ROOKERY FARM BESS, 23/03875/APP:

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHANGES TO THE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS AS A RESULT OF THE CHANGES

INTRODUCTION

1. Following consultation responses on Planning Application 23//03875/APP, BESS Rookery Farm, Granborough the applicant has made changes to the layout of the Proposed Facility. The main changes are:
   - Removal of the compound containing BESS equipment from Field 3. Field 3 will remain under agricultural production.
   - Doubling the length of the inverter houses within Field 1 so that the number of inverters for the whole scheme remains unchanged.
   - Field 4 remains as a landscaped field to provide BNG, screening and permissive open space but the ponds are all now small wildlife ponds and the orchard has been replaced by woodland.
   - Minor changes to the layout in Field 1 to accommodate the larger inverter houses.
   - Replacement of the biodiverse inverter house roofs with shallow pitched roofs. The inverter houses will be painted in three different shades of receive greens to create a disruptive colour pattern (note: an inverter house will only be painted in one shade of green).
   - Creating a more random distribution of trees within hedgerows to create a more naturalistic effect.
   - Proposed planting has been set back at least 10m from the tributary of Claydon Brook on the northwest boundary and the footbridges across side ditches have been upgraded to allow crossing by maintenance vehicles to maintain the watercourse (following comments by the drainage authority).

LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

2. The main changes to the assessment of landscape effects are:
   a) The area of electrical infrastructure has been significantly reduced and while it does reduce the adverse effect on the landscape character of the Site it remains Moderate Adverse in Year 1 and Minor adverse in Years 10 and 20. The adverse effect on the Hogshaw Claylands LCA also remains Moderate adverse in Year 1 and Neutral in Year 10 and 20 and Minor beneficial on decommissioning.

   b) The landscape effect on the Claydon Valley LCA remains Neutral, while the effect on the Quainton Hill LCA reduces to Minor adverse in Year 1 and Neutral in Years 10 and 20 as the most prominent field proposed for electrical infrastructure is removed from view and additional tree planting is proposed.

VISUAL EFFECTS

3. The main changes to visual effects are:

View 1: from rural footpath GRA 10/1 on the western edge of Granborough

The removal of electrical infrastructure from the most prominent field significantly reduces the amount of infrastructure visible from this viewpoint. The magnitude of change is considered to be Medium (if seen in the context of the existing east Claydon Substation, see Summer AVR's) resulting in a Moderate - Major adverse effect in winter and Moderate adverse in summer. This will decline to Minor adverse in winter and Neutral in summer as the proposed tree planting becomes the dominant visual element.

Views 2 and 3: from rural footpath GRA 2/2 as it approaches the Site from the Hogshaw Road.

The effect on users will remain Moderate adverse in winter and summer in Year 1, becoming Neutral in Years 10 and 20 as the proposed tree planting compensates for the glimpsed views of the upper part of the proposed substation. There will be a Minor beneficial effect on decommissioning.

View 4: from rural footpath GAR 1/1 as it approaches the Site from the northeast

A Moderate to Major adverse effect in Year 1 in winter, Moderate adverse effect in Summer, but only for a short length of the footpath. This will decline to a Minor adverse effect in winter Years 10 nd 20 and Neutral in summer. There will be a Minor beneficial effect on decommissioning.

Views 5 and 6 from rural footpath GRA 2/1 as it runs just outside the northeast boundary of the Site

There will be no change in effects because the field where the electrical infrastructure will be omitted is not visible from these locations.

View 7 from rural footpath ECL 4/2 as it heads east towards the Site

There will be a reduction in the amount of electrical infrastructure that would be glimpsed through the tree cover along the tributary to Claydon Brook due to its removal from Field 3, but the effects in Year 1 will remain Moderate adverse in winter and Minor adverse in summer, declining to Neutral in Years 10 and 20, with a Minor beneficial effect on decommissioning.

View 8: from rural footpath ECL 4/2 as it continues up the hill, west of the Site

There will be a reduction in the amount of electrical infrastructure that would be glimpsed through the tree cover along the tributary to Claydon Brook due to its removal from Field 3, but the effects in Year 1 will remain Moderate adverse in winter and Minor adverse in summer, declining to Neutral in Years 10 and 20, with a Minor beneficial effect on decommissioning.

View 9: from rural footpath ECL 4/2 as it crests the hill, west of the Site

There will be significant benefit in not placing electrical infrastructure from Field 3, since this is the most prominent Field from this view, but the infrastructure in Fields 1 and 2 will be visible and so the effect in Year 1, winter and summer will remain Moderate adverse, declining to Neutral in Years 10 and 20, with a Minor beneficial effect on decommissioning.

Views 10 – 16:

No change

View 17: from rural footpath GRA 1/2 as it passes along the southeast boundary of the main development area
Although a boundary hedge will block most views towards Field 3, there will be view as walkers pass the gateway into the adjoining field with Field 3 on its far side. Not placing electrical infrastructure within this field will be beneficial, but the overall effect to walkers will remain Medium adverse in Year 1, winter and summer, due to the upgrading of the farmers track to a wider stoned access track for the facility. It will decline to Neutral in Years 10 and 20 as the track is colonised by vegetation, with a Minor beneficial effect on decommissioning due to the increased tree cover in the area.

Views 18 – 20
No change

View 21: from Bridleway HOG 9/3 from the summit of Conduit Hill (part of Quainton Hill), south of the Site
Field 3 is visible from this viewpoint and so by not placing electrical equipment in this field there will be a reduction in visual impact, although the compound within Field 1 will remain partly visible as will the proposed substation. The effect on visual amenity will remain Moderate adverse in Year, winter and summer, but the additional woodland proposed will ensure that the effect will be Minor adverse in Years 10 and 20 nd Minor beneficial on decommissioning.

