the improvement of national motorway network facilities where appropriate. Policy CO4 requires all major development proposals that are likely to generate significant additional journeys to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and, where appropriate, a Travel Plan.

10.82. Policy INF1 of the SADPD requires developments to contribute positively to local walking, cycling and public transport objectives. Policy INF3 requires development proposals to provide safe access to and from the site for all highway users and ensure that development traffic can be satisfactorily assimilated into the safe operation of the existing highway network.

10.83. An existing access track is to be used to serve the site. The current access is a gated agricultural access onto Woodford Road. The access track will be widened and passing places provided to accommodate construction vehicles. The main highway impact of the proposal will be the construction phase as once completed there will be no daily movements and only limited movements (approximately 1 per month) to the site during the year.

10.84. The construction is expected to take 13 – 14 months to complete with HGV's using the access and also the construction staff, the number of trips is not excessive and the projected traffic generation is likely to be a maximum of 20 two-way HGV trips/day, and up to 60 two way trips from the 30 contractors on site. All parking will be internal to the site and no overspill parking is likely to occur.

10.85. A Construction Management Plan has been submitted that details the construction proposed and measures to implemented during the build and this includes the HGV routing to the site. Vehicles would be required to travel to / from the Application Site via the A555 Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road or A523 Roy Chadwick Way, onto A5149 Chester Road and Woodford Road.

10.86. No objections are raised by CEC highways and therefore no significant highways issues are anticipated. Access by public transport and the sustainability of the site's location have been addressed in the Green Belt section of this report.

Principle of Battery Storage

10.87. Policy ENV11 of the SADPD relates specifically to proposals for battery energy storage systems (BESS). This policy explains that proposals for BESS will be supported where they assist with the balancing of the electricity grid and support renewable energy sources (such as wind and solar) alongside meeting the following criteria:

1. Location on PDL

The policy expects schemes to be located on previously developed land (PDL) and / or in existing industrial areas, wherever possible, close to existing users who can make use of the heat and /or power generated. It has been demonstrated that there are no other available sites for the proposed BESS, and therefore it has not been possible to locate the development on PDL or an industrial area. This criterion is therefore met by the proposed development. The BESS in this case is to support the National Grid and not to provide direct power to an energy consumer, and it will be released when there is the demand.

2. Avoid loss of BMV

As noted above 64% of the site is classified as best and most versatile agricultural land, which will be lost to the development, on a temporary 40-year, but relatively long-term, basis. This criterion is not met

3. Not adversely impact neighbouring land users

There are no identified impacts upon neighbouring land users. This criterion is met.

4. Cumulative impacts on landscape, natural environment, amenity, operational use, and surrounding users must be acceptable

No significant issues are raised regarding these matters and therefore this criterion is met.

5. Utilise existing power lines, structures and infrastructure

The applicant has advised that it is expected that the proposed BESS will connect to the substation in Adswood by underground cables beneath public highways. These works are carried out under permitted development regulations. However, the precise details of this are not known at this stage, but it is thought that the cables do not currently exist. If they are underground the impact on landscape will be acceptably minimised as required by this criterion. The cables will be installed by the District Network Operator (DNO). The DNO have permitted development rights (Class B, Part 15, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended) which would allow the works to be undertaken outside of this planning application.

6. Associated development design to minimise visual impact

As identified in the LVIA and as noted above the visual impacts of the proposal are limited. Additional landscaping is proposed to further minimise the visual impacts. This criterion is met.

7. Removal when no longer required

A condition can be attached to ensure removal of the BESS and restoration of the land at the end of the 40-year period to ensure compliance with this.

10.88. As can be seen from the above there is conflict with only one of the seven criteria (loss of BMV) within policy ENV 11 of the SADPD.

