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Subject: Comment Received from Public Access
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Application Reference No. : HPK/2023/0193
Site Address: LAND AT Marsh Lane New Mills Derbyshire
Comments by: Clare WilkinsPeak District National Park
From:

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Phone:
Email: Submission: Neither
Comments: National Policy

1. The application is for major development on a greenbelt site approximately 1.2km from the boundary of the Peak District National Park (the National Park).
2. Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 places a general duty on all relevant authorities, including public bodies, to have regard to the purposes of a national park. These purposes include to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
3. Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development within their (national parks) setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
4. National policy indicates therefore that close regard should be paid to the impact of the development on the setting of the National Park.

Proposal

5. The proposals comprises the construction and installation of an Energy Storage System (ESS) including the formation of site levels and associated access, landscaping and site infrastructure.

Analysis

6. The landscape character type in this Dark Peak Western fringe area of the National Park is classed as Valley Pastures with Industry. This is described as small scale, settled pastoral landscape on undulating lower valley slopes. There are filtered views through scattered hedgerows and dense streamside trees. Stone built terraced housing on lower slopes is associated with historic mills. There are dispersed gritstone farmsteads as well as small clusters of farms with associated dwellings. Pastoral farmland is bounded by hedgerows and drystone walls.
7. The applicant raises various policy issues in the submitted planning statement and concedes that the scheme represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The Planning Statement argues that the automatic harm to Green Belt plus any other harm is outweighed by other considerations.
8. In relation to landscape impact the Planning Statement explains how the submitted landscape and visual assessment concludes that landscape and visual effects would be localised and limited in nature, and would not affect the setting or purpose of the Peak District National Park.

9. A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been submitted with the application.
10. It is considered that this assessment under represents the potential visual effects of the scheme. It predicts a low/very low magnitude of effect (which is probably fair), but under-assesses the sensitivity of receptors. The sensitivity of recreational receptors within the National Park should be high, combining this with a low magnitude of effect may result in moderate level of effect (rather than the minor effect predicated by the assessment).
11. It is also considered that the assessment does not adequately consider views from the National Park, views from the higher ground further east should have been used to assess the impact on the protected landscape. It is noted that views are possible from a PRoW at an approx. 80m higher elevation.
12. It is noted that a landscape plan has not been submitted with this application (detailing species, locations, sizes, tree protection, establishment maintenance etc) and this should be required.

Conclusion

Further mitigation is required to reduce the magnitude effect on the National Park, as a protected landscape. This could include increasing the width of the woodland buffer mix on the northern edge of the proposed bund (consider rolling it over the top of the downslope), potentially increasing the height/slope of the bund where planted (is a 1:3 gradient required in the planted sections?) and reducing the gradient in the wildflower seeded section, and additional tree planting on the south eastern section of the site. A detailed landscape plan is also required.

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