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Proposal: Battery Energy Storage System and associated works on land west of Buxton Road, Dove Holes

Applicant: Greenergy Renewables UK Ltd

Thank you for consulting Derbyshire County Council on the above planning application for the proposed Battery Energy Storage System and associated works on land west of Buxton Road, Dove Holes. Derbyshire County Council's Member and Officer technical comments on the planning application are set out below, which are submitted under Delegated Procedures.

The application site is located to the west of Buxton Road (A6) and east of the railway line, just south of Dove Holes. The site is approximately 1.5ha in area, consisting of Grade 4 (poor) agricultural land. The site is located approx. 1.3km west of the Peak District National Park, is within Flood Zone 1, does not have any designated heritage assets within or immediately adjacent to the site and has no specific international or national environmental designations. It is proposed that the development has a life span of 35 years, at which point the site will be returned to its original form.

The proposed battery storage facility will comprise of a series of batteries, a substation, a monitoring/welfare unit and switchgear building. The site will be enclosed by a palisade fencing, up to 2.4m in height and acoustic fencing of the same height along the eastern and southern boundaries.

The submitted application consists of supporting documentation including a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Heritage Statement, Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Ecology Assessments, BNG assessment/metric, Transport Statement, Flood Risk Assessment, Noise and Lighting Assessments, submission documents are referred to below where relevant.

Derbyshire County Council's Overall Assessment and Conclusions on the Planning Application

On the basis of the detailed Officer comments below, Derbyshire County Council considers that the scale, extent and nature of the proposal would, on balance and subject to the satisfactory resolution of a number of outstanding matters considered in more detail below, be in broad conformity with national planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the High Peak Borough Council's Local Plan for sustainable development, climate change, landscape character, rural development, biodiversity, design and place making.

Derbyshire County Council recognises the positive merits of the planning application proposal, as an important part of the move from fossil fuels to renewable energy. This would positively contribute to the UK's target to become net zero by 2050 – a target which Derbyshire County Council fully supports. The proposal would also help assist in meeting the carbon budgets for both High Peak Borough and the County as a whole, as set out in more detail in Section 2 below.

Key to Derbyshire County Council's consideration and assessment of the application proposal is paragraph 11 of the NPPF and the 'tilted balance' which states that:

Paragraph 11: The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

In the context of paragraph 11 d (i) of the NPPF, Derbyshire County Council considers that the scale and extent of the application proposals could, with appropriate mitigation and satisfactory resolution of a number of outstanding matters (see detailed assessment below), be made acceptable in the context of national and local planning policies for the environment.

In the context of the requirement of paragraph 11d(ii) of the NPPF, Derbyshire County Council has considered whether the application proposal would be likely to offer any significant direct community benefits. As noted above, it is acknowledged that at a wider and broader level, the proposals would be likely to generate significant climate change benefits in storing renewable energy which would help contribute to meeting national, county and borough-wide carbon reduction targets. However, at a more localised level, having reviewed the application proposals and supporting information, Derbyshire County Council considers that the application proposals provide no significant direct benefits for the community, as set out in more detail in Section 2 below. Further consideration should be given by the applicant to this matter.

Overall and on balance, Derbyshire County Council considers that the proposed planning application could, with appropriate mitigation and satisfactory resolution of the outstanding matters summarised below, be made acceptable and be in conformity with national policies in the NPPF and the HPBC Local Plan.

- Clarification of the amount of energy the battery storage system will be able to hold;
- Assessment of fire risk and associated impacts;
- Ensuring biodiversity net gain and mitigating any potential impact on the adjacent local nature reserve;
- Addressing the Highway Authorities request for further information; and
- Addressing the Archaeologists request for further information.

1. MEMBER COMMENTS

- 1.1 Consultation on this planning application has been undertaken with County Councillor Nigel Gourlay (Member for Chapel & Hope Valley) who made the following comments:

I support this proposal. Dove Holes, the village next to the proposed battery farm, is subject to regular electricity outages, and any improvement to the reliability of supply is to be commended.