Other Matters

Benefits

10.89. The submitted planning statement identifies the following benefits associated with the proposed development:

- Economic benefits
 - Investment of approximately £66 million to develop the scheme;
 - £0.8 million estimated annual business rates generated by the scheme;
 - Up to 20 number of peak construction jobs, utilising local labour where possible, and an estimated 2 permanent operation and maintenance jobs once the scheme is operational;
 - Up to £1.8million in gross value added to the economy over the 6-month construction phase; and
 - The contribution of £1.1 million in gross value added to the economy over the next 10 years.
- Helps to provide a more resilient green energy network stabilising energy costs
- Renewable energy security – supports increased uptake of renewable energy onto the National Grid
- Reduced reliance on overseas energy sources
- Contribution towards addressing climate change
- Carbon reduction
- Local biodiversity improvements
- Landscape planting enhancements – tree and hedgerow planting
- Identified need for the development
- Contributes to moving the nation's energy supply towards local and national Net Zero targets

Planning Obligations

10.90. The Town Council have the local ward councillor have requested that the developer is asked to make a s106 contribution to the Lower Park Crescent Play Area. Planning obligations such as this can only be secured to mitigate for the impact of the development. The proposed BESS will not have any impact upon local open space or play provision within the local area, and therefore a s106 planning obligation along those lines would not meet the tests of the CIL Regulations by not being necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and not being directly related to the development.

Public safety

10.91. Public safety is also a consideration for BESS, and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy advises applicants to engage with the local fire and rescue service before submitted an application. This is so matters relating to the siting and location of battery energy storage systems, in particular in the event of an incident, prevention of the impact of thermal runaway, and emergency services access can be considered before an application is made. The applicant did engage with Cheshire Fire and Rescue prior to the application being submitted. It is understood that the proposed development was amended to include a hammer head at the end of the site access to enable fire vehicles to turn around without the need to enter the BESS compound. The PPG also states that local planning authority are encouraged to consult with their local fire and rescue service as part of the formal period of public consultation prior to deciding the planning application. This has been done, and comments are awaited and will be reported as an update.

11. PLANNING BALANCE/CONCLUSION

- 11.1. The proposed BESS will result in some moderate/minor adverse visual impact which is likely to be experienced by only a small number of receptors at some distance from the application site, but with open views across the proposed development. The proposed mitigation planting would further reduce the adverse visual effect of the built elements of the proposal to a level of minor adverse. This visual impact, as with all the impacts associated with the proposed development, would be temporary but still relatively long-term in nature, given the 40-year period permission is sought for. The temporary nature of the proposal could be considered to be a mitigating factor to a very limited degree. This relatively minor visual harm is considered to attract limited to moderate weight against the proposal, subject to the success of the proposed landscaping.
- 11.2. There would also be a loss of around 3.4ha of the best and most versatile BMV for a 40-year period, and there is no mitigation for the loss of agricultural land, which weighs moderately against the proposal.
- 11.3. Balanced against this harm, the applicant has identified a range of economic benefits arising from the construction and operation of the BESS, which attract moderate weight. The proposal will also secure significant biodiversity improvements and landscaping that are likely to endure long after the development has left the site, which also attract moderate weight. But of most significance are the need for the proposal, the role of storage in reducing the costs of the electricity system and increase reliability by storing surplus electricity in times of low demand to provide electricity when demand is higher, and the contribution that electricity storage makes to achieving the goal of net zero, as identified the National Policy Statement EN-1. This is considered to attract substantial weight in favour of the proposal.
- 11.4. There is considered to be neutral or acceptable impacts upon matters relating to contaminated land, Green Belt, trees and hedgerows, ecology, heritage, noise, air quality, living conditions, flood risk and drainage, and highways subject to relevant conditions.
- 11.5. Overall, the identified benefits of the proposed development are considered to clearly outweigh the identified harm. The proposal is therefore considered to be sustainable development, and a recommendation of approval is made.

12. RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions and receipt of satisfactory responses from Cheshire Fire and Rescue and the LLFA.

13. CONDITIONS

- 1. Commencement of development – 3 years**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Temporary period – 40 years**
- 4. Removal in event development ceases to export electricity**
- 5. Scheme of restoration to be submitted**
- 6. Materials as application**
- 7. Development to be carried out in accordance with the Construction Ecological Management Plan**
- 8. Updated badger survey to be submitted**
- 9. Ecological Enhancement Plan to be submitted**
- 10. Habitat Creation Method Statement and 30-year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan to be submitted**

- 11. Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted**
- 12. Landscape scheme to be submitted**
- 13. Implementation of landscape scheme**
- 14. 30-year landscape management plan to be submitted**
- 15. Site access arrangement and visibility splays**
- 16. Development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan**
- 17. Imported soil to be tested for contamination**
- 18. Actions in the event of any unidentified contamination being found**
- 19. Reporting of contamination during lifetime of development**
- 20. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted drainage details**
- 21. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions / informatives / planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

