

Land at Rookery Farm, Granborough, Buckinghamshire MK18 3NJ 23/03875/APP: Development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), connected directly to the national grid with associated infrastructure including access, drainage, and landscaping (as amended).

The Parish Council (GPC) formally met to consider the amendments to the planning application on 3rd September 2024.

The following was agreed:

A. To object to the planning application on the following grounds:

1. Excessive scale of the development.

The proposed development in terms of its overall size and scale is excessive in this rural area having regard to various reports including:

- I. The National Grid 'Energy Scenario' report 2022 showing a need for 20,000 MW battery storage by 2030 and 35,000 MW battery storage by 2050, and
- II. The 'Renewable UK' energy report showing that 31,500 MW battery storage has already been consented with 27,400 MW in planning and 25,400 MW not yet submitted,

which indicates that the East Claydon BESS site is not required to meet national targets and that there is no need for a BESS of this scale.

2. Environmental impact.

The proposed development in terms of its overall size and scale is excessive in this rural area having regard to the environment, including the impact on existing wildlife, ecology, and biodiversity. It is not considered that the proposed mitigation measures outweigh any stated benefits.

In addition, any fire within the site will have an adverse impact on the local environment due to the toxicity from fumes as well as polluting the ground and water courses from contaminated water used to extinguish a fire.

3. Effect on the existing landscape including visual intrusion.

The proposed development in terms of its overall size and scale including the 'customer substation fire walls' is excessive and incongruous in this rural area having regard to the existing landscape and topography of the site thereby having an adverse impact when viewed from the higher ground in Granborough and East Claydon and from the immediate vicinity, including public footpaths.

Whilst the GPC notes the amendments to the application which reduces the area of the BESS and the number of battery storage units, the Parish Council does not consider this to remove the severe visual impact of the proposal on the local environment. Whilst GPC understands why the sedum roofs have been considered unacceptable by the Fire Authority their removal will result in the storage units being more highly visible, and in

addition the increased size of the inverter buildings will make the whole complex intrude more on the existing landscape from a visual impact. In addition, the GPC cannot accept the view put forward by Statera that the reduction to one field means that the existing electricity substation is the dominant structure when it is fully aware that the existing substation is to be replaced by a new structure, the exact design of which is as yet unknown and will be sited at a greater distance from the proposed BESS, with potentially the BESS being the dominant structure.

4. Fire safety.

The nature of the development presents a considerable fire risk and fear of fire. It has not been demonstrated that there will be adequate mitigation measures to control:

- thermal runaway
- the release of toxic fumes
- prevention of pollution on the surrounding land and water courses
- suitable permanent fire access to the equipment

Until such time as the ERP has been submitted and approved by the Fire Authority (and any other relevant authority) GPC considers that this application should not be approved and would not want to see it included in any detailed schedule of matters to be approved by the LPA after any approval in principle is given i.e. it should not be subject to a planning condition as this information should be considered and determined as part of the current application.

5. Inappropriate location.

It has not been adequately demonstrated that there is an imperative need for this to be sited in this rural location on open farmland and it has not been further demonstrated that other suitable sites, including previously developed (brownfield sites), have been extensively investigated and considered as an alternative and more appropriate location for this type of development.

6. Cumulative impact.

The cumulative effect of the development and other nearby proposals will take up over 1000 hectares of existing farmland which will have an adverse effect on the rural character of the area as well as taking out valuable land for food production having regard to:

- I. the current proposal
- II. an extant planning consent for a solar farm at Tuckey Farm on the northern boundary of Granborough (Bucks Council Planning reference 19/00983/APP)
- III. a proposal for a solar farm at Wings Farm (Bucks Council Planning reference 23/01939/SO), and

- IV. proposed development for a solar farm and battery storage known locally as The Rosefield development (The Planning Inspectorate reference EN010158).
- V. The proposed replacement of the existing electricity substation by National Grid (full details yet to be published) and,
- VI. The proposed new Greener Grid Park near East Claydon substation for another 500mw BESS located on the East Claydon/Granborough Parish boundary Buckinghamshire Council REF: 24/02556/SO'

The cumulative impact of this BESS and these other proposals will completely change the rural nature of the area for generations to come and therefore will have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the wider Claydon Valley and Hogshaw Claylands which will not be outweighed by any perceived benefits.

7. Noise.

There has not been an adequate noise assessment of the proposal in relation to the potential impact on the users of the adjacent footpaths.

In addition, the Parish Council consider that the following matter should be addressed and considered as part of the decision making on this application:

- i. The Construction Environmental Management Plan (biodiversity) must be supplied and approved,
- ii. The ERP must be supplied and approved,
- iii. The weight capacity of the Haul Road bridges must be clarified,
- iv. A surface water drainage strategy must be submitted,
- v. The quality of the water already on site and of the Brook, should be established prior to any development taking place,
- vi. The yield of the lost fields should be established to accurately measure the loss of agricultural use,
- vii. Public Benefit: Ministers have stated that the National interest will prevail over local veto, but there should be Public Benefit for those affected; this benefit should be established as a condition of this and other large applications going ahead, and
- viii. New Substation: we are told new connections won't be available until 2030. Clarity is required as to when Statera can secure any kind of connection and if it is not actually until 2030, then the Parish Council feel this application is premature,

B. That in the event that Buckinghamshire Council as the Local Planning Authority determining this planning application decide to approve the application, then planning conditions should be imposed covering the following matters:

- a. Highways and traffic – only using the proposed haul route at all times except for the 4 abnormal indivisible loads (AILs) as referred to in the planning application,

- b. No increase in height of the buildings/structures above that shown on the existing application,
- c. Landscape improvement to be undertaken in advance of the development and to include mature planting,
- d. Restriction on working hours and not to allow working on any weekends and bank holidays,
- e. Controls on lighting during construction and operation of the site,
- f. Controls on noise levels from generators during construction and when the site is operational,
- g. Vehicles to be able to turn within the site to allow forward movement and to avoid reversing,
- h. Wheel wash facilities to be provided before development commences and operated during the entire construction period,
- i. Independent verification of the Fire Controls,
- j. Details of the restoration of the site to be submitted, agreed and carried out in accordance with approved details,
- k. Audited details for the maintenance /funding/management of green and planted areas to be submitted and approved.

In the context of j and k above it is suggested that these may be covered by a formal section 106 legal agreement between Buckinghamshire Council and the applicant.