County Councillor Tony Kemp (Member for Buxton West) also responded with the following comment:

I know nothing about the argument for battery storage but I note Cllr Gourlay's remarks which were helpful and have had no objections communicated to me by constituents.

OFFICER COMMENTS

- 2.1 The planning application has been assessed below in the context of national planning policies in the NPPF and associated National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and local planning policies in the adopted HPBC Local Plan.
- 2.2 The Derbyshire Environment and Climate Change Framework is also an important consideration as indicated below.

THE NEED FOR AND PRINCIPLE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.3 National planning policies for mitigating the impacts of climate change, and specifically relating to the development of renewable energy projects are set out in the NPPF in Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. Paragraphs 161, 165 and 168 of Chapter 14, set out the Government's overarching requirements for local planning authorities through the planning system for mitigating the impacts of climate change as follows:

Paragraph 161: The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 165. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should: a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);

Paragraph 168: When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should:

- a) 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;*
- b) recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;*

- 2.4 Supporting advice in NPPG on Climate Change also emphasises that, in addition to supporting the delivery of appropriately sited green energy, effective spatial planning is an important part of a successful response to climate change as it can influence the emission of greenhouse gases. In doing so, local planning authorities should ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment. Planning can also help increase resilience to climate change impact through the location, mix and design of development.
- 2.5 The UK Government has committed to deliver on the Paris Agreement by vigorously achieving its carbon budget and pursuing a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, ending the UK's contribution to global warming within 31 years.
- 2.6 This was enshrined in law in June 2019 through amendments to the 2050 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target in the Climate Change Act 2008 from at least 80% to at least 100%, otherwise known as net zero.
- 2.7 The UK carbon budget has been further apportioned to local authority areas, particularly for County Council areas. The recommended budgets reflect the actual emissions from industry and commerce, transport and domestic sectors, with a suggested periodic reduction. Each local authority has been allocated a carbon budget based on 'grandfathering'. A grandfathering approach collates carbon budgets based on recent emissions data (from 2011-16). Budgets reflect a local area's particular profile and are consistent with each area's ability to make a fair contribution to the Paris Agreement. The carbon budget for each local authority area is then divided further into carbon budgets for five year periods in-line with the UK carbon budget periods. This allocation produces a carbon emissions pathway or trajectory for each area for the period 2018-2100.
- 2.8 The recommended carbon budgets for Derbyshire are set out below. Budget periods are aligned with the budget periods in the Climate Change Act and then specific targets are set out for each district and borough council area and aggregated for the County as a whole. Carbon Budgets for Derbyshire County:
- 2018 to 2022: 27.3 million tonnes CO2
 2023 to 2027: 12.9 million tonnes CO2
 2028 to 2032: 5.9 million tonnes CO2
 2033 to 2037: 2.7 million tonnes CO2
 2038 to 2042: 1.2 million tonnes CO2
 2043 to 2047: 0.6 million tonnes CO2
 2048 to 2100: 0.5 million tonnes CO2
- 2.9 Derbyshire County Council has been working closely with its local authority partners (8 district and borough councils) to address the impacts of climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions which are consistent with the allocated carbon budgets for Derbyshire and to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. To this end the Derbyshire local authorities published the Derbyshire Environment and Climate Change Framework (DECCF) in October 2019, which committed all the local authority partners to seek to achieve these targets. Renewable energy and significant increase in development of renewable energy projects across the County will play a very important part in enabling local authority partners to meet their climate change commitments and carbon budgets to achieve the overall aim of net zero emissions by 2050.
- 2.10 In February 2023 the Climate Change and Planning Guidance was published by Derbyshire County Council, on behalf of, and in collaboration with, all the local planning authority partners in the County, including High Peak Borough Council. The purpose of this Planning Guidance is to assist in the development and review of planning policy at all levels, including neighbourhood and local plans, and to assist Development Management officers in making informed decisions. The guidance has been drafted by, and for, the

Derbyshire Planning Authorities, to provide information to help underpin future policy and development management decision making which will aim to address the causes of climate change and implement the actions needed to adapt to the changes that are now inevitable. It is also hoped that the guide and accompanying assessment tool will be used proactively by developers and communities to help shape their proposals and actions.