View 22: from a field gateway on Botyl Road within Botolph Claydon
Field 3 is visible from this viewpoint and so by not placing electrical equipment in this field there will be a reduction in visual impact, although the compound within Field 1 will remain partly visible as will the proposed substation. The effect on visual amenity will reduce to Moderate adverse in Year, winter and summer, but the additional woodland proposed will ensure that the effect will be Minor adverse in Years 10 and 20 nd Minor beneficial on decommissioning.

4. It is concluded that the proposed changes will meaningfully reduce the effect of the proposed development on visual amenity to key receptors. The Proposed Development will not be visible from the majority of dwellings, roads and public footpaths in the surrounding area due to the screening effect of existing trees and hedges. Few properties afford views directly towards the Site and are sufficiently distant that the effects will not be significant. The proposed electrical equipment will be located within two fields with a significant buffer of farmland around them.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

5. The proposed development will have cumulative effects in association with the existing East Claydon Substation and the consented Tuckey Solar Farm.

Landscape cumulative effects

6. The Proposed Development and the Tuckey Farm Solar Farm will increase the amount of electrical infrastructure around the East Claydon Substation. The East Claydon Substation and Tuckey Farm Solar Farm (if built) lie within the Claydon Valley LCA while the Site lies

within the Hogshaw Claylands. The substation represents an LCA transition zone and the area also follows a trend nationally for new electrical infrastructure to aggregate around substations which are the most efficient and functional point of connection.

7. The solar farm will be largely screened from the Hogshaw Claylands by the East Claydon Substation. It will be possible to see the part of the solar farm that lies south of the East Claydon Road in conjunction with the proposed Customer Substation and so the increase in electrical infrastructure in the area will be noticeable, but only from a limited area. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect on the transitional landscape character area around the substation is not considered to increase the Moderate adverse effect that will result due to the Proposed Development on its own. The cumulative effect on the perceived character of the wider Claydon Valley and Hogshaw Claylands LCA will be Negligible.

Visual cumulative effects

8. The main cumulative effect will be with the existing East Claydon Substation and the numerous overhead transmission lines which feed into it. The existing substation is a dominant feature in many views, while the proposed electrical infrastructure comprising the battery storage will be far less prominent because it will be under 4m high, set within a strong existing framework of hedges. The main cumulative effect will arise from the proposed substation which, will be visible in conjunction with the existing substation. It will, however, be identical in character with the existing substation and in most views will appear as an extension of it. The East Claydon Substation, including the transmission towers immediately adjacent to it, occupies approximately 10.9 hectares with substation equipment up to 16m high and towers above 36m high, while the proposed substation will occupy 1.2 hectares. with elements as tall as 12.1m. The smaller scale of the Proposed Development will have a Minor adverse cumulative effect on direct and indirect views from the key vantage points but will not will Significantly increase the perception of electrical infrastructure in the landscape.

9. The Proposed Development will result in an adverse Moderate sequential cumulative visual effect in Year 1 to users of footpaths GRA 10/1, GRA 2/2 and ECL 4 as walker pass close to the proposed substation and the East Claydon Substation. This will decline as the proposed planting matures to Minor adverse in Year 20. It must be accepted that there is benefit in locating electrical infrastructure within a landscape already adversely affected by electrical infrastructure, even if there are some adverse cumulative effects.

10. The locations where a viewer will be able to see parts of the Tuckey Solar Farm and the Proposed Development either within the same direction of view or by turning their head are Direct effects. Such viewpoints are very limited, largely because the East Claydon Substation lies between the two schemes, blocking views, and both developments sit in the base of the valley. It might be possible to see parts of both schemes from the upper floor windows of a few properties on the northwest part of Granborough, but at distance. It may also be possible to see elements of both from Viewpoint 4 (only by looking in different directions), but the level of increase in electrical infrastructure in the view will not increase the adverse effect from the currently assessed Moderate adverse for Year 1. The landscape mitigation associated with both schemes will reduce this adverse effect by Year 10 to Minor adverse in winter and Neutral in summer with no cumulative effect. It will be possible to see parts of both schemes from Viewpoint 8 (again by looking in different directions), but this

will not increase the level of effect beyond Moderate adverse and again with mitigation, this will decline to Minor adverse in winter and Neutral in summer with no cumulative effect.

11. The Proposed Development, the existing East Claydon Substation and a very small part of the consented Tuckey Solar farm would be visible from the top of Quainton Hill. The most visible part of the Proposed Development, the substation, would be seen set against the existing substation and so, at the distance viewed, would have no significant cumulative effect. The electrical infrastructure within Field 1 would initially be visible but it will be screened by the several layers of tree planting that would lie between Quainton Hill and Field 1. The Tuckey Solar Farm would be barely visible since the section south of the East Claydon Road will lie behind the East Claydon Substation, with the remainder tucked low down in the valley to the northwest, screened from Quainton Hill by the East Claydon ridge.

12. Overall, the visual cumulative effect from Quainton Hill will not be significant and will become beneficial as the tree planting associated with the Proposed Development reduces the visibility of the Proposed Development and the East Claydon Substation.

CONCLUSION

13. It is concluded that the removal of the proposed compound within Field 3, combined with the additional tree planting will reduce the adverse landscape and visual effects so that by Year 10 there will be no landscape and visual effects of Significance.