

Agenda Item 10
Planning Applications to 9th June 2023

Representations to be made by	Application No.	Proposal	Site Address	Applicant
29/06/2023	HPK/2023/0193	The proposal comprises the construction and installation of an Energy Storage System (ESS) including the formation of site levels and associated access. Landscaping and site infrastructure	Land at Marsh Lane New Mills	Mr K Denton

Comments from NMTC re Planning Application HPK/2023/0193

New Mills Town Council objects to the proposals for a lithium battery storage site at Marsh Lane on several grounds: the unsuitability of local roads for construction vehicles, the fire safety risk that this site poses to local residents and the environment, the environmental impact of building the facility on green belt land, and the lack of consultation with some residents.

First, Marsh Lane is totally unsuitable for large vehicles and has very narrow access from both Marsh Lane and Church Radd which is in very close proximity to both a primary and secondary school. Construction will, therefore, cause significant disruption to local residents.

Second, these proposals pose a significant risk to the local environment and residents. Lithium battery storage sites are considered high-risk by the Fire and Rescue Service. This is because any fires in lithium battery storage facilities are extremely difficult to put out, often taking the FRS several days, and can emit poisonous gases (emit hydrofluoric acid and carbon oxides) when burning. West Yorkshire FRS have said the risk of an explosion at a similar site in Carlton, Leeds was “unfortunately very real”, with incidents in similar facilities elsewhere across the world.

The Statement of Community Involvement notes that the developers have met with Derbyshire FRS, but will engage more thoroughly after the proposals have been accepted. Novus could, of course, have gone beyond the minimum required in regulations to more fully engage with the FRS (and residents) in discussing the risks around this site, but have chosen not to do so. Given the risk this site poses to local residents and the firefighters who would be called upon to control any fire in this facility, this is insufficient. There is no statutory duty for the developer to consult the FRS for these sites under the Environmental Permitting Regulations. However, there is an argument that this is itself a gap in the regulations, an example of regulations not keeping up with the risks surrounding an emerging technology, and that further engagement with the FRS should happen prior to the proposal being accepted. The recent widespread bans of much smaller lithium batteries (for example, e-scooters) on public transport suggest that the safety risks of lithium batteries, even those on a much smaller scale, are only recently being realised and regulated.

Third, New Mills Town Council would also like to raise objections to the environmental impact of the proposed facility. The project is marketed by NOVUS as a green energy project, and this is true in that it will store renewable energy. However, the creation of this site will cause considerable environmental destruction to Green Belt land and, as stated above, in the event of a fire that emits poisonous gases the storage facility could have a catastrophic impact on the local environment, including the River Goyt. The benefits in terms of green energy storage do not outweigh a) the destruction of local Green Belt land during construction, b) the huge damage that a fire in this facility could cause to the local environment.

Finally, the Council objects on the grounds that not all local residents in Calico Lane were given appropriate access to the consultation for this proposal. Given the significant impact this site will have on local residents during construction and once operational, greater effort should have been made by Novus to ensure residents had fair access to information on these proposals.