- 2.11 The High Peak Local Plan was adopted April 2016 and of particular relevance is Policy EQ1 Climate Change, as set out below:

Policy EQ1: Climate Change

The Council will adopt strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In addressing the move to a low carbon future for High Peak, the Council will plan for new development in locations and ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adopt the principles set out in the energy hierarchy.

The Council intends to meet part of its future energy needs through renewable or low carbon energy sources and will therefore encourage and support the provision of renewable and low carbon technologies, including both stand-alone installations, and micro-renewables integrated within new or existing development. A low carbon future for High Peak will be achieved by:

- Requiring new development to be designed to contribute to achieving national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using land-form, layout, building orientation, tree planting, massing and landscaping to reduce likely energy consumption and resilience to increased temperatures
- Ensuring that renewable energy installations do not have an adverse impact on the integrity of any European sites, (including by project- level HRA where appropriate), wildlife sites, protected species or habitats, or the landscape and landscape setting of the Peak District National Park
- Supporting opportunities to deliver decentralised energy systems, particularly those which are powered by a renewable or low carbon source
- Supporting connection to an existing decentralised energy supply system where there is capacity to supply the proposed development, or design for a future connection where there a firm proposals for such a system
- Ensuring that renewable / low carbon energy generation developments and associated infrastructure are supported by requiring Design Statements to include an assessment of how any impacts on the environment and heritage assets, including cumulative landscape, noise and visual impacts, can be avoided and/or mitigated through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures
- Applications for new build residential development in the Buxton Sub-Area should meet the optional national technical requirement for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day to minimise the phosphate load to the River Wye via discharges from the Buxton Sewage Treatment Works, unless it can be demonstrated that doing so would adversely impact on a scheme's viability.
- Unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be technically feasible or financially viable, requiring that commercial developments over 1,000m² the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) good standard as a minimum
- Promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable / low carbon energy in new development and through retro-fitting of existing buildings
- Supporting sustainable waste management by provision of space for recycling and composting
- Supporting the use of sustainable design and construction techniques including the use of recycled materials in construction, including where appropriate the local or on-site sourcing of these building materials

- **Supporting high water efficiency standards and measures to recycle and minimise water consumption**

- 2.12 The submitted information with the application does not appear to outline the amount of energy storage this proposal will create. This is an important factor in balancing the public benefit of the proposal in seeking to meet the carbon budgets for the High Peak and the County as whole. If this information is absent it should be clarified with the applicant prior to determination.

Assessment

- 2.13 In setting out support for the principle of renewable energy projects, the NPPF paragraph 163 requires that the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change should be considered when preparing and assessing planning applications, **taking into account the full range of potential climate change impacts. Para 168 requires that**, when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need and recognises the valuable contribution small-scale/community-led projects provide.
- 2.14 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that electricity storage can enable us to use energy more flexibly and de-carbonise our energy system cost-effectively – for example, by helping to balance the system at lower cost, maximising the usable output from intermittent low carbon generation (e.g. solar and wind), and deferring or avoiding the need for costly network upgrades and new generation capacity. NPPG also sets out requirements for mandatory biodiversity net gain as referred to below.
- 2.15 A range of other policies in the NPPF for the protection and enhancement of the environment are also relevant to this application, in particular Section 2: Achieving Sustainable Development’ Section 12: Achieving well-designed places; and Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the Natural Environment.
- 2.16 These policies are reflected at the local level in the HPBC Local Plan.
- 2.17 The County Council welcomes proposals for schemes that generate renewable energy and utilise battery storage technologies that will ultimately reduce the UK’s reliance on energy from fossil fuels and ensure a more stable and resilient energy system. However, the proposed scheme should not result in direct negative impacts to the environment during its operation.
- 2.18 The scheme design, construction and operation should take all necessary steps to avoid any environmental risks and pollution during abnormal and emergency situations (such as battery fire). Particular attention should be paid to protecting any nearby water sources from such situations and associated pollution.
- 2.19 An assessment is provided below of possible environmental impacts of the proposal.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.20 It is noted in this House of Commons [Research Briefing April 2024](#) that fire safety with regards to battery energy storage systems has been raised in Parliament on a number of occasions. This issue is addressed in the Planning Statement and measures have been proposed to mitigate issues. Further information can also be found at [Health and safety in grid scale electrical energy storage systems \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 2.21 The application does not appear to include a Risk Management Plan for the site, and it should be confirmed that there is a sufficient water supply in the event of a fire, particularly as the site does not appear to propose a water tank. The drainage/containment of any fire

water run-off should also be confirmed with the applicant, particularly to avoid impacting on surrounding green and blue infrastructure.

- 2.22 A Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken in support of this application, which concludes that noise arising from the operation of the proposal would be acceptable, with the mitigation defined in this report, at all residential locations for daytime and night-time periods.
- 2.23 It is noted that the application will be subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain. A BNG Assessment has been submitted with the application, however, the BNG metric did not appear to be available on HPBC's planning record, and therefore has not been looked at.
- 2.24 It is noted that the site sits directly to the south of a local nature reserve, Victory Quarry, which is in DCC ownership. It is therefore requested that the proposal does not impact on the biodiversity of this site.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACTS

- 2.25 It is noted that a Landscape/Visual Impact assessment has been submitted with this planning application. This document concludes that overall, despite some localised adverse effects, the small-scale proposal would be visually contained, giving rise to a minor change and proposed tree planting will successfully integrate it into the landscape and views.
- 2.26 It is noted that Landscape Character for this area is White Peak Plateau Pastures with gently rolling, upland limestone plateau characterised by nucleated limestone villages, dry-stone walls, a pastoral land-use and open, expansive views.
- 2.27 The Derbyshire Renewable Energy Study rates the area with moderate low sensitivity. Regardless of this it is recommended that HPBC seek the views of their own independent landscape advisor regarding the submitted LVIA.

HIGHWAY COMMENTS

- 2.28 It is noted that a response from Highway Authority (HA) has been received, separately to this response which states that the before the HA can provide a formal response to the above application, the aforementioned Transport Statement should be provided, drawings showing the access improvements (application form amended accordingly) and also the vehicle visibility splays available at present.

DCC ARCHAEOLOGY

- 2.29 It is noted that a response from DCC Archaeology has been received separately to this response and states:

I therefore object to the proposals as currently submitted because of a lack of information to establish archaeological significance in line with NPPF para 200, and noting the possible presence of nationally important archaeology on the site. This objection could be addressed by the applicant submitting a more detailed archaeological baseline combining the layers of information as summarised above, with clarity over how potential archaeological remains on the site might be impacted by the current proposals

CLIMATE CHANGE TEAM COMMENTS

- 2.30 From a climate perspective:

- While there are considerations for the impact of the climate impacts from flooding (judged to be low) there are no considerations of the likely future impacts of hotter and drier summers, which may be important for such an installation
- It would be useful to see a commitment to reduce the carbon impacts of construction (for example by minimising vehicle movements and optimising the use of concrete) to reduce the embodied carbon of the project

I hope the above comments are of assistance in the assessment of the planning application. Please contact my officer, Clare Wilkins, if you wish to discuss this matter or require any further information or details.

Yours sincerely

Chris Henning
Director of Place